

Let's Talk about Children Logbook for Day Care for 3 to 5 -year-old Children

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Thank you to all the families, day care personnel and collaborators, who provided comments and feedback on the earlier versions of this logbook and contributed to the present edition. Further feedback and comments can be forwarded to Tytti Solantaus (tytti.solantaus@gmail.com).

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'Day care' refers to any arrangement outside home, where children under day care age are regularly cared for, brought up and educated, usually during the caregivers' working hours. 'Day care' does not refer to spending a few days with grandparents or friends, or alike. However, if they have an agreement of being responsible of the child and their care over a period of time, this is included in 'day care'.

'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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Logbook on Let's Talk about Children Network Meeting © Mika Niemelä and Tytti Solantaus

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LET'S TALK ABOUT CHILDREN INTERVENTION

Words of welcome and introduction of participants

A brief overview of the aims of LTC and what to expect during the discussion

Confidentiality and how the discussion is documented in children's records, 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.

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

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.

Two examples to be discussed with the caregivers

A shy child in a lively and loud class room (or some other example)

The child is very lonely, left alone. The shyness is a vulnerability in this context. Action plan: to help the child integrate (homes and day care), and to help the school mates learn to accept someone who is different in their group (day care). Shyness could be a strength in another kind of environment.

A mother with alcohol problems takes the child to day care (or some other example).

The mother brings her child to the day care center with a hangover and the staff looks down on her. Overall, the child is doing well. Strength: The mother brings the child does this risking her own reputation, because she is sure that it is better for the child to play with other children in day care than stay at home with an ill mother.

DISCUSSING THE CHILD IN THE FLOW OF EVERYDAY LIFE

1. A brief introductory discussion

- **To the family members:** Would you (including the child) like to share something about your family? How was like for you to come to this session?
- **To the practitioner and the child:** Would you like to share something about the day care setting? How was it for you to come to this session?
- **To the Child:** Would you like to say something about yourself?
For instance, what do you like to do? What makes you laugh?
How was it for you to participate to this session?
- **To others:** How would you describe the Child? (lead this discussion to the next topic)

CHILD

1. Child's curiosity, imagination and joy of learning

To the child: What do you like to play? Do you make up stories? ...

To adults: What would you say, is the Child interested in the world around them and eager to get to know it? Is the Child proud of their achievements?

Examples of Strengths ... A child is curious of the environment ... wants to know ... asks questions ... is eager to learn ... creates stories, art and play ... is proud of one's new achievements... adults find it easy to share and participate

Examples of Vulnerabilities ...A child is not interested in the environment does not try out new things ... seems to lack initiative ... difficulties in creative activities gets frustrated and shreds drawings to parts ... repeats the same troublesome content ... adults find it difficult to encourage the child

The child

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregiver/s

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The practitioner

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

2. Child's wellbeing and health

A discussion about the Child's wellbeing and health, mood and energy. Include the Child. What things could be affecting the child's mood and wellbeing, what have you noticed?

Examples of Strengths ...A child smiles/ laughs/ is usually in a good mood ... expresses all kinds of emotions ... enjoys different activities... has a health issue, which is well taken care of at home and in day care

Examples of Vulnerabilities... A child looks often serious or sad... is often in low spirits/crying/ fearful/irritable ...does not seek consolation ... strong emotions tend to take over, adults' support might not help...has a health issue, but lacks appropriate support and care.

The Child

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregiver/s

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The practitioner

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

3. Have you had any worries about the Child?

Would you tell more? To the Child: What do you think?

Have you sought and received for help? Where? _____

The Child

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregiver/s

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The practitioner

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

4. Child's engagement in and sense of belonging to day care

Discuss whether the child enjoys day care, participate in activities, enjoys teaching sessions and learning new things ... What is the Child's mood when coming home? ...Is the Child proud of being one of "the Squirrels" (or whatever their own group is called)? Discuss also what the day care setting is like for this particular child. How do they match with each other?

Examples of Strengths: A child enjoys coming to day care ... is accepted as they are by adults and children ... the child moves about comfortably in the environment ... wants to be part of what happens ...enjoys also being by oneself ...is interested to learn new things ... make sense of letters... gets positive feedback

Examples of Vulnerabilities. A child does not enjoy coming to day care ... is often alone ... does not seem to have a place in the child group ... behaves and seems to feel an outsider... has difficulties to focus on tasks ...is on a bad mood at home after the day ... adults find it difficult to help the child join in.

The child

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregiver/s

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The practitioner

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

HOME AND DAY CARE TOGETHER

1. Understanding the child's situation

If the necessary awareness exists, home and day care can support the child when there are problems in the other and in leisure time environment. Understanding the overall situation of the child helps caregiver/s and The practitioners interact with the child in the best possible way. Consider possible supporting measures in the action plan.

- a. Is there something in day care that may be affecting the child's wellbeing and should be considered by the caregiver/s and day care The practitioners when interacting with the child? For instance, a restless and quarrelsome group, an important peer or adult has left the group, bullying, an atmosphere of tension and exhaustion among the staff, etc.

Any problem: Vulnerability

- b. Is there something in the child's life outside of day care that you would like to mention, something that should be considered by the caregiver/s and day care The practitioners when interacting with the child? For instance, birth of a new baby, parental separation, a serious illness or some other stressful situation in the family, an atmosphere of tension and exhaustion at home. Problems related to peers, hobbies or use of internet.

Any problem: Vulnerability

2. Daily routines: smoothness and atmosphere

Daily routines are often underestimated. We do not pay much attention to them, in fact, we do not much appreciate them. However, they are the backbone of everyday life and also thermometer of adults and children's moods. When adults are happy and full of energy, the routines are done with smiles, while under stress, the irritability and exhaustion show almost immediately in the routines and their atmosphere. This applies to home and day care, and as well to children. A cranky child is a nightmare to dress up, be it home or day care. If there is a disagreement between child and adult, please mark them both.

Examples of Strengths: The routine is usually fine with pleasant atmosphere, although days can be different

Examples of Vulnerability: There are often struggles, the atmosphere tense, although days can be different.

Home

Waking up and morning routines

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Leaving home and coming to day care

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Eating, mealtimes Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Getting dressed Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Nappies and using the potty/toilet

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Outdoor activities Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Screen time Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Leaving day care and coming home

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Evening routines Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Sleep and rest Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Day care

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

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Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

3. Wellbeing of caregiver/s at home and in day care

Small children are demanding and it is common for caregivers to feel stressed and exhausted, not only at home but also in day care.

How have you been, how do you balance all the different tasks? Do you get support?

The caregiver/s

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The practitioner

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐4. **Collaboration and communication between home and day care**

How would you describe the collaboration? Do you have any wishes and suggestions?

The caregiver/s

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The practitioner

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐**CHILD AND SOCIAL SITUATIONS**1. **The Child's interaction with caregivers at home and in day care**

Would you describe times you spend with the Child, what might you do, what is fun together?

Is there something that makes it difficult? Involve the Child in this discussion. What are the Child's experiences? Is there somebody whom the child feels close to in day care?

Examples of Strengths: Adults and child enjoy interaction ... plays ... discussions ... floor time ... including also other children ... doing chores together ... the child initiates contact ... conflicts are negotiated ... a child is easy to console and soothe a child often receives positive feedback

Examples of Vulnerabilities: Adults finds it difficult to find time to be with the child ... times together are short ... a child is silent and withdrawn ... a child does not get much adult attention ... a child clings to the adult, which might feel irritative to the adult ... a child is defiant ... adults find it difficult to understand the child ... to soothe and console ... to contain a child's defiance/ anger ... interaction tends to be coloured by disciplinary issues and alike ... a child often gets negative feedback

The child

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregiver/s

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregiver at DC

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐2. **Play and interaction with other children including siblings**

Keep the child involved in this discussion. They are really the expert!

Discuss issues like if the child enjoys the company of sisters /brothers, of other children and if there is a special friend and what they like to do. How would you describe the Child's ways of approaching and relating to other children? Is there discrimination or racist attitudes among children, at home or in day care? Have you noticed what impacts the Child's interaction with other children?

Examples of Strengths: A child finds joy in playing and goofing around with other children ... has a good friend ... enjoys also playing and being alone ... quarrels over toys and temper tantrums occur but can mostly be solved with adults' help

Examples of Vulnerabilities: A child has difficulties joining others ...making positive contact ... is often left alone ... is treated poorly by someone/ other children ... play often ends with anxiety ... with anger outbursts... with a physical attack ... the child often receives negative feedback

The child

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregiver/s

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The practitioner

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

3. Sharing emotions and experiences, understanding those of others

How does the child express its emotional needs? Does the child share its happiness, excitement, sadness with others? How does the child react to other children's feelings and experiences? How do adults respond?

Examples of Strengths: A child is open with its feelings ... is learning to put them into words ... seeks comfort when needed ... takes delight in other children's success ... tends to help/comfort others in distress ... a child gets positive feedback from adults

Examples of Vulnerabilities: A child gets very anxious when somebody cries ... gets frightened if someone is very angry ... A child is withdrawn ... does not express one's own feelings ... A child tends not to show empathy towards others ... tends to laugh at ... hurt others in distress ... adults find it difficult to connect with the child and to support them

The child

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregiver/s

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The practitioner

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

4. Disagreements and conflicts at home, in day care and with friends

Have a discussion (including the child) on how disagreements and conflicts arise, how children and adults behave and how it feels and what happens afterwards.

Also, has anyone, children or 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.

Note, however, that grabbing a toy from someone or pushing or hitting a peer are still fairly common at age 3, but getting gradually less prominent with the development of language and social skills. Punishment is not the solution but support and guidance are in place for both children on how to deal with conflicts of interest. This means that such a behavior by small children is not a vulnerability in an environment which handles it with understanding and guidance, while it is a vulnerability if it leads to repeated punishments and negative feedback to the child.

Examples of Strengths: Disagreements and conflicts arise occasionally are mostly resolved through dialogue ...

Possible Vulnerabilities: Conflicts predominate in relationships ... resolving them is hard or fails ... the child is submissive and becomes dominated by others ... conflicts might lead to rough behavior and bad and degrading talk also by adults ...

The child

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregiver/s

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The practitioner

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

We are getting close to making the action plan, two more issues to be discussed!

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

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

The Child

Delight ☐ **Concern** ☐
Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The caregiver/s

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

The practitioner

Strength ☐ Vulnerability ☐

Examples of Strengths: Any delight

It can be marked on the Action plan section as a strength to be re-enforced.

Possible Vulnerabilities: Any concern. If help is needed, it is marked on the Action plan section

6. Goals and thoughts concerning child upbringing

The goals and thoughts at home and in day care are likely to be somewhat different. Day care, for instance, has the possibility to guide children in making contact and playing with all kinds of children as well as managing conflicts and disagreements. The variety of cultural backgrounds at home and in day care can feature in this very important conversation.

Examples of Strengths Goals and thoughts are similar and/or complement each other

Examples of Vulnerabilities: Goal and thoughts, or some of them, are in conflict with one another

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Action plan

The participants choose the most important strengths and vulnerabilities to be the focus of action. **Then, plan specific and concrete courses of action** based on the participants' possibilities and resources and the practitioner's job description. **Use Annex 1, the factors that support child development** as a planning aid. Also consider whether additional resources are needed and LTC Network Meeting should be called.

1. In terms of strengths, the parties agree on the following courses of action:

At home and the child's leisure environment (friends, hobbies, other activities outside home)

In day care/early education

2. In terms of vulnerabilities, the parties agree on the following courses of action:

At home and leisure environment (friends, hobbies and other activities outside home)

In day care/early education

If more people are needed to carry out the action plan, proceed to Planning Network Meeting. If not, proceed to Ending the session.

Involving the whole family and day care group in the action plan

Any action planned for home concerns the whole family. It is recommended that caregiver/s talk about the action plan with **the whole family**, listen to what the children of different ages have to say, encourage them to find more ideas and involve them in the planned courses of action. The same applies to day care.

Ending the session

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

What do you think of LTC as a whole or up to now, if Network Meeting is still to come?

What do you think, has it been helpful for you, the child, caregiver/s and practitioner? In what way?

Was it a disappointment? 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 make an effort or even organize a way to continue the discussion. I do not mean only problems, but any issue sparked by these sessions. **Overall, it is hoped that LTC serves as a spring board to interesting and innovative collaboration among caregivers, children and day care staff members.**

A reminder: Let's Talk about Children can be repeated at any time, especially if there are changes within the family, in day care or in the child's friendships which may put the child's wellbeing at risk. The initiative can come from the day care personnel, caregiver/s and of course from child itself.

Thank you!

Planning Let's Talk about Children Network Meeting

- a) Explanation of the meeting process
- b) Parties agree on the topics, choose the relevant strengths and vulnerabilities and agree also on which topics the family does not wish to discuss
- c) Parties agree on who is to be invited and by whom

Chosen strengths and vulnerabilities, other topics?

- a) People to be invited and by whom
- b) The date and time of the meeting _____

LET'S TALK ABOUT CHILDREN NETWORK MEETING

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1. The caregiver/s and/or the practitioner bid the participants **welcome**.
2. The leader of the meeting describes **the outline of the meeting and describes how it has been prepared**.
3. Family members and/or the practitioner, in agreed order, describe **the reasons for the meeting and the areas of discussion and action**.
4. **Discussion, caregiver/s and invited participants**
 - 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 (template below). Use a flip chart or project the memorandum on a screen. **All participants should receive a copy of the memorandum** at the end of the meeting, based on caregiver/s' agreement.
 - a. Service The practitioners are usually at the top of the list, followed by the family's social network and the family members. The family can plan their own actions based on the overall effort. If called for, the order can be changed.
6. **Set up a follow-up meeting and agree who will be there.** The follow-up meeting begins with a short outline of the current situation and a look at whether the plans have been realised. Then, discuss what everyone has learned for the future while implementing the plan. If further action is called for, write a new memorandum stating what courses of action should proceed as they are and what else you wish to do. **At least one follow-up meeting is recommended**, to let the involved parties note what has been achieved and whether a new meeting is called for. The time between meetings and the number of meetings depend on the overall situation.
7. The leader of the meeting makes a summary, gives everyone the memorandum, thanks the participants and declares the meeting closed.

*Template for memorandum

Date_____ Topics (eg. 1-4)	Topic 1: Topic 2: Topic 3: Topic 4:	
Participants	I agree to do the following: What (specific action)/When (e.g., date, time of day)	Follow-up meeting, date

Annex 1

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

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

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

Annex 2

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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.

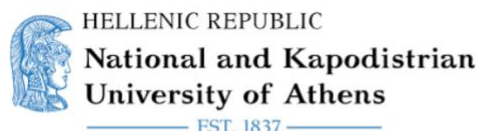
Example 1. In a child with a strong and quick temperament, a restless classroom can lead to behavioural and learning difficulties, which can also manifest as irritability at home. If a child is timid, a home environment that has become isolated due to caregiver/s' depression, can make the child even more reserved at day care. **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 day care (re. LTC action plan), before possible problems develop.

3. **Strengths and vulnerabilities are not inherent to the child 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.

Example 2. A sensitive and shy child might become or has already become isolated and lonely in a very active and outgoing student group. Therefore, their shyness is marked down as a vulnerability. The aim is to raise adults' awareness: **The child and the student group need extra support and attention to help the shy student establish their place in the group and the group to learn to include someone who is different.** How to do this is part of the action plan. In another kind of environment, shyness might be a strength.

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