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# More Core *Skills*

**FOR CHILDREN'S WORK**

**Extended learning skills for  
church-based children's ministry**

The Consultative Group on Ministry among Children





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# Introduction

## Guiding principles

All children are made in the image of God. They are loved unconditionally by God and were affirmed in the life and ministry of Jesus. This is reflected in the Christian community, where:

- ❖ God's love is made real through human life and relationships.
- ❖ All children and adults are of equal value.
- ❖ The Holy Spirit speaks powerfully through children as well as adults.
- ❖ Everyone experiences enjoyment, safety and encouragement in belonging.
- ❖ All contribute and all receive, learning from each other.
- ❖ The Bible is accessible to all.
- ❖ All respect one another as people of faith.
- ❖ Differences are acknowledged and diversity celebrated.
- ❖ All are being changed by the love of Christ and share the good news in the wider community.
- ❖ Worship, celebration and encountering God are vital to the growth of faith.
- ❖ All have a sense of belonging to the universal Church and of serving the world together.

## Rights of the Child

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has been an important document for all those working with children, both in and out of the Church. Its main drives are reflected through CORE, and are as follows.

- ❖ Calling for the provision of specific resources, skills and contributions necessary to ensure the survival and development of children to their maximum capability.
- ❖ Requiring the creation of means to protect children from neglect, exploitation and abuse.
- ❖ When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account, while recognising that the

level of a child's participation in decisions must be appropriate to the child's level of maturity.

## Safeguarding and Child Protection

*More CORE Skills for Children's Work* does not include Child Protection training. Most denominations in Britain and Ireland have their own policies, procedures and training, to which all participants in *More CORE* should look.

*More CORE Skills for Children's Work* recognises the centrality of Safeguarding and Child Protection to all our work with children, so we recommend that the information sheet on page 14 is completed by all participants before starting *More CORE*. A copy of this sheet can be included in your portfolio.

## CORE aims and learning outcomes

### Aim One

To help participants to develop an understanding of children and the skills required to nurture children in their journey of faith.

### Learning outcomes

- ❖ To experience and understand the process of how people develop, learn and grow in faith.
- ❖ To listen to and accompany children as partners in faith.
- ❖ To evaluate their own skills, gifts, strengths and weaknesses and identify a plan for personal development.
- ❖ To help children engage with the Bible as a part of the living, personal and ongoing story.
- ❖ To work creatively with children, using a variety of methods to suit different learning styles.
- ❖ To develop skills to encourage children in expressing and valuing their spirituality and making their own response of faith.
- ❖ To share resources and ideas.

## Aim Two

To provide the participants with the opportunity to explore and reflect on their own experience of faith and Christian journey, and the effect it has on their work with children.

### Learning outcomes

- ❖ To recognise the need to feel valued, equipped and supported in their role.
- ❖ To reflect on and share their own faith story.
- ❖ To develop a reflective, enquiring approach to the Bible and its use in faith and life.
- ❖ To explore their experience of worship, celebration and spiritual life.
- ❖ To recognise the role of, and raise their awareness of, children's ministry.
- ❖ To develop the skills and habit of reflecting on their work with children.

## Aim Three

To help participants capture and share a vision of a Christian community in which children's faith is expressed and valued.

### Learning outcomes

- ❖ To articulate an understanding of God's call to be a pilgrim people, a missionary community and a global family.
- ❖ To advocate the active participation of children in mission and ministry.
- ❖ To explore ways of working with children in a variety of contexts, including new expressions of church.

## Using More CORE

This material is planned for ease of use in a variety of ways. As the material has been written from a number of ecumenical settings, it is hoped that it will be delivered ecumenically wherever possible.

If you would like to know where your nearest *More CORE* course is happening, visit the CORE website ([www.coreskillsforchurches.com](http://www.coreskillsforchurches.com)), contact CGMC ([www.cgmcontheweb.com](http://www.cgmcontheweb.com)) or ask your denominational or organisational office.

The basic skills for children's ministry (child development, leadership, programme planning, pastoral awareness, spirituality and the Bible) are covered in *Core Skills for Children's Work*.

The six sessions in *More Core Skills for*

*Children's Work* are designed as 'stand-alone' modules, covering specific issues and building on the basic skills. It is expected that an individual or group will select a module appropriate to their needs and then perhaps cover the remaining modules at a future date.

Each session is designed to take two hours. This timespan will be achieved by selecting from the material available. Each session could be extended to cover a whole day by using more of the material, adding some from the website and slowing the pace in items used, to allow more discussion, exploration and activity. The 'apple indicators' shown beside each activity have been developed to give an idea of how long that item might take.

- ❖ One apple indicates a simple introductory activity that might take only a short time to complete.
- ❖ Two apples indicate a more in-depth activity that will require some thought and time.
- ❖ Three apples indicate a high-content section containing the main thrust of the teaching.

By choosing more of the one-apple activities and fewer of the three-apple ones, you will have a shorter session. The reverse, of course, will give a longer session.

A *More CORE for Children's Work* session is laid out as follows.

- ❖ **Aim** of the whole module.
- ❖ **Learning outcomes** that should be achieved through the session.
- ❖ **Materials needed** to run the session.
- ❖ **Opening thought** to enable reflection.
- ❖ **Starters:** ways into the topic.
- ❖ **More CORE:** the main teaching element.
- ❖ **Biblical thought:** tying the teaching to the Bible.
- ❖ **Reflection on learning:** a prompt to help better understanding of the session.
- ❖ **Worship:** suggestions to close the session in themed worship.
- ❖ **Personal Reflection sheet** to assist participants in noting their learning outcomes.
- ❖ **Portfolio checklist** for those wishing to collect evidence of learning.

The CORE website is an exciting part of the training. It offers many additional resources, web links, articles and book suggestions, which will help all participants to expand their CORE knowledge.

Website features include:

- ❖ Resource lists for each CORE session (updated and extended regularly).
- ❖ A list of courses posted by trainers across the UK and Ireland.
- ❖ Contact details for denominations and organisations.
- ❖ New CORE modules for sale and download as they are made available.
- ❖ Bulletin boards for those involved in CORE and More CORE.
- ❖ Resources for trainers, including PowerPoint, logos and certificates.

The Personal Reflection sheet can be completed by the participant at home or at the end of the session. It is intended to enable further thought on the following questions.

- ❖ What encouragements, concerns and challenges has this module raised for you?
- ❖ What would you like to explore further?
- ❖ What action will you take or encourage your church community to take as a result of this module?
- ❖ What will be the benefits for the children in your group and for your church community?
- ❖ Which aspects of this session can you talk about and check out with the children in your group?

For those who want to use *More CORE Skills for Children's Work* as part of an accredited learning course, the portfolio checklist summarises the learning for which you would need to show proof, in order to satisfy the requirements. More information on *More CORE* and accreditation will be available on the website.

## Session Six: Young leaders

Session Six is a training module for existing young leaders or prospective young leaders aged about 14–18, introducing them to the role of a children's worker.

The material and the exercises are designed to be used by a group of young leaders led by two experienced children's workers who have some training competence. However, many of the activities could be used by a mixture of young leaders and the adult leaders with whom they already work. Indeed, this could lead to more insightful discussions about the transition a young leader is experiencing, and a better mutual understanding of what may be reasonably expected from a young leader. If the adult leaders are present, the trainers may need to agree some rules

at the outset so that this module primarily benefits the young leaders. For example, in discussions young leaders should be invited to speak first, while adults comment afterwards.

The module can be used on its own or in conjunction with other *CORE Skills* and *More CORE Skills* sessions. Alternatively, young leaders could complete the main *CORE Skills* session and take this module as an extra unit to explore issues particular to their situation.

### Weekender

You could use Session Six as the focus of a weekend for young leaders by:

- ❖ Extending some of the activities.
- ❖ Exploring the 'Top tips' handouts in more detail.
- ❖ Combining this session with some of the other *More CORE Skills* sessions.
- ❖ Adding some food and social activities.
- ❖ Preparing together to lead the worship service at church on Sunday.
- ❖ Inviting adult leaders, with whom the young leaders usually work, to attend part of the weekend to explore the expectations placed upon young leaders.

### Mentoring

Young leaders are likely to develop their leadership skills more effectively if they have an experienced mentor who can:

- ❖ Demonstrate good practice.
- ❖ Encourage, reassure and build confidence.
- ❖ Help them to reflect on and learn from their experience of leadership and their observations of other leaders.
- ❖ Direct them to further training where it might be appropriate.

The simple model below may be a helpful pattern for mentors to follow.

*I do, you watch.*

*We do together.*

*You do, I watch.*

### Top tips handouts

The 'Top tips' handouts (pages 122–124) are given to aid young leaders in their practical work with children. They are not intended as comprehensive guides but simply to help young leaders get started.

## Safeguarding and Child Protection

Title of your denomination's policy document:

What do you do if you have an issue relating to safeguarding and child protection?

Who is the person in your church who deals with safeguarding and child protection issues?

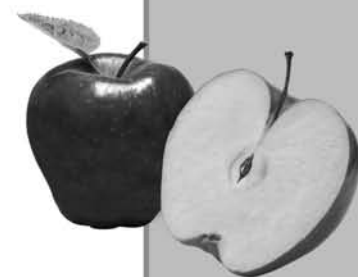
What permission and registration forms do you complete when a new child joins the group?

What training in safeguarding and child protection have you had?

If none, when is the next available training?

When is the next review of your local safeguarding and child protection procedures?

# Introductory session



## Aim

To provide a basic introduction to working with children in a church context.

## Learning outcomes

- ❖ To share hopes and fears about working with children.
- ❖ To reflect critically on a variety of strategies for developing relationships with children.
- ❖ To evaluate the use of a code of conduct.
- ❖ To explore issues around children, theology and culture.
- ❖ To consider how to approach a session with children.
- ❖ To determine future learning needs.

## Materials needed

### Before the session

- \* Labels or name badges for people as they arrive

### Starters

- \* Flip chart paper and pens
- \* An apple
- \* Post-it notes

### Core

- \* Copies of 'Children and church' questionnaire (see page 20)
- \* Copies of 'Assessing training needs' questionnaire (see page 21)

## Opening thought

'Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.'

Matthew 10:29–31 (NRSV)



Our role in working among children for the church involves being God's representative in communicating God's love and care. That love and care is also shown to children by the way we act towards each other as adults. In this learning session, the group will not count the hairs on each member's head, but will develop a better understanding of each other's role in children's ministry.

## Starters

### Who am I? \_\_\_\_\_

You will need:

- \* Flip chart paper and pens

In threes, check that you know each other's names, then find out about the context of each other's children's work. Talk about:

- ❖ How you each feel half an hour before a session begins.
- ❖ Your hopes and concerns about working with children and young people.

There will be feedback only on the hopes and concerns, which should be written on flip chart paper.

In the whole group, feed back your hopes and concerns and write them on flip chart paper. Then discuss the hopes and concerns that the children may be bringing to the groups with which the participants are involved. Write them up on the flip chart too, and compare this list with the first.

Think about how to find out how children are really feeling. Why is it important to find out?

### Apple consequences \_\_\_\_\_

You will need:

- \* An apple

Take the apple and start off a story about it: for example, 'This apple came from a small orchard not far from here, and one day...' Pass the apple to someone else in the group, who must continue the story, using the word 'apple' in their contribution to the story. Pass it around the whole group so that everyone contributes, and continue until the story is complete.

### Why am I here? \_\_\_\_\_

You will need:

- \* A flip chart or large sheet of paper, and pens
- \* Post-it notes

How many ways can this question be answered? Write as many as you like, one on each Post-it note. It is up to individuals how they interpret the question. Stick the responses on to a flip chart, without comment.

Join up with one or two other people and talk more specifically about why each person is here in this group. Come back into the whole group and talk about the experiences of this activity.

- ❖ How did different people interpret the question?
- ❖ How did people feel during the Post-it exercise?
- ❖ What insights does this exercise give into working with children?

## CORE

### Children and their culture \_\_\_\_\_

Any adult who wants to work with children needs to understand a little about what it is like to be a child in today's world. The way an adult sees the world is quite different from the way a child sees it. An adult leader can never be a child, but can make some effort to get inside the world of children.

There are many important and powerful influences on children, and the values that are strongly communicated through the media are significant and formative. Spending time on children's websites and reading magazines aimed at children is a good investment and gives pause for thought.

Look at a selection of children's magazines. Skim-read them to get a feel of the impact and tone of the publication. As you read:

- ❖ Ask yourself what is the message being given there about school/home/lifestyle/spirituality/young women.
- ❖ List any words or phrases you don't recognise.
- ❖ Identify one or two articles that you would like to share with the rest of the group.
- ❖ Note the main themes of the advertising.

Share your findings with the rest of the group. If there is time together, try putting the values that children observe and experience in the media alongside those communicated explicitly and/or

implicitly by the church, and see the differences. Make two lists and ask:

- ❖ Which culture is easier to understand?
- ❖ How easy is it to be part of both?
- ❖ How easy is it to make choices within each culture?
- ❖ If the church is 'counter cultural', what does that mean?

## Children and church \_\_\_\_\_

You will need:

- \* Copies of the 'Children and church' questionnaire (see page 20)

Individually, complete the 'Children and church' questionnaire and then share responses together. How far are these statements true of the church you attend? (Mark 0 for 'Not true at all' and 5 for 'This is clearly our church's belief and practice'.)

## Approaching a session \_\_\_\_\_

Share the experience of a memorable session you have led with children, one you have seen led, or one you experienced as a child. What worked well and why did you remember it?

What challenges have you met, or are you anticipating, in your work with children? Compile a list of these challenges under the following headings:

- ❖ Starting a session
- ❖ Using time in a session
- ❖ Working with a whole group
- ❖ Choosing activities
- ❖ Working with other leaders

The following thoughts may start off your discussion.

### Starting a session

Think about how the tone is set in the first five minutes (atmosphere, layout, welcome and so on). How can you start the session off to build relationships with the children?

### Using time in a session

When planning, always build in time to engage with a group and individual children. Consider the fact that one-to-one conversation is usually easier when a child is engaged in a practical task, especially a low-key task.

## Working with a whole group

Use 'circle time' techniques from time to time. With younger children, a 'show and tell' can be an important, regular part of the session. For older children, frequent positive affirmation games will build up the group's capacity to relate positively and share more deeply.

## Choosing activities

Always plan to spend time on what is important, and avoid giving time to activities that benefit the adults more than the children. For example, if you meet on a Sunday morning, avoid a weekly commitment to 'producing' something that has to be performed for the adults in church.

## Working with other leaders

Consider how you plan and review together.

## Assessing training needs \_\_\_\_\_

You will need:

- \* Copies of the 'Assessing training needs' questionnaire (see page 21)

This session has drawn attention to just some of the skills and knowledge that are important for any adult working with children on behalf of the church. Some of this skill comes with experience, but only if you take time to do some conscious learning as well, and also take time to reflect critically on your experiences. Look at the outline of the More CORE sessions on the 'Assessing training needs' questionnaire and fill in the boxes to help you assess which topics are priorities for you.

## Biblical thought

## Children and church \_\_\_\_\_

Split into three groups, each group looking at one of these Bible passages: Psalm 78:1-8; Matthew 18:1-5; Luke 13:34-35.

If this was the only passage in the Bible you read, what would your 'theology' (your understanding of God's view) of children be? Try to sum it up in three statements, and briefly sum up how this would affect the life of the whole church. What do you feel now about the way you would work with children in your church, and why?

In the whole group, consider the different 'theologies' that different church traditions have,

and the different ideas there are about why children are in the church. You may recognise the following models.

- ❖ If the children are considered to be the church of tomorrow and will only become useful disciples when they become adult members, the provision for children may be aimed at keeping them in contact with the church so that their real learning and work can begin when the time comes.
- ❖ If the children are seen as the church of tomorrow but need to lead a Christian life now, the children's work may be seen as a schooling in the Christian life. The children's activities may work on the assumption that the faith must be learnt and a Christian way of life followed. Information giving and Bible teaching will aim to lead to a vibrant adult faith and spiritual life.
- ❖ If children are seen as being as much a part of today's church as the rest of the congregation, and equally valuable members, then it will be vital that children's provision in the church is of a high quality, aimed at equipping their ministry. Children will be enabled to take part in all aspects of church life.

If someone came into your church and tried to guess what your theology of children was by watching the life of the church, what conclusions do you think they would draw? Think about visiting another church and guessing what their theology of children might be.

## Reflection on learning

### Building relationships with children



What is the group's observations of how they have all worked together so far?

Every group has some principles about how the relationships in the group will work—between children, between adults, and between children and adults. Some of those principles will be explicit (having quiet periods to listen to others, keeping each other safe by not running around, and so on) and some implicit (how children address adults, how the children are involved in decision making, and so on).

In a new group, in an established group meeting for the first time after a break, or in a group with lots of new members, it may be good to work together to produce a code of conduct and agree on it. The process for doing this will be important: perhaps there will be some suggestions from both adults and children, followed by a voting procedure to decide

which ones are to be included. Read the following examples and share your responses to them.

### Rules set by the leaders

Don't run.  
Don't shout.  
Don't answer back.  
When the leader is talking, listen.  
Have fun!

### Rules compiled by the children

Welcome to our club. We hope you have a good time, but when you are here you need to do things in our club way. We don't like anyone skittin' people, because we are all friends. Don't bring any sweets or chocolate just for you! We like playing silly games and running round, but when the leaders tell us to stop, we STOP! You'll probably find out that we are all a bit (very!) noisy and talk too much. But we need to remember that when one of the leaders is telling us what to do, we shut up and listen. And we need to listen to each other as well.

We have one word that is banned—BORING. And we don't use any swear words at all. We have drinks every week so you don't need to bring your own. Finally, at the end of the night, no one goes home until someone comes to pick them up.

We hope you have a good time at our club.

### Rules agreed by everyone

Be nice.  
Help others.  
Do the activities when the leaders ask us to.  
Make new friends.  
Help new people.  
Enjoy ourselves.  
Listen carefully.  
Walk.  
Join in.  
Don't hit or kick people.  
Don't refuse to join in.  
Don't be nasty.  
Don't run round the room.  
Don't talk when someone else is talking.  
Don't leave the club room.

How would you go about working with your group to agree a 'code of conduct'?

## Worship



Read 1 Corinthians 12:4–6. As a focal point, have a selection of apples used in different ways: apple

juice, apple pies, toffee apples and so on. Take time while listening to some music to consider the gifts and talents that you have in relation to children's ministry, because we all have a concern for children and can offer our different skills in different ways. Finish this meditation with a prayer together.

### **Suggested song**

The Lord is good to me  
and so I thank the Lord  
for giving me the things I need,  
the sun and the rain and the apple seed.  
The Lord is good to me.

And every seed that grows  
will grow into a tree,  
and one day soon there will be apples there  
for everyone in the world to share.  
The Lord is good to me.

'Johnny Appleseed':  
[http://www.scoutingresources.org.uk/songs/songs\\_short.html#johnnyappleseed](http://www.scoutingresources.org.uk/songs/songs_short.html#johnnyappleseed)

At the close of the session, invite everyone to share in the variety of apple products together, in celebration of their involvement in children's ministry.



## Children and church questionnaire

Mark **0** for 'Not true at all' and **5** for 'This is clearly our church's belief and practice'.

- |     |                                                                                                            |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  | Children are considered important in our church.                                                           | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2.  | People in our church feel comfortable with children.                                                       | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3.  | Children in our church are happy to be there.                                                              | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4.  | People in our church are willing to support children's work by praying.                                    | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5.  | People in our church are keen to see children involved in worship throughout the year.                     | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6.  | Children are encouraged to join in with other church activities as well as worship.                        | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.  | The adults in our church talk to the children and know their names.                                        | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8.  | When the children enter the church, they are ignored, but someone greets their parents.                    | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9.  | We want children in our church to keep the church going in the future.                                     | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | There is evidence around the building of the children's involvement in church life.                        | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. | Our church wants our children to see that God loves them and has a purpose for their lives.                | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. | Our church wants children to become active members of the church today.                                    | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. | We want children to be able to look back, later in life, with warm affection at what church meant to them. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

# Assessing training needs questionnaire

No knowledge: **N**

Some knowledge: **S**

Fully confident: **F**

## More CORE Session 1: Transitions

- ❖ I understand the key transitions in children's lives.
- ❖ I use active listening skills.
- ❖ I have strategies for supporting children and their families and carers.
- ❖ I understand the role of spiritual development in coping with transition.

## More CORE Session 2: Special needs

- ❖ I have an overview of the different needs of children.
- ❖ I am aware of the issues and difficulties surrounding special needs.
- ❖ I understand current practice and working environments in special needs.
- ❖ I know how to enable full participation of children with special needs.

## More CORE Session 3: Challenging behaviour

- ❖ I can define what is meant by disruptive behaviour.
- ❖ I understand what causes disruptive behaviour.
- ❖ I am aware of the differing attitudes and behaviours of adults regarding children's behaviour.
- ❖ I can employ strategies and good practice to help modify children's behaviour.

## More CORE Session 4: The global dimension

- ❖ I understand the ways in which the Christian faith is expressed and experienced around the world.
- ❖ I am aware of insights from other cultures and perspectives.
- ❖ I can work with the challenges and complexities of our global faith.
- ❖ I know how to explore engagement through mission and biblical material.

## More CORE Session 5: Children's advocacy

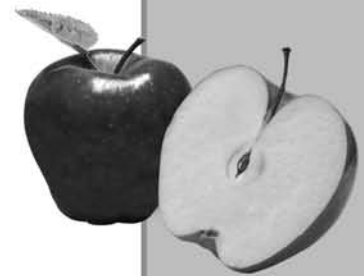
- ❖ I understand what is meant by advocacy.
- ❖ I can recognise the attitudes and stumbling blocks that prevent advocacy from taking place.
- ❖ I understand the role of local schools councils—the child advocate.
- ❖ I know how to advocate the importance of children's, youth and family work in the church and wider community.

## More CORE Session 6: Young leaders

- ❖ I understand the importance of training young leaders.
- ❖ I can recognise and confirm the unique contribution that young leaders can make.
- ❖ I am aware of the range of leadership styles and factors that influence leadership.
- ❖ I know how to communicate effectively with young leaders.

## MORE CORE SESSION ONE

# Transitions



### Aim

To enable workers to support children through the different transitional experiences in their journey from infancy to early adolescence.

### Learning outcomes

- ❖ To know and understand the key types of transition in the lives of children.
- ❖ To develop active listening skills and trusting relationships with children.
- ❖ To develop strategies for supporting children and their families and carers.
- ❖ To understand the role of spiritual development in coping with transition.

### Materials needed

#### Starters

- \* Circle Line and District Line diagram printed out (one per pair)  
(download from [www.coreskillsforchurches.com/2367](http://www.coreskillsforchurches.com/2367))

#### Core

- \* 'Transitions and strategies for developing resilience' PowerPoint presentation  
(download from [www.coreskillsforchurches.com/2367](http://www.coreskillsforchurches.com/2367))
- \* Accompanying handouts: 'Transitions' (see pages 26–27) and 'Building resilience' (see page 28)
- \* 'Attending and listening' PowerPoint presentation  
(download from [www.coreskillsforchurches.com/2367](http://www.coreskillsforchurches.com/2367))
- \* Accompanying handout: 'Attending and listening' (see page 29)
- \* 'Fowler's stages of faith development' PowerPoint presentation  
(download from [www.coreskillsforchurches.com/2367](http://www.coreskillsforchurches.com/2367))
- \* 'Comparative development' handout (A3) printed out (one per person)  
(download from [www.coreskillsforchurches.com/2367](http://www.coreskillsforchurches.com/2367))

#### Reflection on learning

- \* Personal reflection sheets photocopied from page 30

#### Worship

- \* Reflective music
- \* Slips of paper and pens or pencils (one per person)
- \* A basket or bin

### Opening thought

Adults tend to identify acute and major life events as stressful, whereas children emphasise the primacy of daily hassles, for example, conflict with peers or between parents, or transitional events such as changing schools.

Tony Newman and Sarah Blackburn, 'Transitions in the Lives of Children and Young People: Resilience Factors', *Interchange* 78 (Barnardo's Policy Research and Influencing Unit)



## Starters

### Life lines \_\_\_\_\_

You will need:

- \* Circle Line and District Line diagram downloaded and printed out (one per pair)

Consider the Circle Line diagram as an overview of a selection of lifetime key transitional periods. In twos and threes, create a District Line of stations indicating transition events and/or processes affecting children through to early adolescence. As a whole group, compare the diagrams and reflect on the range of stations identified in the small groups.

Discuss the following questions.

- \* What do we understand by the word 'transition'?
- \* Can we agree our own definition in the group?

## CORE

### Input \_\_\_\_\_

You will need:

- \* 'Transitions and strategies for developing resilience' PowerPoint presentation
- \* 'Transitions' handout (pp. 26–27)
- \* 'Building resilience' handout (p. 28)

In plenary (that is, the whole group), work through the 'Transitions and strategies for developing resilience' PowerPoint presentation and, as a group, take time to digest everyone's thoughts on the material. Use this exercise as a basis to support input to the rest of the CORE material.

### Supporting children in transition \_\_\_\_\_

You will need:

- \* 'Attending and listening skills' PowerPoint presentation
- \* 'Attending and listening' handout (p. 29)

In plenary, work through the 'Attending and listening skills' PowerPoint presentation and take time for everyone to digest the material. Next, get into pairs and ask each pair to choose a sharer and a listener.

Work through the following listening exercise.

- \* Bring to mind a time in your life when you experienced a transition.
- \* Share with your partner what happened.
- \* How did you cope?
- \* What kind of support did you need?
- \* Who was around to support you?
- \* Where was God for you at this time?

Reverse the procedure, so that each person has a chance to be a sharer and a listener.

### Spirituality and faith development \_\_\_\_\_

You will need:

- \* 'Fowler's stages of faith development' PowerPoint presentation
- \* 'Comparative development' handout (A3) downloaded and printed out

In plenary, work through the 'Fowler's stages of faith development' PowerPoint presentation and take time for everyone to digest the material. The A3 handout can be used as a separate comparative diagram to place Fowler's and Westerhoff's stages alongside each other and also to give a timeline. The handout can also be used for further study after the session.

As a group, discuss the following question.

- \* Do faith development models help to identify how transitions impact on children?

### Support strategies \_\_\_\_\_

In the light of the session so far, in plenary, discuss the implications for leaders in the following areas.

#### Self-awareness

- \* How self-aware are you?
- \* How do you cope with transition?

#### Activities and programmes

- \* How do our activities and programmes support children?
- \* What manageable risks are built in?

#### Faith and spirituality

- \* How do faith development models help to identify how transitions impact on children?
- \* What are the implications for children's spirituality?

### The church community

- ❖ Are significant adults available for the children in our church?
- ❖ Who are they?
- ❖ How do they become more accessible?
- ❖ Is there a sense of significance and solidarity for children in the church?

### The wider community

- ❖ Who else supports the children you work with (at home, school and so on)?
- ❖ What agencies might you refer to, for support for yourself or the children, if you feel you cannot offer the most appropriate support yourself?
- ❖ Who else in the community could you work in partnership with?

## Biblical thought

### A woman's faith

Read Mark 7:24–30.

The Syro-Phoenician woman faced a major crisis point in her life with resilience. She would not be put off by Jesus' apparent rebuff. Do you think she would have considered his comment to be racist, sectarian or chauvinistic? How did Jesus deal with the challenge to his reaction to the woman's request? Was this a transition moment for him? Discuss!

## Reflection on learning

You will need:

- \* Personal reflection sheets photocopied from page 30

Using the Personal reflection sheet, draw out action points for yourself in your ongoing work with children.

## Worship

You will need:

- \* Reflective music
- \* Slips of paper and pens or pencils (one per person)
- \* A basket or bin

During a time of musical reflection, write down a 'Commitment to action' decision on a slip of paper. Invite everyone to place their slips in a basket or bin, and offer prayers of commitment to working with children.

For the reflective music, use hymns such as 'Jesus, take me as I am' (*Mission Praise* 382) or 'Take my life' (*Mission Praise* 624).

## Useful resources

*Strong Tower*, Kutless, BEC Recordings, Fischy Music ([www.fischy.com](http://www.fischy.com))

## Transitions handout

A transition is the change from one state or phase of life to another, or a change in circumstances.

Children face many transitions, such as:

- ❖ Dependence to independence
- ❖ Immaturity to maturity
- ❖ Critical events, such as bereavement and separation of parents or from parents
- ❖ Chronic events, such as long-term illness

Many transitions are 'firsts' for children and can feel daunting. For example:

- ❖ First day at school
- ❖ First exam
- ❖ First girl or boyfriend

### Emotional health, well-being and resilience

For J. Bird and L. Gerlach,<sup>1</sup> children need 'good enough' emotional health and well-being to cope with transitions. They will have:

- ❖ A secure sense of who they are (although this changes over time and develops as they grow).
- ❖ A sense of being able to be themselves, which is accompanied by aliveness, vitality and energy.
- ❖ A sense of self-worth that sustains them in the face of setbacks.
- ❖ A belief in their own ability to influence things and make changes.
- ❖ An ability to identify, ask for and move towards the things they need.
- ❖ An ability to recognise, care about and take responsibility for the impact of their behaviour on others.
- ❖ A willingness and ability to do things with others and/or alone.
- ❖ A capacity to respect the need for appropriate boundaries for self and others.
- ❖ A sense of belonging and connection to a few significant people.
- ❖ A capacity to tolerate uncertainty and respond creatively and with integrity to the challenges life brings.
- ❖ A way of making sense of their experience to sustain them through life's challenges.

The last three points enable children to manage their risk-taking from a position of strength.

### Key skills for managing transition

- ❖ Manage risk-taking and cope with the outcomes.
- ❖ Have optimism and a sense of possibility.
- ❖ Be self-aware and able to learn and develop from experience.
- ❖ Celebrate success.
- ❖ Be able to ask for help.
- ❖ Take care of oneself.
- ❖ Develop empathy.
- ❖ Manage loss.

*Just as children learn different skills from supervised play and free play, they need both to be able to take risks with and without supervision (as appropriate) and learn from the consequences.*

Ali Worthy, 'Supporting children and young people through transition', *Spotlight briefing*, NCB, November 2005

### Some principles for supporting effective transitions

- ❖ Identify key changes, critical moments and transition points for children and young people.
- ❖ Ensure that your work with children builds life skills, including emotional resilience and empathy, and emphasises the importance of asking for help and support when they are needed.
- ❖ Identify individuals who may need particular support through transitions. Identify the support mechanisms and agencies that are available for the child and their family. Work in partnership to provide this support where possible.
- ❖ Involve children in providing support to their peers as part of everyday friendships and relationships.
- ❖ Involve and support parents and carers in transitions work so that they can celebrate the transitions and provide understanding and support.
- ❖ Encourage optimism and work with the excitement and opportunities, as well as the fears and anxieties, caused by change and transition.
- ❖ If the behaviour of a child changes, encourage them to acknowledge it and talk about it. Are there issues relating to transition and change that are causing difficulties, and what can be done to address them?

❖ Provide consistent responses to critical moments and events in children's lives, such as when they are bullied, bereaved or experiencing parental separation. Ensure that the child is at the heart of deciding what support and help

they need. Discuss with children when they would be happy for their peers and others to know and understand what has happened, and who they would wish to inform those peers and others.

## Notes

1 J. Bird and L. Gerlach, *Improving the Emotional Health and Well-being of Young People in Secure Care: Training for staff in local authority secure children's homes* (National Children's Bureau, 2005)

## Building resilience handout

Resilience factors operate in three dimensions, as shown in the table below. The factors listed are those that have a *positive* effect on the child's resilience.

The child	The family	The environment
Active, good-natured temperament	Warm, supportive parents	Supportive extended family
Gender (girls before adolescence / boys during adolescence)	Good parent-child relationships	Successful school experiences
Age (i.e. being younger)	Parental harmony	Friendship networks
Higher IQ	Valued social role (for example, care of siblings)	Valued social role (for example, job, volunteering, helping neighbours)
Social skills	Close relationship with one parent	Close relationship with unrelated mentor
Personal awareness		Membership of religious or faith community
Feelings of empathy		
Self-control		
Humour		
Attractiveness		

When children themselves are asked what helped them 'succeed against the odds', the most frequently mentioned factors are help from members of their extended families, neighbours or informal mentors, and positive peer relationships, rather than the activities of paid professionals.

### Strategies for developing resilience

- ❖ Strong social support networks.
- ❖ The presence of at least one unconditionally supportive parent or parent substitute.
- ❖ A committed mentor or other person from outside the family.
- ❖ Positive school experiences.

- ❖ A sense of mastery and a belief that one's own efforts can make a difference.
- ❖ Participation in a range of extra-curricular activities that promote self-esteem.
- ❖ The capacity to reframe adversities so that the beneficial as well as the damaging effects are recognised.
- ❖ The ability, or opportunity, to 'make a difference' by helping others or through part-time work.
- ❖ Not to be excessively sheltered from challenging situations that provide opportunities to develop coping skills.

Newman and Blackburn, 'Transitions in the Lives of Children and Young People: Resilience Factors'

## Attending and listening handout

Effective attending tells the other person that you are with them, and puts you in a position to listen.

In his book *The Skilled Helper* (Thomson Learning, 2006), Gerard Egan identifies 'micro-skills' involved in attending. He uses an acronym, SOLER, to help us remember them.

- S Face the person Squarely.
- O Adopt an Open posture.
- L Lean slightly towards the person.
- E Maintain good Eye contact.
- R Try to Relax.

### Skills of listening

- ❖ **Stop talking:** The focus must be on the other person talking.
- ❖ **Prepare yourself to listen:** Try to free your mind of other issues.
- ❖ **Put the talker at ease:** Help the talker to feel free to talk. Think SOLER.
- ❖ **Remove distractions:** Focus your mind on what is being said. Don't doodle, tap, shuffle papers and so on. Find an appropriate environment, and switch off the phone.
- ❖ **Empathise:** Show genuine interest.
- ❖ **Be patient:** A pause, even a long one, does not mean that the person has finished speaking. Be comfortable with periods of silence.
- ❖ **Listen exactly:** Listen to what the person is really saying, not what you think she or he should be saying.
- ❖ **Listen to tone of voice:** Tone, volume and pitch can give the listener clues to the person's feelings.
- ❖ **Listen for ideas, not just words:** You want to get the whole picture. A surface grievance may hide an underlying problem.
- ❖ **Find out:** Probe gently. Check your own understanding and repeat back what you think you have heard.
- ❖ **Watch non-verbal communication:** Body posture, gestures, facial expressions and so on are all important. Non-verbal communication can deny or confuse what is being said verbally. It can also confirm what is being said.

### Empathic listening

Empathic listening means 'entering the private, perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it. It involves being sensitive, moment by moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person, to the fear or rage or tenderness or confusion or whatever that he or she is experiencing. It means temporarily living in the other's life, moving about delicately without making judgments'.

Carl Rogers, *A Way of Being* (Houghton Mifflin, 1995)



## **Personal reflection sheet**

What did you learn from this session?

How will this affect the way you work with children?

What further items in this area would you like to follow up?

## **Portfolio checklist**

### **Learning outcomes**

- ❖ To know and understand the key types of transition in the lives of children.
- ❖ To develop active listening skills and trusting relationships with children.
- ❖ To develop strategies for supporting children and their families and carers.
- ❖ To understand the role of spiritual development in coping with transition.

To show that the learning outcomes have been achieved, your portfolio must include at least the following. *(Tick when you have included each one in the file.)*

- Personal reflection sheet
- Notes taken during the session, with any additional ideas
- Circle Line and District Line diagram with any annotations in the light of discussion and reflection
- Reflections on the listening exercise, both as a sharer and as a listener
- Notes you have taken based on the exploration of the 'Transitions' PowerPoint presentation
- Strategies and support you have identified from reflecting on your children's work situation
- Action points identified from the 'Reflection on learning' exercise. Include any action you have taken as a result, and how it has improved your support of the children

The participant's involvement in a group for More CORE Session 1, 'Transitions', is confirmed. The learning outcomes have been achieved through the evidence provided.

Signed (assessor) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Any comments from assessor

Signed (candidate) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_