



# **Communication Matters – *It's a Two Way Street***

## **Top Communication Tips for Panel Members**





## **“Communication Matters – It’s a Two Way Street**

**Saturday 16 March 2019**

The aim of this Training Event was to provide panel members with a better understanding of how to improve communication between all attendees and most importantly, between the Panel Members and the child or young person in a hearing.

This leaflet will detail Top Tips provided by each of the workshop contributors and should serve as a handy reminder to Panel Members on ways in which they can improve practice whilst communicating with children and young people within the Hearing Room.

# Dr Lorraine Lockhart

## CAMHS

### Communicating with children and young people –

#### 5 top tips

1. Think about what you know about a child's development and use language appropriate to their developmental age and not their chronological age.
2. Use empathy – try to see things from the child's point of view and let them know you understand. If a child feels understood by you, they are more likely to trust you and will communicate better with you.
3. Consider a mix of open and closed questions. Try to avoid “why” questions wherever possible when communicating with children. Not all children have the thinking skills to understand why things happen (especially their own behaviour).
4. Adopt the help of someone who knows the child well. A familiar and safe adult can help to support a child or young person to communicate effectively.
5. Use simple and concrete language that avoids jargon. Children cannot understand complex language or hold as much information in their mind as adults. Keeping your questions short, simple and focussed will help the child to think through what they are being asked.





# **Mary Philliben & Louise Torrance**

## **Language & Communication Disorders**

**Top Tips for supporting children with language and communication needs.**

### **Support understanding:**

- Use straight-forward language: avoid jargon
- Use words that everyone will understand
- Limit what you say
- Present one idea or instruction at a time
- Give processing time
- Show more, say less: demonstrate and use visuals, signs, photographs
- Avoid sarcasm and use humour carefully
- Ask for help if you are not sure of the child or YP's level of understanding

"Front load" them – prepare them for what will happen

## **Support talking:**



Give them the opportunity to talk

Talk about what they are interested in

Give them time to respond

Ask open ended questions

Avoid multiple questions: ask once and wait

Avoid finishing their sentences

Repeat back to make sure you have understood what  
they meant

Respond to what they say, not the way they say it

Don't pretend to understand





# **Dr Christine Jones**

## **Stand Up for Siblings**

### **TOP FIVE TIPS**

- **Take time to understand who the child sees as their siblings (including non-biological) and what these relationships mean to the child**
- **If siblings are living apart ask why and find out what the barriers to them living together are**
- **Make sure that sibling contact is considered in its own right not just as an add-on to parental contact**
- **Think about possible long-term consequences or unintended consequences on sibship of decisions made today**
- **Make decisions regarding sibling relationships visible in records**



# Jane Rough

## Communicating with Young Children

### 5 tips

- **Be respectful**
  - introduce yourself
  - use the child's name
  - use language the child will understand
- **Be attentive**
  - look interested
  - have a friendly posture
  - turn towards the child
- **Be encouraging**
  - show emotional warmth
  - listen actively
- **Be receptive**
  - be friendly
  - smile, nod, show you notice
- **Be attuned**
  - be aware how stressful this situation is
  - all behaviour is communication





# **Kirsti Bridgewater & Claire Lundy**

## **Communicating with Young People with Behavioural Problems**

### **Five tips - Do's and Don'ts**

- ♦ **Do** look beyond the behaviour
- ♦ **Do** use total communication
- ♦ **Do** use developmentally appropriate language
- ♦ **Don't** use jargon
- ♦ **Don't** make decisions when you are angry or upset



# Janis Watson

## How Teenagers Manage Panel Members

### Top 5 Tips

- Always speak to young person first when the Hearing starts. Encourage young people to take part in the Hearing throughout the meeting.
- After each professional/agency has spoken, check out with young person if they agree with what has been said if they disagree include this in the feedback near the end of the Hearing. You are demonstrating you have listened to what they have said.
- Be aware of your own values, attitudes and body language and tone of voice. Look for non-verbal cues for example body language, fidgeting, lack of interest from young person. Use language that is plain, simple and young person friendly. Do not use jargonistic language.
- Ask young person if they would like education or other external agencies to speak first then leave the Hearing. Respect young peoples confidentiality.
- Know what young people's Rights are. Use children's rights language that is encouraging and enabling in supporting young person to take part in their Hearing.





# Edmund Cybulski

## Unconscious Bias

### Ten tips on how to Brave Your Bias

Here are some steps you can take to tackle your unconscious bias:

#### **1 Question your assumptions**

Get into the habit of taking a moment to pause and ask yourself, “Why am I thinking this way?” Be aware of your first impressions or gut reactions as those often are driven by unconscious biases.

#### **2 Look for it**

Be alert to the types of situations where you are particularly vulnerable to unconscious biases, such as when you are stressed and under pressure, tired or multi-tasking and make an effort to be more deliberate in your approach.

#### **3 Own it**

The intent to be unbiased isn’t enough to eliminate bias. Take advantage of opportunities to self-reflect and consider the subtle ways your biases may be influencing your actions, behaviours or decisions.

#### **4 Focus on the individual**

Make an effort to view others based on their personal characteristics rather than stereotypical ones. Avoid broad generalisations such as “All millennials want...” or “Working mothers never...” or even “Why can’t the planning team ever...”.

## **5 Be comfortable being uncomfortable**

We all have a tendency to like “people like us” (this is an ‘affinity bias’); it’s comfortable to surround yourself with people who are similar to you. Unconscious bias operates when there is a lack of information, so push yourself, to seek out opportunities to immerse yourself in environments where you may be out of your comfort zone.

## **6 Understand differences**

Our comfort with people “like us” can also have a negative impact on those who are “different” from us. Look for ways to increase contact among different people or groups, and actively look for complementary skill sets and perspectives. Learning more about others will help prevent your biases from filling in the gaps.

## **7 Embrace the positive**

It’s often easy to find things to praise in people who are similar to us but push yourself to regularly find the positive in people with different backgrounds, work styles, personalities etc. Actively addressing the positive will not only help that person, but is also likely to help you prevent unconscious and unintended slights.

## **8 Analyse your decisions**

Push yourself to look for the evidence and the objective data to support your decisions (particularly decisions that directly impact another’s future).

## **9 Change your perspective**

Consider the situation from the perspective of different people or groups and be open to exploring multiple viewpoints. Think about how you would feel if the situation were reversed or how you would feel if someone said that about you or treated you in that manner.

## **10 Help someone**

Volunteer to be a mentor, either through a formal programme or informally. More specifically, look to work with someone who is different than you in some way – you will both benefit and grow from the difference in perspectives and experience.

The AST would like to thank all the workshop contributors for their assistance in providing tips which will influence practice in Hearings rooms.

Thank you to:

**Dr Lorraine Lockhart**

**Mary Philliben**

**Louise Torrance**

**Dr Christine Jones**

**Jane Rough**

**Kirsti Bridgewater**

**Claire Lundy**

**Janis Watson**

**Edmund Cybulski**

