

Words & Pictures Explanations: Key Phrases

Written by Susie Essex

Introduction

These are ideas for words for difficult and/or serious presentations and assumes that they are in the 4 to 6 frame Words and Pictures format i.e. an explanation linked to a Signs of Safety Assessment or 'Mapping'.

This is not a one size fits all solution. Each case requires consideration of how individually tailored words and pictures appropriately fit the individual circumstances of the case.

Below are examples of some Words and Pictures that have been used in previous cases. They are not intended as the only way of describing these presentations.

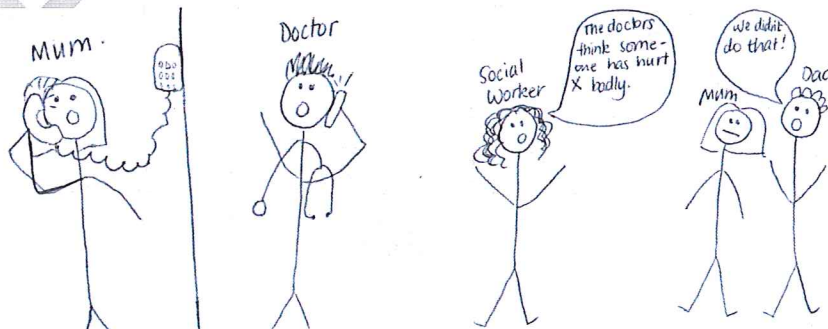
These ideas are for constructing the Words and Pictures document as early as possible after the initial mapping. The Words and Pictures needs to be part of the engagement process and mentioned along with a clear outline of the possible work, as early as possible.

Children need to know why people are visiting their home, seeing them and talking about worries. If children don't know why people are there they are effectively rendered silent (by kindness/protectiveness/adult concerns), about a highly significant event in their own lives. Children have a right to make sense of what is happening in order to create a consistent shared (with significant adults) narrative about their own lives. Secrecy about child protection issues is one of the key things that creates long term difficulties for children (relationships, mental health, appropriate coping strategies etc.).

If we can do Words and Pictures early it really makes it clear to parents, professionals and Safety Networks that the child is the focus of all the work we will do together. Everything we do and everything we say becomes part of the journey toward future safety.

Workers, professionals and family members can be stuck by the enormity of what they are trying to tell the child. One way to tackle explaining a difficult issue is to break it down into 3 main areas:

1. What is the sequence of events that led up to people finding out about the worry...E.g. A phone call from a doctor...then in simple terms what the doctor said...then child in hospital having more tests...then social worker talking to mum and dad, the doctors think someone has hurt X badly, mum and dad saying we didn't do that...



- a.
2. social worker, we need to make sure X will be safe in the future... and finally who will work with them to show that X will be safe i.e. the network, family, kin and a few significant long term professionals. (More ideas below).

3. What are the simplest things to say to get across this is very serious not an everyday problem... (Jot them down on a piece of paper or word storm ideas with close colleagues. I add in words like 'very serious' or 'hurt badly' so that it is more than a child hitting another child, as children worry most about their own behaviour and/or part in the worries.) This allows an honesty and can set the scene for future maybe more detailed conversations when the child asks questions or is older etc. (See below for ideas linked to different presentations).

I find it helpful to remember that in Greek Tragedies, the horrific events take place off stage, yet we hear reports of what happened on stage and we see the aftermath of the event. This is a useful principle in creating Words and Pictures about the concerns.

- c. What are the important positive points or learning messages to get across to the child...
E.g. Seeking help from others when you are worried, talking to someone, never being alone with a problem..... Messages like..... the Parent tried hard but were overwhelmed...the Parent didn't know who to turn to.....the Parent needed help but found it too difficult/too embarrassing to ask.

Parental/professional dispute can be included in this process, as the key thing is to get across to children why people are worried. They will hear the dispute at home so including parent/s different view alongside the professional view can be both respectful yet also allows children to realise there is more than one story. This is helpful as children have often heard things through closed doors but not heard the range of views voiced out loud.

The bottom line is that children are told there is a big worry in their family, broadly what the worry is, (beyond the everyday), it is not something they have done wrong in any way, and that we are trying to help their parents sort it out, with the help of other people XYZ (Safety Network).

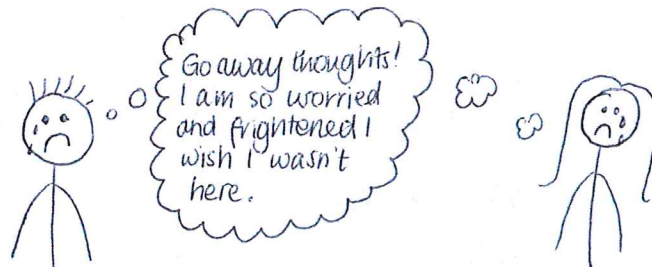
Ideas for Difficult Presentations

Suicide:

Key phrases to cover the enormity of the event:

The Parent ...hurt themselves so badly, the doctors couldn't make them better... Everybody was very sad. Everyone, (Gran, Pappa, Uncle T, X and Y) wished they had realised the thoughts in Z's head had got so strange and so difficult. The thoughts weren't everyday worries; sometimes people can be ill in their head and how they are thinking. They get worries that seem to grow so big that they seem to take over everything. Everyone wishes Z could have talked to someone. If you can talk to someone you can begin to get help, but it is not easy to do that.

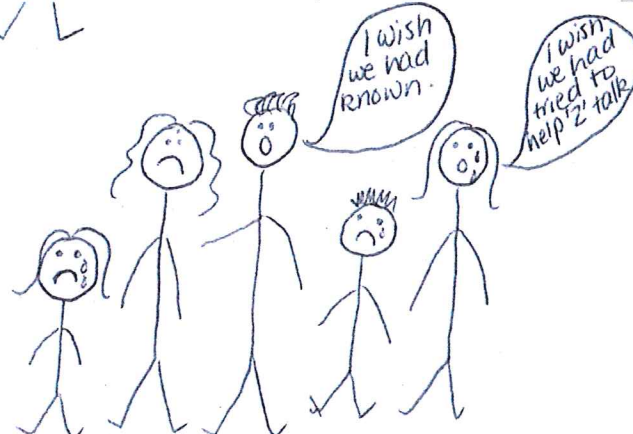
The accompanying pictures set the context but never the event so things leading up to the event: Z looking sad and desperate with bubble out of their head "go away thoughts, I am so worried and frightened I wish I wasn't here"



and picture after doctors in hospital, doctors saying "I am sorry Z hurt himself/herself so badly we just couldn't make them better".



Picture of everyone significant crying and looking sad, speech bubble out of a key family person, "I wish we had known and could have tried to help Z to talk".



In summary include lead up, then hospital with doctors saying they can't save Z and then everyone crying with message re what might help if you are overwhelmed. If it is important to describe aspects of the event go for the minimum that gets it across not the detail e.g...The police looked everywhere for Z. No-one could find where he was, a man walking in the woods near *** found Z by a tree there was a rope around his neck and the man quickly called for an ambulance, it didn't look good. At the hospital the doctors said Z's neck was so badly damaged they couldn't save him...

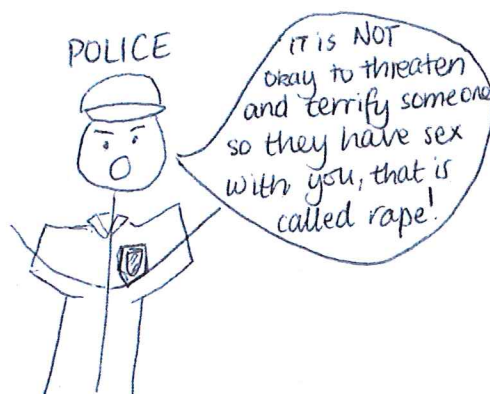
It depends on the age of the child what questions they have asked already, what they are aware of and who has said something to them.

Rape:

Key Phrases to get across the seriousness:

A person got hold of Y and started to hurt her/him very badly. They dragged Y across some woodland to a place out of the way. They then not only hit and hurt Y they said they would kill Y if they couldn't have sex with Y. Y was absolutely terrified.

Picture: Someone in authority saying, "It is not OK to threaten and terrify someone so they have sex with you, that is what the Police call rape".



Ask parents what children know or have been told about good sex. Often parents say I don't know what they know they are only young. Check with children do they know "what having sex is"? Simple version may be sex is what two people do when you really love someone and want to be with them and care for each other.

The pictures again only give the context leading up to the event, not the event itself. This can be followed by the person Y in hospital or with the Police. Police saying, " you were right to come to us you are very brave". Underneath that picture in words a simplified version of what Y says happened as outlined in the above paragraph. Perhaps a bubble from the mouth of an important person that includes message to child about handling very difficult events in their life, i.e. the best thing to do is to find a safe person to tell, (or in some cases, whilst acknowledging how difficult that is or the person didn't know how to tell someone, so couldn't do that "right" thing). The significant person might say, "We all want to help, we are so pleased Y was able to tell the Police what happened, it can't have been easy to go to the Police Station, Y must have been so very brave."

Murder/ Manslaughter:

As with all serious cases it is important to set the context leading up to the event. (This applies to murder as result of DV, child molestation or stranger murder).

Then describe the circumstances, and the aftermath, not the detail of the actual event.

This might start..... "The police said Daddy had to go to the Police station to talk to them". This naturally leads into why:

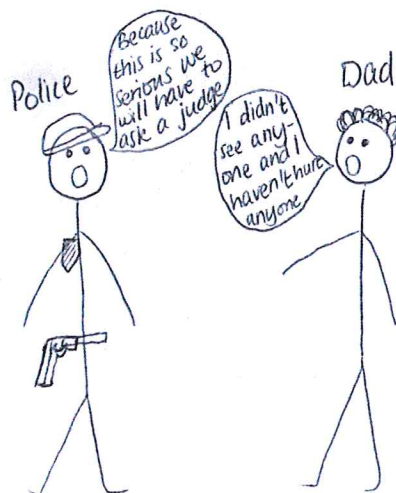
"This was because a child was missing in the village and no-one knew where they were. The Police thought the child had gone for a cycle by the lake and that Daddy had been fishing there on that same day...". This allows for different views to be expressed.

... "Daddy said he hadn't seen the child. It was very serious as later on the police found the child near the Lake. The child had been so badly hurt on the head they had died. It was all very confusing and the Police were worried because Daddy it seemed was the only one by the Lake...".

The pictures with this might start with a picture of the Police coming to the house to take Dad to the Police station, with a Policeman saying, "We have to ask you to come with us..."



Then a picture of Daddy talking to the Police, Daddy with a bubble saying, "I didn't see anyone and I haven't hurt anyone." Police saying, "Because this is so serious we will have to ask a Judge."



Then a picture of a Judge saying, "This is very serious, you must stay in prison whilst the Police sort this out". Underneath this picture, the words "Daddy told the Judge he hadn't seen or hurt the child".



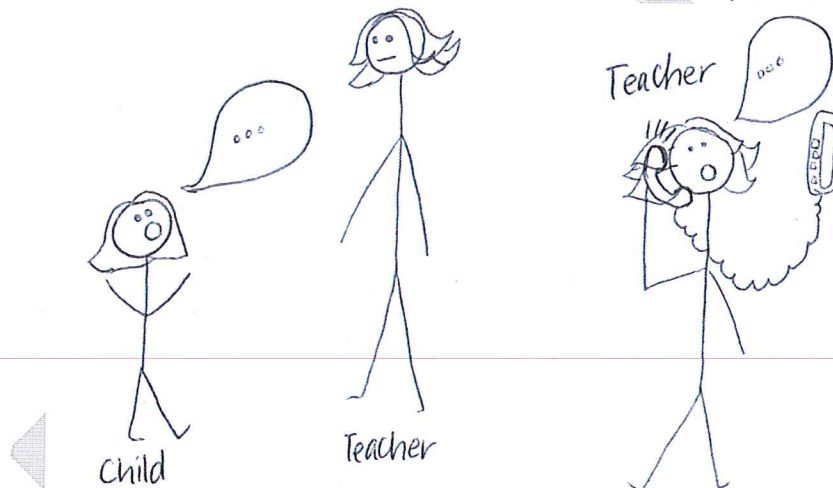
Child Sexual Abuse: (see Turnell & Essex, 2006).

The key thing is who is worried and why are they worried. Usually a child has said something to someone or (more rarely now post Cleveland in the UK) there has been a worry after a medical examination.

A possible start picture might be a picture of a teacher or youth worker ringing the authorities, saying that a child/young person has told them something very worrying.

Or there might be a picture of the child telling whoever it is they told about the abuse. That person, saying to child, "this is very serious we must get help". Then in simple terms underneath the picture of the person telephoning with what the child said - not too much detail, (see example in Turnell & Essex, 2006). The bottom line is, the child says the adult touched their private bits/parts and most important the adult touched the child with their private bits. This is yukky enough to get across the substance of most allegations even the most serious. If the child hasn't been touched by the adult's private bits, then the adult showing the child their private bits and stroking them can cover the yukkiness. This section can include the parent's disputing the concerns as children will know or have overheard the "denial" but might not know what the upset is about or that the authorities are taking it so seriously.

I never do pictures of the event; these words are underneath the picture of a child telling a teacher or sometimes under a picture of the teacher telephoning the Department.



This is followed by a picture of a significant person saying, "I am pleased W told us, it is very serious we must make sure something like this can't ever happen in the future. We must be sure the children will be safe".

Domestic violence.

The key thing in this presentation is to get across the message that violence should never be used as an excuse to resolve a row or argument. The aim is similar to all the above in terms of structure and keeping it simplified. Keeping in mind even if parents say the children were not in the room, or they were asleep, or it's only the baby who was in the house etc. Children will have heard scary rows and babies are affected by the emotional milieu both before, during and after a scary row.

Start with how this came to the attention of the authorities. The Police rang the social workers as the Police had called an ambulance when they went to the house, where they found Mum had

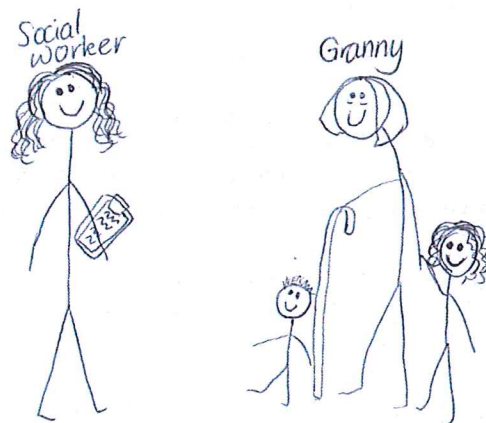
been badly hurt. Picture of Police car arriving and Mum in a chair being looked after by Gran Jo, children looking worried.



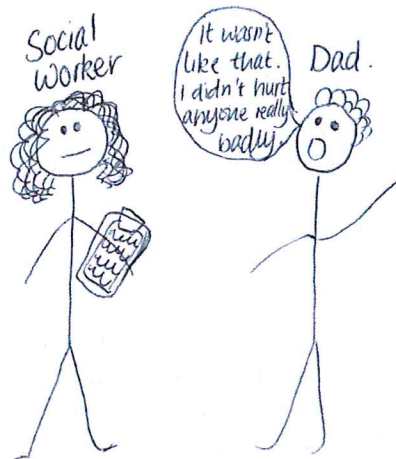
The doctors at the hospital said "someone had hit Mum very hard and she had a broken jaw and her teeth had also been broken...Mum had lots of bruises on her body and her face and it looked as if someone had hit her lots and hurt her badly.....Mum couldn't tell them right then what had happened. Picture of doctors ringing the Police, with a speech bubble, "We are very worried someone has hurt this woman badly but she can't say who at the moment..."



The Police rang the social workers, the social workers came to the house to see you and Granny Jo. They said they thought there had been a very scary row between Mum and Dad and that Dad had hurt mum which was very serious and not OK. Picture of a social worker visiting the children and Granny Jo.



"Dad told the social workers, 'it wasn't like that', and he hadn't hurt anyone really badly. The social workers said they had to make sure all the children are safe. Picture of Dad talking to the Social Workers".



"The social workers asked Gran Jo to look after you at her house whilst they try to help Mum and to help Dad sort things out. This is why you are living at Gran Jo's at the moment".

"Everyone W, X, Y and Z are working together with Mum and Dad to make sure that there are no more scary rows where people or children might be scared or get hurt badly".

The Words and Pictures can also cover the presentation where a parent has been murdered, to include the phrase... "Mum was hurt so badly the doctors couldn't make her better, ...the ambulance people thought she had stopped breathing before she even got to hospital.... Everyone was very sad that Mum had died...The Police said this is very serious Dad will have to stay in prison until a Judge can decide what should happen. Dad told the police he didn't do it and the doctors had made a mistake...".

As with all presentations the context is very important... "There was a meeting everyone was worried about Peta, Ash and Kerry... they were worried because.....the Police and ambulance were called because.... There was a very scary row...Peta, Ash and Kerry were upstairs Kerry had gone under the bed, Peta told them all to keep quiet... Sami the neighbour was worried and rang the Police.....".

In brief it creates a logical sequence that leads up to the distressing information... "We must make sure these Peta, Ash and Kerry are safe.....They will stay with Auntie Pami whilst we all try to sort things out...followed by who is involved/Network etc".

Prison:

People are often at a loss what to say to a child about a parent in prison. This can render children silent when they most need help and support. Some of the above ideas can be useful. However, where a parent has gone to prison for an offence not linked to children or domestic life the context is often explaining to a child why Dad or Mum are not living at home at the moment.

The lead in can be things they have heard or even been told by those around them. Even in complicated cases keeping to the 4-6 frame structure and keeping the language simple is often most useful. At the same time ensuring that the main themes of the offence are kept clear.

Whatever they have been told, the start might be:

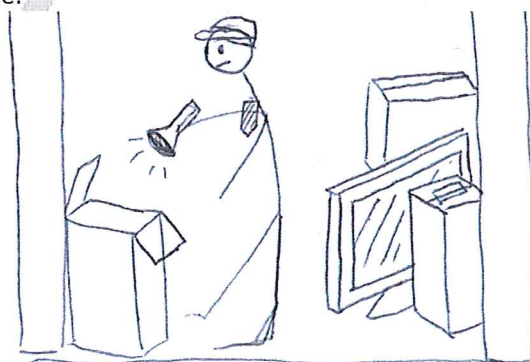
"Things have been very difficult these last few weeks/months. We want you to know what has been happening and to tell you who else knows and who you can talk to if you have any worries or questions or anything."

Current research indicates (Gill and Jacobson Deegan, 2016), children do want to know who else knows, and often have worries about how widely the information is known. These conversations help them to be prepared for any possible playground comments, and to be able to talk more openly to those closest to them.

"Some time ago Dad was in a lot of trouble with the Police", (Did you know that?). The Police came to see Dad, (Did you know that?). They wanted to ask him about lots of things that had been taken from other peoples houses. Dad said he didn't know anything." There could be a start picture of the Police visiting the house and talking to Dad, with Dad with a bubble coming out of his mouth, "I don't know why you are here".



"The Police looked all round our house and in a garage Dad rents. In the garage they found lots of the things from other peoples houses that they had been looking for." Picture of the Police looking in a lock up garage.

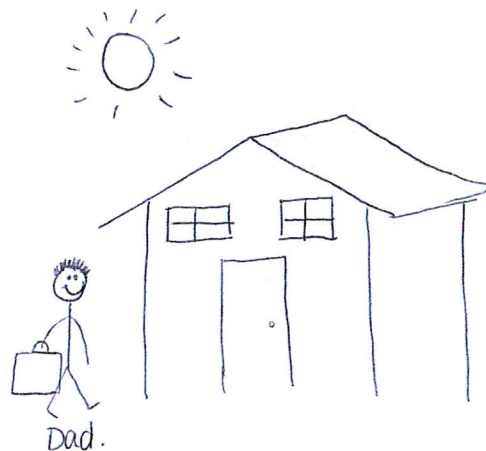


"The Police said to Dad they had to go to Court as this was very serious. They took Dad to the Police Station". Picture of Dad in a Police car.

Then a picture of Court, with words underneath this picture.



"The Judge listened to everyone. Dad told the Judge he didn't take the things; someone else must have put them there. The Judge said he thought Dad had put them there. He said this was so serious, and as Dad had been in trouble with the Police before, he said Dad had to go to Prison for 2 years. Dad still says he didn't take the things. This is why Dad is not here at the moment, and Mum is worried about money and keeps crying lots. Dad will be home after next summer, which is a long time". Picture of Dad coming home in the summer.



"So Gran, Uncle Fred and Emma from the Community Centre have all said they will help Mum". Picture of everyone helping.

Finally in many cases children visiting Dad in prison might be a relevant further issue.

"Dad has said he would like to see you at prison visiting. If you do want to see him with Mum, then Mum and Uncle Fred will try to sort it out but we can't promise. The man who runs the prison, the Governor has to decide". Picture of Governor at a desk with lots of papers to look at.



Underneath the Governor saying "I need to think very carefully and make sure these children know all about visiting a prison. I might ask the social worker who works with us at the prison to help".

Asylum seekers/refugees

I have come across cases where people have fled their country of origin, have become pregnant as a result of rape in their country of origin and don't know what to say to the child. This can be further complicated by rejection by their family as the child's "father" was from an opposing group.

The process is similar to any other difficult words and pictures, that it starts with a referral by someone, perhaps concerns re mother's mental health and neglect issues regarding the toddler.

It would start with a meeting or the professional phoning, the meeting or phone call was because.... "X was worried that when they visited Mum was still in bed and Samera a 2-year-old toddler was crying in a dirty nappy and holding an empty bottle. This has happened many times over the last month. Mum said she couldn't get out of bed she was so tired..."

This would lead into a 4 to 6 frame Words and Pictures. However, there might be a need to explain the background to mums struggles to be available to Samera as she gets older and for the Safety Network who are convened to help Samera and her mother. Other refugees, community workers, faith groups, and perhaps wider family in other towns or even nearby. It is so important to ask as once asylum seekers have been accepted and housed there are often more local connections than might first be apparent.

The basics might be:

1. "Mum comes from a country where there was a terrible war, there were bombs and gun fights it was very scary. One day many fighters from a really scary group called X, Y and Z turned up in the village, they killed lots of men, and took away all the younger women. Mum was one of the young women they took away".
2. "Mum was terrified, she didn't know what would happen yet she was determined to escape if she could and try to get somewhere safe". Perhaps a picture of Mum on her own looking sad, two men looking scary and a bubble out of mum's head "I will try to get somewhere safe".
3. "The fighters were terrible they hurt everyone badly. They hurt the women and said they would kill them if they didn't have sex with them, Mum thought she might die".
4. "After half a year Mum and two other women got away. Mum says she can't remember what happened and ran and ran until her feet were bleeding. Mum kept thinking quickly and somehow she can't exactly remember she got to Spain and then to Sweden and finally to the UK".
5. "Mum found out she was going to have a baby. She doesn't know who you father is but she does know you remind her of her grandfather who was a good and true man. She wants you to be safe and grow to be like him and so many good people in her family".
6. "Mum has scary dreams in the day and the night. The dreams are about all the scary things and how scary it was escaping".
7. "Mum sees Kate a counsellor who is trying to help with the scary memories. A, B and C have said they will come to help Mum and Sameera to show everyone Samera will be well cared for and safe".

Honour threat or killing in relation to Forced marriage.

Already posted on Yammer for Lotte:

I have been thinking about this and some of my past work that links but not a direct example. I am not very good on the Yammer system yet so if others have posted more useful examples I apologise for not catching up with the conversation.

First of all, some questions, as for any Words and Pictures explanation, context is very important.

Questions:

- How come this worry has come to the attention of the authorities?
- What sort of worry is it.... about a boyfriend/girlfriend situation or a specific report or both?
- Did a friend speak to a teacher?
- Did the young person or one of their siblings tell some-one?
- Has the young person gone abroad and not returned?
- Or something else?
- How has the possible threat come to be known?
- All of the above are important as it depends on the answers what one might think of covering in W and P.

I thought it might be helpful to offer a hypothetical case idea and look at a possible W and P for it.

This is about a young person I will call Balkys(B) and her twin sisters Suraya and Sultana, (Sand S).

The W and P might start:

1. "There was a Child Protection meeting.....everyone was very worried about B, and her sisters S and S". Picture of everyone at meeting and all named; or "The social worker Jan went to visit mum and dad and wanted to talk to them about a worry about Balkys and also S and S". Picture of social worker arriving at the house or flat.
2. "They were worried because Balkys had told her teacher Mrs. Jones, she was worried as she thought her Mum and Dad were going to take her on holiday to get married. She said she didn't want to go home as she was frightened Mum and Dad would be very cross as she had said NO". Picture of B talking to her teacher.
3. "The social worker Jan went to see Balkys in school. Balkys said she thought Mum and Dad were so cross they would beat her or something even worse". Picture of B talking to Jan. Underneath the picture...."Dad and Mum told the social worker B often made up stories and they were just going on holiday to see relatives".
4. "The social worker Jan said she had to take the worries seriously and that her manager was also worried about B's younger sister S and S. Dad was very cross and shouted that this was shaming his family. He told the social worker Jan to leave". Picture of Jan talking to parents dad very cross and mum looking scared and worried.
5. The social worker Jan and her manager said "We must try to work with all the family and the community to make sure B and Sand S will be safe in the future". Picture of Social worker and team manager with thought bubbles with lots of helpful people in them.

Or another idea

1. Similar to above, meeting or social worker visits.
2. What they are worried about..."The social workers heard from the school principal that Balkys had not returned after the holidays. She told them she was worried as her sister had stopped speaking to anyone but each other in school. The principal was worried something had happened to Balkys". Picture of principal ringing the social worker saying "I am very worried".

3. "The social worker Jan went to see S and S in school. They would not talk to her and Sultana began to cry. When Jan visited Mum and Dad at home, Dad said B was staying with relatives in a rural village to learn the language and she would be back at half term". Picture of Jan talking to S and S, S and S looking upset, and Picture of Jan talking to Mum and Dad, Mum looking sad. Underneath The social worker had told Mum and Dad that a friend had said B had talked about a forced marriage and honour killing. Dad and Mum said that was ridiculous.
4. Last bit, similar to above 5. But could be a more serious end The social worker and manager and the police said "We must make sure all the young people are safe, we need to talk to more people". Picture of worried Social worker police and manager with thought bubbles as above.

These might seem a bit simple, they can be added to and it means people can agree what to say to the network without jumping too far ahead. If something dreadful has happened this can be included when the information comes to light.

Questions that might be useful:

- What has the young person said, (actual words not our interpretation)?
- What have Mum Dad wider family said(actual words, edited for the children if necessary)?
- What do police, teachers, other professionals say? what is it specifically that makes them worried?
- What are the young persons wider networks , family, friends, faith organisation?
- Is there a supportive helpful faith leader?
- Do mothers relatives especially the male relatives have slightly different views to Dad's relatives?

These are all only ideas based on some families in the past. It is helpful often to keep in mind that whatever the "justification" story, if the young person has been threatened or hurt it is emotional abuse and also possibly physical abuse. It is helpful to hold that as a guide whilst also being mindful of all the extra layers created by the "justifying" story.

I hope some of this might be useful or could be adapted to cross cultural relationships between young people, where both sets of parents disapprove for very different reasons.

This is a bit rushed so apologies if it seems a bit muddily. all the best Susie

Posted to Leigh re Social Media concerns:

Leigh this is such an important area for children outside their birth family network, so I will be interested in responses. My experience is the need to include social media contact in Safety Plans and to make safety plans similar to direct contact safety plans, i.e. who can view the contact, when and where it happens etc. This very much part of our future, we need to include it as we would have been clear in the past about telephone contact. If there is a good words and pictures about why the child/young person is outside the family/kin system that includes the parent/s views then the original concerns don't come as a surprise to the child and are already incorporated into the child's narrative. So for me these situations are easier to manage when there is a good Words and Pictures explanation in place. BW Susie.

Susie Essex

February 2016

References:

Gill, O. and Jacobson Deegan, M. (2016) Children of Prisoners – A guide for community health professionals. Barnados, United Kingdom. Accessed Online February, 2016: <https://www.i-hop.org.uk/ci/fattach/get/664/0/filename/i-HOP+Health+Guide.pdf>

Turnell A. and Essex S. (2006). *Working with 'denied' child abuse: the Resolutions approach*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

DRAFT