

Let's Talk about Children Logbook for families of Young People of 12 – 18 years of age

Tytti Solantaus
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'Caregiver' refers to the child's parents and other caregivers in the parenting role irrespective of their biological, social or legal background. We use "the Child" as a placeholder name for the child being discussed, but we encourage using the actual name in the discussion, and in the electronic logbook if possible.

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LETTER OF WELCOME

Dear Caregiver/s,

You and your child have been invited to discuss your child's wellbeing along the lines of the Let's Talk about Children (LTC) approach. **Welcome to the discussion!** Here is a brief overview of the approach, hopefully answering some of your questions about what is ahead.

WHAT is LTC for? LTC was developed to help caregiver/s and professionals support children's wellbeing, learning and development in collaboration with each other and the child. LTC intervention involves building a shared understanding around the child at home and at school, and agreeing on action that is based on that understanding. **The aim is to contribute to the child's a day-to day life that supports their wellbeing, studies and development and to build mutually supportive collaboration between caregivers, child and school staff.**

HOW does this happen? **The practical part first.** LTC consists of one or two discussion sessions and, if needed, LTC Network Meeting. Network Meeting includes a gathering of the individuals that are identified by the caregiver/s to explore opportunities to support the child. Children's participation is decided by parents and the child, and children have to be treated as equal partners in the discussion. Caregivers can also discuss the relevant issues in this logbook with the child and bring their greetings to the sessions.

As to the contents, LTC discussion focuses on a young person's day-to-day life as everyday interactions and routines are important to them and their wellbeing. Caregiver/s and teachers have their own experiences with a young person in everyday life. If shared, and with the young person's contribution, everyone benefits. Shared understanding helps adults and young person to interact in the best possible way in the course of ordinary days. **It is also hoped that the LTC approach helps caregiver/s and teachers appreciate the smallest things that they have with a young person in the course of the ordinary day.**

In the course of the discussion, the participants identify **strengths and vulnerabilities in the young person's life**. Everyone's experience is respected. This makes it possible to cherish the strengths and find solutions for the vulnerabilities with the help of the action plan.

It is time to start! I hope you have an interesting and inspiring discussion.

Kind regards

Tytti Solantaus

Tytti Solantaus

Emeritus professor, Child psychiatrist, visiting scholar, University of Turku/INVEST,
tytti.solantaus@utu.fi; tytti.solantaus@gmail.com

LET'S TALK ABOUT CHILDREN INTERVENTION (LTC)

1. **Words of welcome and introduction of participants**, a special welcome to the Young Person
2. **A brief overview** of the aims and what to expect during the discussion.
3. **Confidentiality** and how the discussion is documented at school, as needed

Logbook and how it is used

The framework and themes for the discussion are documented in the logbook. The logbook serves as means to identify and discuss strengths and vulnerabilities in the child's life at home and in day care, and to make an action plan based on the discussion. **The logbook is not an assessment tool, nor a questionnaire to be completed.** Let's Talk about Children is **not** about making assessments of the caregiver/s' or the day care personnel's interaction skills and quality. It simply aims to understand the child's daily experiences. **If the Young Person attends, they have to be treated as full partners in the discussion.**

The logbook is made for you to keep and make notes on. You are most welcome to take it home and go back to any topic to reflect and discuss it further at home. It would be especially worthwhile to discuss the planned actions and how the whole family could get involved. Factors supporting young people's wellbeing and development are presented in Annex 1

4. **Strengths and vulnerabilities (See also Annex 2)**

Strength: An area of the family life and of child's life outside home (day care, school and leisure environment) that is progressing well, including everyday routines, time spent together and activities with friends and the community.

Vulnerability: An area of the family life and of child's life outside home (day care, school, leisure environment) that might cause problems if nothing is done, or is already a concern which would benefit from further attention and support.

DISCUSSING THE YOUNG PERSON IN THE FLOW OF ORDINARY DAYS

1. Introductory discussion

To the caregiver/s: Would you like to share something about your family?

To the Young Person: Would you like to tell something about yourself?

To the teacher: Would you like to share something about the school and yourself?

How was it for you to come to this session?

YOUNG PERSON

2. Young person's curiosity, imagination and joy of learning

Discuss what the Young Person is interested in and would want to know more about. It might be computer games and creating one with peers, or focusing on nature, motorbikes, art, whatever.

Listen and ask more!

The Young Person

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregivers

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The teacher

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

3. The Young Person's wellbeing, mood and energy

To the Young Person: How are you, have you been healthy? How would you describe your mood and energy? What would others say?

Also, what might be influencing the Young Person's mood and energy? What have you noticed yourself?

The Young Person

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregivers

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The teacher

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

4. Worries about the Young Person?

What would you say, have you been worried about how things are going for you or how you are feeling? What would others say?

Have you sought and received for help? Where? _____

The Young Person

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregiver/s

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The practitioner

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

YOUNG PERSON AND SCHOOL

1. School engagement and sense of belonging

Discuss how the Young Person feels about school, are they respected and accepted for what they are, by teachers and peers. Does the Young Person feel a part of their student group? Are they interested and committed to studying and doing the homework? Does the Young Person participate in school activities in their own way? Does the Young Person who is close to finishing school have future plans?

The Young Person

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregiver

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The teacher

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

A young person's lack of engagement in school might be due to many issues, three common ones being.

1. The Young Person is a different learner, has learning problems or is talented beyond their class mates (see 6)
2. There is discrimination and bullying in the class in general or targeted at the Young Person (see 10).
3. Home and school have different views about child upbringing and about school and its aims (see 14)

2. School achievement

The Young Person

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregiver

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The teacher

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

If there is a mismatch between the methods of teaching and support and the young person's needs and ways of learning, discuss the needed action in the action plan. The young person's capacities might not be fostered, be it a young person with learning or other challenges (e.g. mental health) or an exceptionally talented young person.

3. A support person at school

To the Young Person: Is there an adult or adults at school you can turn to when needed?

The Young Person

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregivers

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The teacher

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Home and school

1. Routines at home and school

The following discussion concerns daily routines at home and school. Routines are not usually paid much attention to; however, they are the backbone of everyday life. They are new every day. When adults and children are happy and full of energy, the routines are carried out with smiles, while under stress, the tension and irritability show almost immediately in the routines and their atmosphere. This applies to home and school, and adults and children. Everyday routines are important to us all.

The home-related topics in the list reflect issues that have an impact on a young person's day also at school. It is recommended that the topics are discussed at the same time from home and school perspectives. A topic can be a strength in one and a vulnerability in the other. If the Young Person disagrees with adults, mark both.

How do the daily routines run at home and school?

Do they run most often smoothly or do some of them create disagreements or conflicts?

Home

Leaving home and coming to school

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Issues concerning clothing

Eating, mealtimes Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Lessons at school Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Transitions from one activity to another

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Play, physical exercise and outdoor activities

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Issues related to money

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Leaving school, coming home

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Screen time, social media

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Day-night rhythm, enough sleep and rest

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

School

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐ N

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

2. Understanding the Young Person (see Annex 2)

Understanding the overall situation of a young person helps caregivers and school staff interact with the young person in the best possible way. Possible courses of action are considered and decided under the action plan section.

- a. **Is there something at school that may be affecting the Young Person's wellbeing and learning and should be considered by the caregiver/s and teacher when interacting with the child?**

For example, bullying at school, racist attitudes, a disorderly class, multiple substitute teachers, lack of equipment for remote teaching, an atmosphere of exhaustion among teachers, etc.

The Young Person

Vulnerability ☐

The caregiver

Vulnerability ☐

The teacher

Vulnerability ☐

- b. **Is there something in the Young Person's life outside of school that you would like to mention, something that should be considered by the caregiver/s and teacher when interacting with the Young Person?**

For example, bullying outside of school/on the internet, lack of peaceful space or equipment for remote learning at home, stressful situation for the caregivers, an atmosphere of exhaustion at home

The Young Person

Vulnerability ☐

The caregiver

Vulnerability ☐

The teacher

Vulnerability ☐

How was it for you all to discuss issues at home and school? Was it helpful or maybe uncomfortable? How do you feel about collaboration and communication concerning issues related to the Young Person?

The Young Person

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregiver/s

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The teacher

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

3. How do you feel about collaboration and communication concerning more general issues

Home

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

School

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

CHILD AND SOCIAL WORLD

Friends, interests and activities in leisure time

1. **For instance, to the Young Person:** Would you like to describe a little bit what you like to do during your leisure time? ...

The Young Person

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregivers

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The teacher

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

2. Social situations and in a larger context at school

To the Young Person, perhaps: What would you say, how do you get along with teachers and other students in general? ...

What is the school atmosphere like? Is it easy to get know new people and make friends, or not?

Is there bullying, discrimination, any negative attitudes and behavior?

Have you experienced such behavior, how about any of your friends? What you do in such situations?

Also, what might be influencing interactions in social situations?

The Young Person

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregivers

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The teacher

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

3. Disagreements and conflicts at home, at school and with friends

How do they arise? What happens? Has anyone, including adults lost their nerve and attacked someone verbally or physically? If this has happened, make a note on the action plan section to remind of needed action.

The Young Person

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregivers

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The teacher

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

4. A meaningful social network

Do you have a social group you belong to, for example a group of friends, your football team, the choir etc. you attend, adults you like to spend time with (relatives, neighbours etc) or some others?

The Young Person

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregivers

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The teacher

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Only two topics left before planning what to do!

1. Has something been forgotten, are there any delights or concerns not yet discussed?

To the Young Person: Has something delightful happened recently we have not talked about? Is there anything that has bothered you and we have not talked about? Big or small? To caregivers and teacher: what would you say?

	Delight	Concern
The Young Person	Strength ☐	Vulnerability ☐
The caregiver/s	Strength ☐	Vulnerability ☐
The teacher	Strength ☐	Vulnerability ☐

2. Goals and thoughts concerning child upbringing at home and school

The goals and thoughts are likely to be somewhat different at home and school. For example, at school, important goals include learning and social-emotional skills especially in classroom and groups. Young people themselves might have a very different view on these issues. Their own goals and thoughts and a variety of cultural backgrounds at home and school can feature in this very important conversation.

Examples of Strengths: Goals and thoughts are similar ... complement each other there are differences, but not in conflict with each other

Possible Vulnerabilities: Goals and thoughts or some of them are in conflict with each other

The Young Person	Strength ☐	Vulnerability ☐
The caregiver/s	Strength ☐	Vulnerability ☐
The teacher	Strength ☐	Vulnerability ☐

Action plan

Which strengths and vulnerabilities do you choose to be the foci of action and why?

Plan specific and concrete courses of action based on the participants' possibilities and resources and the worker's job description. **Use Annex 1, the factors that support a healthy development as a planning aid.** Also consider whether additional resources are needed somewhere and whether a network meeting should be called.

In terms of strengths, the individuals agree on the following courses of action:

At home

At school

Leisure time

Additional resources? For what and by whom?

In terms of vulnerabilities, the individuals agree on the following courses of action:

At home

At school

Leisure time

Additional resources? For what and by whom?

If Network Meeting is not needed, **proceed to Ending the session.**

If Network Meeting is needed, proceed to its planning and come back to **Ending the session**

Ending the session

How was it for you to make an action plan together?

What do you think of LTC as a whole /this far (if Network Meeting is still to come)?

Has it been helpful for you, each one? In what way?

Was there something problematic that you would like to go back to?

The author has one wish. You have discussed a large variety of topics and there has not been time to talk about them thoroughly. The wish is that if there is anything in your mind that you would like to discuss further, you would find a way or even organize a way to continue the discussion. Overall, It is hoped that LTC serves as a spring board to interesting and innovative discussions among caregivers, children and teachers.

A reminder: Let's Talk about Children can be repeated at any time, especially if there are changes within the family, at school or in friendships which may put the Young Person's wellbeing at risk. The initiative can come from the teacher, caregivers and of course from the Young Person itself.

Thank you everyone!

Planning Let's Talk about Children Network Meeting

1. Explanation of the meeting process
2. Participants agree on the topics, choose the relevant strengths and vulnerabilities and agree who introduces the topics (often caregiver/s, if they agree). It is also agreed on which topics the family does not wish to discuss.
3. Participants identify and decide to invite people who are likely to be able to contribute to the aims of the meeting. Remember also the Young Person's own support people.

a. Chosen strengths and vulnerabilities, other topics?

b. People to be invited, and by whom, date and time of the meeting

Date and time of the meeting _____

4. If the Young Person is not present now, invite them to the Network Meeting afterwards. Explain what is being planned and why, and who will participate. Invite them to suggest participants. If the Young Person does not want to participate, **explain afterwards what was decided and why, and include them in carrying out the action plan.** The Young Person can also send their suggestions about actions to be included in the action plan.

1. The parents and/or the leader of the meeting bid the participants **welcome**. Introductions.
2. The leader of the meeting gives everyone a preliminary outline of the meeting and describes **how it has been prepared**.
3. Family members and/or the leader, as agreed, describe **the reasons for the meeting and the areas of action**.
4. **Discussion. Involve the Young Person as an equal participant.**
 - a. Clarifying questions and points of view
 - b. Ideas on how to proceed on each item
 - c. Turn the ideas into concrete actions and agree on them
5. Write a **memorandum stating the agreed courses of action** by every participant. Use a flip chart or project the memorandum on a wall for everyone to see. Participants and their agreed action are listed on the template (below). Workers are usually at the top of the list, followed by the family's social network and the family members. This way, the family can plan their own actions based on the overall effort. If called for, the order can be changed. **All participants should receive a copy of the memorandum at the end of the meeting, if family members agree.**
6. **Set up a follow-up meeting.** At least one follow-up meeting is recommended to let the involved parties note what has been achieved and whether continued action is called for. Agree on the time and participants.
 - a. **The follow-up meeting follows the structure described above.** Begin with a short outline of the Young Person's situation and state whether the plans have been realised. With the future in mind, what useful lessons did you learn in the course of pursuing the plan? If called for, write a new memorandum stating what the participants decide to do next.
 - b. The time between meetings and the number of meetings depend on the overall situation. **In case of a longer process, the meetings build up a functional scaffolding around the Young Person.**
7. **The leader of the meeting makes a summary, hands out the memorandum, thanks the participants and declares the meeting closed.**
8. The teacher makes the respective notes in the student records according to the Finnish legislation (Pupil and Student Welfare Act Chapter 3, § 20).

***Memorandum**

Let's Talk about Children Network meeting: _____ (date)

Topics (e.g., 1-3)	Topic 1: Topic 2: Topic 3:	Follow-up date
Participants	I agree to do the following: (specific action)	When (e.g., date, time of day)

FACTORS AT HOME AND SCHOOL THAT SUPPORT CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING AND DEVELOPMENT

1. **Warm and functional relationships among family members. The young person is cherished as an important member of the family.** The family has relationships with the extended family, if possible, and activities with a circle of family friends.
2. **The young person has hobbies and friends to their liking.** Activities are constructive and also include physical exercise and outdoor activities. The young person has friends also at school and feels part of the peer community. Adults are interested in and aware of the young person's whereabouts.
3. **The caregivers care about the young person's life at school,** show interest in the school day, discuss homework and what the young person is learning, show support when something feels difficult and celebrate achievements.
4. **The teachers' relationship with the young person is positive and productive.** The Young Person feels that the teachers appreciate, understand and support them and are interested in their affairs. The young person's achievements are noted, even small ones. When having difficulties, the young person can ask for and receive help, and feels supported.
5. **A day-to-day life at home and school that is as functional as possible.** This includes daily routines and interaction starting from morning activities to evening routines, sleep and rest. The young person is aware of the rules at home and school. They have their own tasks to carry out and to be proud of.
6. **The young person's ordinary day** includes joy and achievement as well situations, when the young person feels liked, valued and special. These feelings come from the way adults look at the young person, their facial expressions, gestures and tone of their voice, and the way they stop to listen and talk when the young person has something to say. They are also expressed in the way adults speak of the young person when they are not present. This applies to both home and school.
7. **In case of problems affecting life at home, school and leisure time environments,** the young person is helped to make sense of what is happening and to cope with the situation.
8. **Engagement in and a sense of belonging to school.** The young person feels motivated to go to school and is valued by the teacher and appreciated in the student group.

9. **The young person's feelings, mood and behaviour are understood.** Home and school co-operate to support them through difficult times, while delights and successes are reasons for common celebration.
10. **Even if the young person has problems,** they are not branded as problem children.
The following is understood:
 - a. Any problems that the young person may have **do not define the young person or their future**
 - b. Negative labels will **influence the way the young person is treated** and affect their learning and development
 - c. **Problems in the young person's life and coping with them are the result of interplay,** which adults can have an effect on.
11. **The young person's caregivers and family background** are discussed in a respectful and warm manner at school, and the same respect is shown when talking about **the teachers at home.** The young person feels that any differences in the young person itself or in their family are understood and respected at school. The young person feels safe and trustful at home and at school.
12. **Good parent-teacher co-operation.** Every young person needs to feel that the adults in their life co-operate and respect one another. This is especially important for children who are having difficulties.

What are strengths and vulnerabilities?

1. **Strength.** In the LTC approach, strength means something that functions well in the child's day-to-day life. When discussing what the child's day looks like, the answer 'It's okay, I guess' reveals a strength. Situations that increase joy and pleasure also count as strengths. **Focusing on strengths is important for everyone, but more-so for anyone facing challenges. In such cases, strengths and nurturing them are acts of resilience.**
2. **Vulnerability.** In the LTC approach, a vulnerability is a situation that contains problems or can lead to problems if nothing is done. Vulnerabilities often arise when a change in the child's environment touches a particularly sensitive area in the child's life.

Example 1. In a child with a strong and quick temperament, a restless classroom can lead to behavioural and learning difficulties, which can also manifest as irritability at home. If a child is timid, a home environment that has become isolated due to caregiver/s' depression, can make the child even more reserved at school. **Situations like these are vulnerabilities.** It is important to identify them and to take them into account in the child's everyday life at home and at school (re. LTC action plan), before possible problems develop.

3. **Strengths and vulnerabilities are not inherent to The Young Person itself.** They stem from the interplay between the child and the environment. Children's temperaments and behaviours differ without children intending problems in themselves. However, a temperamental characteristic might lead to difficulties depending on the environment. **It usually concerns a problem in the match between the child and the environment.** Therefore, it is important to understand that 'vulnerability' does not mean a problem in the child itself and that adults can have an impact upon them.

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