

Topic based practice group 13/06/25

The meeting focused on the challenges and strategies for capturing the voice of the child where there are language challenges including where English is not a first language or where there may be disabilities that impact communication. The group considered how these challenges can be mitigated when matching children and carers; a variety of communication methods, and cultural considerations.

Supporting Language Barriers in Foster Care

The group discussed challenges and strategies for supporting children with language barriers in foster care, how agencies and foster carers support children with communication challenges, including those who speak different languages or have disabilities. A member shared experiences with a non-verbal autistic children, highlighting the importance of relying on foster carers and support staff for interpreting behaviors and emotions. Another member described a family that cares for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, focusing on matching them with peers who speak the same language and using creative methods like humor and gestures to aid communication. The discussion touched on the use of Google Translate and whether it is effective, community resources, and the need for formal or informal support groups for carers. It was suggested that carers could be linked across agencies to share good practices and resources. The conversation also explored the challenges of gathering feedback from children with significant communication difficulties and the role of community links in supporting these children.

Cultural Challenges in Gaming Support

A case example was shared, that was a familiar experience to others in the group, involving a young person from Afghanistan who was heavily involved in the game "PubG," which served as a cultural and language connection for the young person but posed challenges in monitoring and addressing his gaming activity in regard to safeguarding especially because of the language barriers. This underscored the complexities of engaging with young people from different cultural backgrounds, including issues of consent, communication, and the challenges of monitoring online activities.

Overcoming Language Barriers in Education

The discussion highlighted how language barriers can mask underlying learning difficulties and impact a child's ability to engage and progress in their new environment and with their education. The importance of ensuring the best and appropriate support is available and some agencies get this from the responsible local authority for the child.

Language Barriers in Foster Care

The group discussed challenges around language barriers for foster carers, emphasizing that while English proficiency is important for safeguarding and effective communication, agencies must balance this with avoiding discrimination. A member shared a case where a potential foster carer was unable to proceed due to limited English, whilst an example was given of an agency's approach to supporting non-English speaking applicants to develop their language skills through assessment and training. The discussion highlighted that while language proficiency is crucial, agencies can provide support to help carers improve their skills and meet requirements, though this may require additional time and resources.

Child-Friendly Documentation and Translation

The group discussed challenges around children's language and communication, particularly in gaming environments, with a member sharing insights from a training session about the link between gaming and gambling. They explored ways to capture young people's voices in paperwork, with children typically declining to review records, while Jodie shared an example of providing translated materials for an unaccompanied asylum seeker. The discussion highlighted the need for more child-friendly documentation and translation services and the importance of actively encouraging children to review their files.

Ofsted Feedback and Future Topics

The group discussed feedback from Ofsted inspections and explored potential topics for future sessions, including gaming and its impact on children, particularly regarding addiction and virtual relationships. They agreed to consider scheduling sessions on gaming and young people's voices in records.

