

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

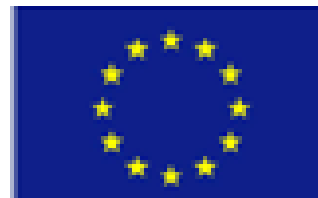
# Unlocking Children's Rights

**Strengthening the capacity of professionals in the EU  
to fulfil the rights of vulnerable children**

## Participant's Workbook

### Module Three: Communication Skills

This project is co-funded by the Fundamental Rights and  
Citizenship Programme of the European Union



Additional funding has been provided by the Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust



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KIEMELKEDŐEN KÖZHASZNÚ EGYESÜLET  
FAMILY CHILD YOUTH ASSOCIATION



## THESE MATERIALS HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED BY:



Coram Children's Legal Centre, UK

Coram Voice, UK



European Roma Rights Centre,  
Hungary



*With support from:*



The Child Law Clinic, University  
College Cork, Ireland



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FICE Bulgaria

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Estonian Centre for Human Rights

Social Education Action, Greece



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Sociale, Italy



Empowering Children Foundation,  
Poland



Children of Slovakia Foundation



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The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Coram Children's Legal Centre and project partners and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.

***"Above everything else, the professionals should be at peace with themselves. If you are not at peace with yourself, you cannot help the children".***

**Focus Group Participant, Greece**

## **TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF USE**

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## **MODULE 3: COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

### **PROPOSED DURATION:**

- **Why communicate?** – 30 minutes
- **When communicate?** – 30 minutes
- **Where to communicate?** – 45 minutes to 1 hour
- **What to do with communications?** – 30 minutes to 45 minutes
- **How to communicate?** – Numerous exercises to total of 7 hours 15 minutes to be distributed over selected time-frame

### **AGENDA**

#### **❖ WHY COMMUNICATE WITH CHILDREN?**

#### **❖ WHEN DO CHILDREN HAVE A RIGHT TO COMMUNICATION?**

#### **❖ WHERE SHOULD COMMUNICATION TAKE PLACE?**

#### **❖ WHAT SHOULD PROFESSIONALS DO WITH THE INFORMATION PROVIDED?**

#### **❖ HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH CHILDREN**

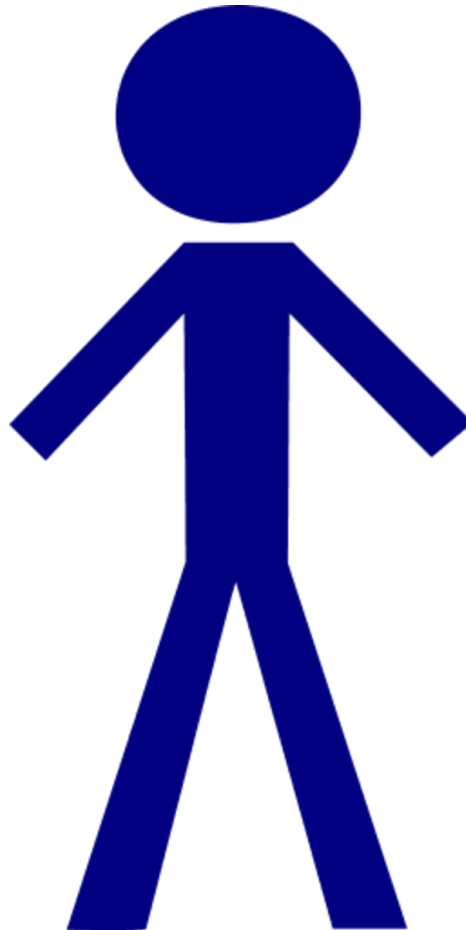
- **TOOLKITS**
  - **EXERCISES**
-

### 3.1 WHY SHOULD PROFESSIONALS COMMUNICATE WITH CHILDREN?

What are the benefits of positive communications for the child and for the professionals?

CHILD

PROFESSIONALS



### 3.2 WHEN SHOULD PROFESSIONALS COMMUNICATE WITH CHILDREN?

In my profession/ job/ institution, children are normally able to speak in the following circumstances...

If I were one of the children I work with, I would want to speak at the following times...

In the future, I will try to communicate with children in the following additional circumstances...

**REMEMBER:** Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states:

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

### 3.3 WHERE SHOULD COMMUNICATION TAKE PLACE?

What makes an environment child-friendly?

- ☐ Safe
- ☐ Clean
- ☐ Ventilated

What makes an environment unfriendly to children?

- ☐ Drab and dank
- ☐ Dirty
- ☐ Public

Who should be present?

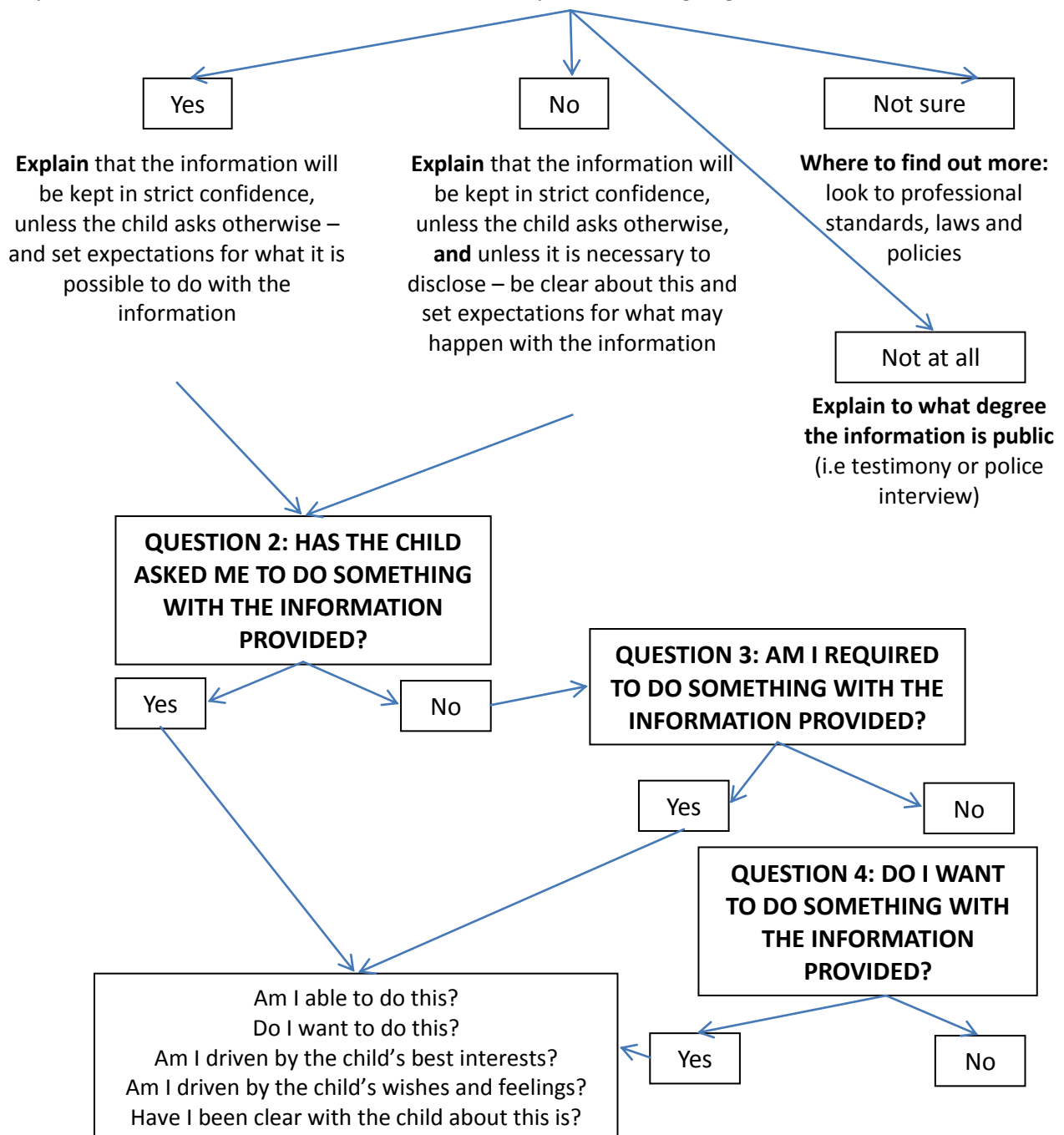


### 3.4 WHAT SHOULD PROFESSIONALS DO WITH THE INFORMATION PROVIDED?

The following flowchart will help you to decide what to do with the information you receive from communication:

#### QUESTION 1: CAN I OFFER COMPLETE CONFIDENTIALITY TO THIS CHILD IN MY ROLE?

**Think about:** do I have a legal or moral obligation to act if the child discloses that he or she is suffering, or likely to suffer abuse/harm? What about if the child says he or she is going to harm his or herself?



After considering the above, explain to the child clearly:

- Whether what they want is possible
- Whether you are able to do what they want (why/why not)
- Whether you are going to do what they want (why/why not)
  - What the potential outcomes are
- Check again what they would like you to do and proceed from there...

You have to lay the groundwork. Praise the child to boost their confidence and validate them. Give them activities to help them bond and to encourage positivity. Believe in them.

I liked that my child protection officer invited me to a coffee shop instead of her office to discuss my case and we had a really relaxing conversation. It took some of the anxiety off my shoulders. I do not like these big grey office buildings

Do not take me through the shopping centre, because everyone sees it.

Do it face to face because that way you know they are not doing anything else.

Think about the time and place and let them choose where to meet you. Even if my parents knew me as I know myself, I still want to make the decision.

**Children and young person's voices**

## **HOW TO COMMUNICATE (3.5-3.13)**

### **3.5 NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION**

**Notes:**

### **3.6 IDENTIFYING AND OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO COMMUNICATION**

**Notes:**

### **3.7 CHILD-FRIENDLY TONE, LANGUAGE AND APPROACH**

#### **MAKING COMMUNICATION MORE CHILD-FRIENDLY**

The following tips are especially useful for all justice settings:

##### **DO**

- ☐ Be sensitive to language that the child may find difficult to say (i.e. sexual language, or language about body parts)
- ☐ Explain that it is OK for the child to say 'I don't know' or 'I don't remember' rather than feeling obliged to come up with an answer
- ☐ Have a kind, reassuring and friendly tone (don't shout or be overly stern)
- ☐ Use simple language (avoid technical terms and jargon that children are unlikely to understand)
- ☐ Ask one question at a time
- ☐ Change language according to the age and maturity of the child
- ☐ Recognise that it may be necessary to speak 'through' a supporter
- ☐ Allow the child additional breaks if the child is distressed or tired
- ☐ Allow children to have time to respond
- ☐ Wear less formal clothing
- ☐ Monitor the child's participation and suggest breaks
- ☐ Conduct an individual assessment, or otherwise be aware of the child's background and personality, to help the child to participate most effectively
- ☐ Explain proceedings clearly
- ☐ Make sure the child has the right people with him/her to support the child and make him/her feel comfortable
- ☐ Speak up and raise complaints if concerned that the actions of anyone else are preventing the child from participating or understanding proceedings

##### **DO NOT**

- ☐ Avoid leading questions
- ☐ Avoid using questions that involve comparative judgements as children may find these difficult or have different perceptions (i.e. big, small, fast, slow)
- ☐ Do not use aggressive, confrontational or degrading language
- ☐ Do not repeat the same question over and over again – it could confuse the child
- ☐ Avoid multiple clauses within sentences
- ☐ Avoid multiple questions within questions, leading questions, and double negatives
- ☐ Do not assume you know the child's views, wishes or feelings based on arbitrary criteria such as their age, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

Poor practice	Problems with this question	Same question, asked a different way
Is it not true that you were not supposed to be in the school at that time?	<i>Double negative, leading question and confusing structure</i>	Were you supposed/allowed to be at the school at that time? OR  Where were you supposed to be at that time?
You stole the bike, didn't you?!	<i>Aggressive and intimidating tone</i>	Did you take the bike?
Was it a woman you spoke with, and what age was she, and what did you say?	<i>Multiple questions at the same time</i>	Who did you speak with? OR  Thinking about the person you spoke with, was that person a woman or a man?  ... What age was he/she?  ... What did you say?
So, you were there at 9pm, with your friend Saira?	<i>Multiple closed questions at the same time – it is not clear which one to answer</i>	Where were you at 9pm? OR You were there at 9pm? (as a clarifying question)  Were you with anyone? OR You were there with your friend Saira (as a clarifying question)
Please explain, using the proper terms, where he touched you	<i>Forces the child to use language he/she may not be comfortable with</i>	Please explain, in words you are comfortable with, what happened  OR – could you show me on this doll/diagram where he touched you  (OR, refer to previous testimony where possible)

**Source:** Originally produced for Coram Children's Legal Centre and UNICEF Tanzania Judicial Training (2013-14) and prosecutor guidelines.

### 3.8 COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN DISPLAYING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

The table below sets out some possible emotional, cognitive, physical and interpersonal behavioural reactions to crises.

EMOTIONAL	COGNITIVE	PHYSICAL	INTERPERSONAL BEHAVIOUR
Shock	Impaired concentration	Fatigue	Aggression
Anger		Insomnia	Hostility
Despair/Depression/Sadness	Impaired decision making ability	Sleep disturbance	Lack of trust
Numbness	Memory impairment	Hyper-arousal	Risk-taking
Terror/Fear	Confusion	Headaches	Crying easily
Guilt	Distortion	Gastro problems	Lack of emotions
Phobias	Decreased self-esteem	Decreased appetite	Watchful
Grief	Self-blame	Startle response	Lack of empathy
Irritability	Intrusive thoughts/memories		Tantrums
Hypersensitivity/arousal			Refusal to go to school/home etc.
Hyper-vigilant	Worry		Refusal to engage with professionals
Helpless/Hopeless	Nightmares		Alienation
Dissociation	Flashbacks		Social withdrawal/isolation
			Increased relationship conflict
			Use of drugs/alcohol

**What sorts of reactions or behaviours have you found challenging to deal with in the course of working with children?**

**What happens to you when you are faced with this type of reaction or behaviour? How do you tend to respond?**

**Why do you think you respond or react in this way?**

**What steps can you take to facilitate the communication?**

### **3.9 COMMUNICATING WITH ADOLSCENT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**Notes:**



### **3.10 CREATIVE COMMUNICATION TOOLKITS**

**The following are some creative communication techniques. These may be especially useful for communication with children with disabilities or special educational needs, or with ‘younger’ children.**

#### Using objects to represent people

Children can be asked to choose play people, buttons or stones to represent themselves, family members, pets, professionals etc. The child could be asked to show who is important to them by placing objects near or far away, or could use the objects to re-enact past or current events etc.

#### Creative play

Children can often communicate through play materials things they are unable or do not want to express verbally. Children can draw family and school pictures, make models, make feelings masks etc.

#### Using a play object

Puppets and/or a soft toy can be used to talk to a small child about what they think or feel. Children may also use these themselves to re-enact events or explain current feelings. Finally, play objects can help to distract a child and make the child feel at ease.

#### Stories, rhymes and poems

Children can either use paper, pens etc to create their own stories i.e. what do you want your new foster carer to know about you?

They can write poems, rhymes about feelings etc.

Story books on specific subjects can be useful when explaining things to young children, death, adoption etc.

#### Visual aids

Children can use a series of visual aids: cards with pictures of home, school, special events (birthday, Christmas, holidays etc.) happy, sad, angry faces etc to express feelings.

#### IT equipment

Children and young people can use tablets and computers to create their own information to present to professionals about issues that affect them.

**Practical materials can be very useful to help your communication with children and young people.**

- **What materials can you put in your toolkit to facilitate communication with children?**

- **When / under what circumstances would you use these materials?**

- **Notes from group presentations:**

### 3.11 HOW TO COMMUNICATE: PLANNING FOR POSITIVE COMMUNICATION

Create a case study by picking one feature from each row in the following table:

Age	10	14	17	12
Background	Lives with mother; father abandoned many years ago	Lives with two fathers	Homeless	Lives in care
Reason for communication	Child is accused of an offence	Child is alleging an offence	Child is unaccompanied migrant	Working out where the child should live
Additional factors	Deaf	Does not speak national/ official language as a first language	Physical disabilities	Behavioural disabilities

- **My group's communication plan:**

- **Notes from other group's communication plan presentations:**

### **3.12 COMMUNICATION ROLE PLAYS**

**Notes:**

### **3.13 WORKING TOGETHER TO SOLVE COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES**

**Notes:**

Start concentrating more on the people you're going to be looking after, not on the thing that happened.

Authority figures need to see kids as equals rather than look down on them - be more understanding and less domineering.

Every professional uses a different way of speaking with children. But the best way to communicate is not to use swear words or scare the child and to speak to children with respect.

Try to understand the person rather than just what happened.

I was going to say 'let them down gently' but that's patronising.

### **Children and young person's voices**

Do not look down on me.

Be interested in the lives of children. Talk to them like they care.

Get to know the child and remember personal information about them so that you can talk to them about it next time.

If a child is asked by a policeman to sit down then he should also sit down not to be so much taller.

# PARTICIPANT'S READER – MODULE THREE

Source: Coram Voice [www.coramvoice.org.uk](http://www.coramvoice.org.uk)

## ACTIVE LISTENING

*This is used to show you are listening and to check your understanding of what has been said.*

- **Paraphrasing** – repeating back what the person has said “you feel nervous about talking to your social worker”
- **Closed questions** – to gain factual information “Did anyone ask you first?”
- **Open questions** – to further the discussion “Why do you think they made that decision?”
- **Giving small verbal and non-verbal cues** - to encourage the speaker to continue
- **Summarising the main points of the conversation**

## PASSIVE LISTENING

*This is used when no feedback response is intended or needed.*

- **Concentrating on what the speaker is saying** – not letting your mind wonder
- **Listening carefully to tone and body language of the speaker** - to be aware of what is not being said

## BODY LANGUAGE

*This is the non-verbal clues.*

- **How you/they sit**
- **Eye contact**
- **Facial expressions**
- **Body movements** – such as nodding, shaking your head, raising your eyebrows, describing with your hands

## EMPATHY

- **It is listening to the speaker and understanding and identifying with their feelings about the situation.** “I can see you are upset about that”
- **It is NOT sympathizing** which is feeling sorry for someone.
- **It is NOT assuming** that because you have been in the same situation you will have had the same feelings and responses.

## COMMUNICATION AIDS

*These are some tools that can encourage good communication.*

- **Encouraging responses** e.g. Hmmm, I see, interesting...
- **Open questions** e.g. How..? When..? What...? Why...? I wonder...?
- **Picking up on free information** e.g. reading between the lines, asking about what they didn't tell you, responding to body language clues, checking out you've understood.



## **ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION METHODS**

**Source: Coram Voice** [www.coramvoice.org.uk](http://www.coramvoice.org.uk)

### **Communication Passports**

Communication passports are a way of recording information about individual children, young people (and adults) who have communication difficulties. The unique passport contains information that can be shared with the people who are supporting them. This helps to ensure their likes, dislikes and needs are understood, how they communicate and the best ways of communicating with them. The passport is developed by people who know the child best.

### **Objects of reference**

Objects of reference are not universal, but created to meet the needs of each individual. Objects which convey meaning to the individual are utilised. Generally, parts of real objects e.g. part of a towel, full sized real objects e.g. a wooden spoon or miniature objects e.g. a toy spoon are utilised. These objects represent an activity and are used to communicate to an individual what will be happening next or for the individual to communicate what they want. For example, a full sized wooden spoon or a miniature spoon may indicate that cooking is the next activity, a small piece of towel may be shown to indicate that it is bath time.

Since objects of reference are individualised, then objects which are not directly relational may be used as long as the object of reference holds meaning for the individual e.g. using an athlete's wrist sweat band to indicate that the individual is going out to the park.

### **Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)**

Pyramid Educational Consultants hold the franchise for PECs in the UK. PECS was created by Dr Andrew Bondy and is used extensively with children and young people with autism.

There are 6 stages or phases and it is useful to know at which phase a client is operating.

Phase1: The individual initiates communication by exchanging a single picture for a highly desired item.

Phase 2: The individual initiates communication persistently; actively seeking out and using a variety of pictures and travelling to someone to hand a picture to make a request.

Phase 3: Individuals are discriminating from a range of pictures and selecting the picture that represents the item that is wanted.

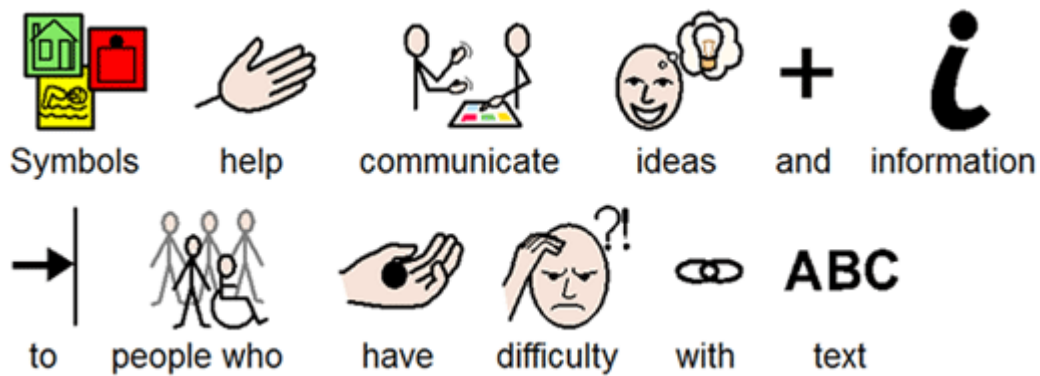
Phase4: Individuals use the 'I want -' sentence structure to request an item.

Phase 5: Individuals respond to the question, 'What do you want?'

Phase 6: Individuals use pictures to comment both spontaneously and in response to questions on things in the environment using, 'I see -' and 'I have -' sentence forms.<sup>1</sup>

### **Widgit Literacy Symbols (previously known as Rebus)**

There are thousands of Widgit symbols which can be purchased.






<sup>1</sup> For more information, please see: <http://www.pecs-unitedkingdom.com/>

Example of materials used to discuss wishes and feelings with a child

Source: Coram Voice [www.coramvoice.org.uk](http://www.coramvoice.org.uk)

## Eleanor's story

 <p>Where do you live?</p>	
 <p>What is the name of your school?</p>	
<p>What does Eleanor like?</p> 	

## What would Eleanor like to happen?



At home?



At school?

What Eleanor would like to tell  
social services?



## What should happen?

Natalie can help Eleanor to speak to social services about Eleanor's wishes and feelings




Natalie can come to meetings to help Eleanor say what she wants and does not want



Natalie will talk to her manager about what is happening with Eleanor.



If Natalie is worried  about Eleanor she will speak to Eleanor's social worker

## Eleanor's Quiz

😊 happy   😐 nothing   ☹️ sad

1. Moshis



make me feel



2. Christmas



makes me feel



3. Sarah coming to visit makes me feel

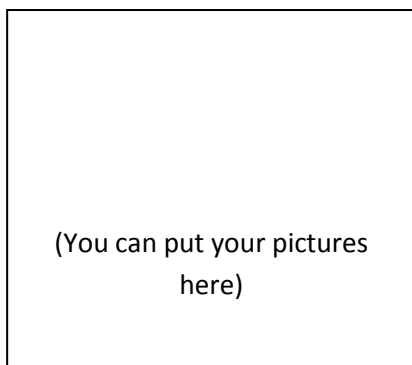


4. Living with my mum makes me feel



***This book is about me!***

**My name is.....**



**Please read this book.**

**It will help you to get to know me and how  
I communicate.**

I communicate using... (tick the boxes)

☐ Speech

☐ Signs

☐ Without speech

☐ Symbols

☐ Body movements

☐ Pictures

☐ Facial expressions

☐ Pointing

☐ Eye pointing/movements

☐ Vocal Sounds

☐ Communicator (e.g. Liberator, Dynamyte) or switches

☐ I need time to understand and respond, please be patient

My eyesight is...

☐ Good

☐ Not so good

☐ I use glasses

My hearing is...



☐ Good

☐ Not so good


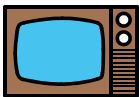
☐ I use hearing aid(s)

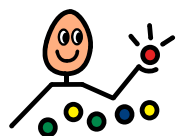


## What I like and don't like

 Like	
 Don't like	

## What I like and don't like

 Music	
 Television	



Favourite



Activities



Video



Friends

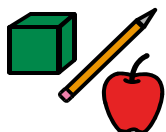


Family

## When I go out



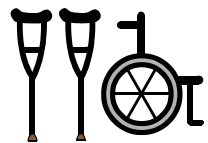
Help I need



Toys and games I like to  
take with me

## People who help me are...

	Telephone number
Parent/s:	
Carers:	
Social worker:	
Teacher:	
Helper or Assistant:	
Advocate:	
Connexions Personal Adviser:	

 <p>Special equipment I need with me</p>	

Doctor/G.P.:	
Speech Therapist:	
Physiotherapist:	
Occupational Therapist:	
Others:	

