

**ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL (AFA)
STRAND 2
PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT**

**Structured Conversation
CASCADE TRAINING FOR SCHOOLS
1pm – 4pm**

Welcome

Your presenters today are:

Val Brown (Service Manager - Learning Support Service)

Julie Thompson (SIPS SEN Lead Consultant)

Zoe King (Educational Psychologist - Psychology Service)

George Thomas (Service Manager - Autism Outreach)

Outline of session

1.00pm – 2.30pm

**Overview of Achievement for All
Purposes of the structured conversation
Training: outline, supporting materials
Framework for the structured conversation**

Refreshments

2.45pm – 4.00pm

**Framework for the structured conversation (cont'd)
Demonstration of the structured conversation (Video)
Issues and questions
Next steps**

Aims of the Cascade Training

- To understand the purpose and nature of the Structured Conversation. (What it is)
- To understand the basic skills of carrying out a structured conversation. (How to do it)
- To begin to consider how participants might train others in the structured conversation framework.

Achievement for All – What is it?

- 2 year innovative pilot National Strategies project with 10 LAs and 460 schools. Started in Sept 2009.
- Commitment from Children's Plan - £31m funding.
- Targets pupils with SEND in Y1, Y5, Y7, Y10.
- Builds on good practice – Assessment for Learning; Assessing Pupil Progress; Quality First Teaching and Personalised Learning.
- Enables schools and LAs to reflect on existing strategies that are effective and provide capacity to strengthen provision.

Aims of Achievement for All (AfA)

3 Main Aims:

- To improve the achievement and progress of children and young people with SEND.
- To improve the engagement of parents of children and young people with SEND with their school.
- To improve the wider outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

To meet these 3 aims,
there are 3 strands.



Why the need for a structured conversation?

- Harris & Goodall “Parents: Do They Matter?” (2007) found parental engagement is critical to the child’s achievement.
- Brian Lamb’s Inquiry (2009) reported:
“What has struck us quite forcibly is that it seems no one has had a discussion with parents about the outcomes they aspire to for their child.”

Focus for our session today – Strand 2: the Structured Conversation

Why?

Because of impact so far

- Outcomes of the initial structured conversations have shown improvements in provision and in ensuring aspirational targets are set.
- Overwhelming evidence already from schools prioritising the structured conversations of significant impact on improving the engagement of parents with the education of their children

Pupils are reporting:

- they talk to their parents more about what they are learning at school;
- their parents are helping them with their learning at home;
- they feel more confident to contribute in lessons;
- they are happier in school because they are becoming successful in areas where they have previously struggled.

Parents are reporting:

- they value the experience of the structured conversation and feel they are being listened to;
- they feel that this is the best opportunity they have had to really talk to the school about their child;
- they are sharing ideas with the teacher about the most effective ways of supporting their child.

Teachers are reporting:

- the training has effectively equipped them with the core skills they need to hold a more open and listening dialogue with parents;
- they are feeling more confident to have ‘open conversations’ with parents;
- they are gaining more information than ever before about their pupils;
- they are starting to use the increased knowledge and information they have about their pupils to improve provision to meet their needs more effectively

The AfA

Structured Conversation Resource

Available on-line

- [http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/
search/inclusion/results/nav:81859](http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/search/inclusion/results/nav:81859)

Includes resources to cascade training:

- PowerPoint presentation (very similar to this!);
- Information booklet 'The Structured Conversation: Handbook to support training'
- Structured conversation video clips to use in training

Aims of the structured conversation

The structured conversation is intended to facilitate a relationship that develops around the shared purpose of improving the educational achievement of young people with SEND; this will allow the free exchange of information and views; the evolution of supportive teaching and learning strategies and clarity of learning objectives.

Benefits of the structured conversation

- Establishes an effective relationship.
- Parents can express their aspirations.
- Teacher and parent can share concerns.
- They can set clear targets and decide on how to achieve them.
- Clarifies responsibilities of all parties.

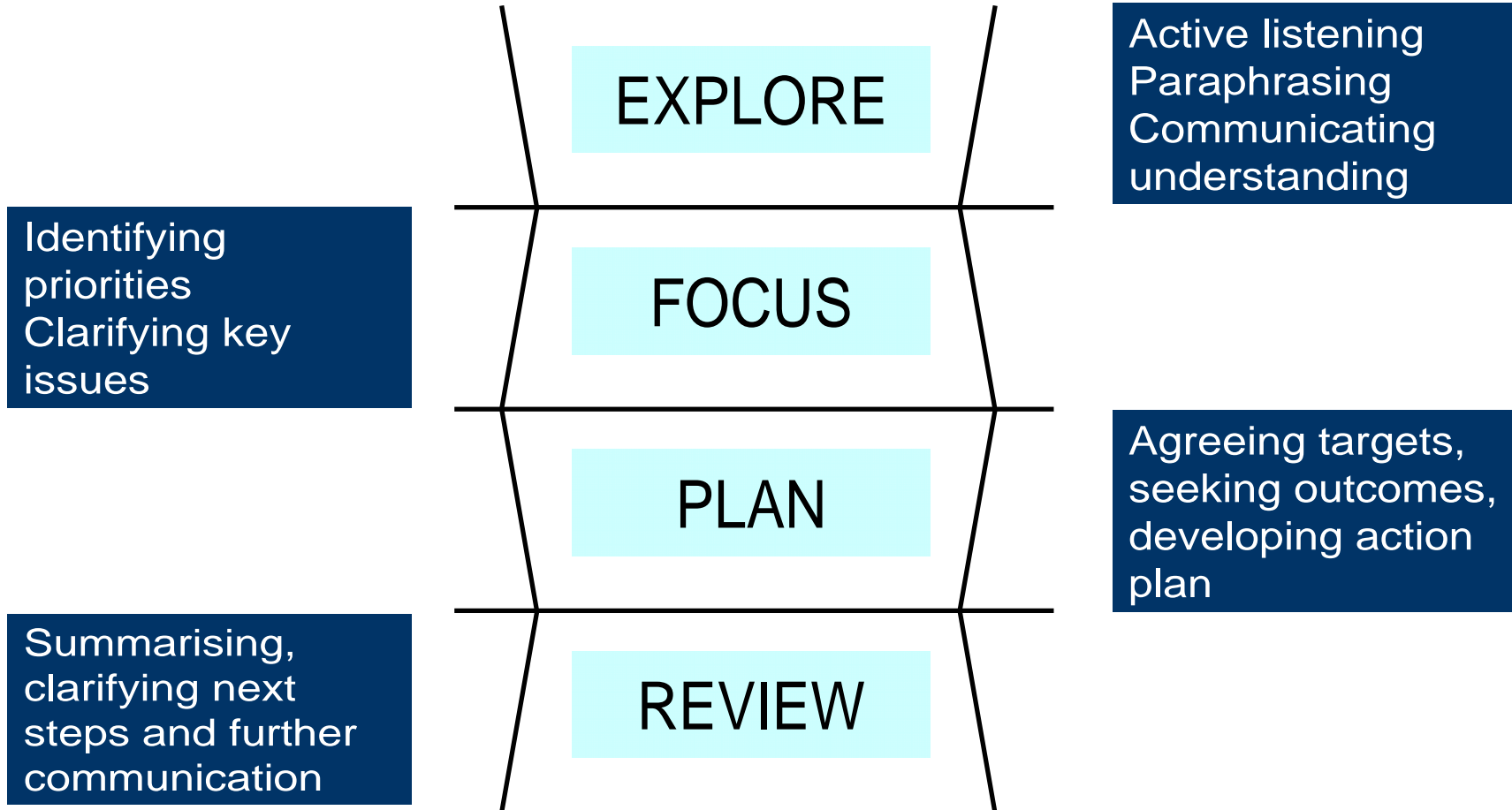
Process for the Structured Conversation

- Prior to meeting key teacher gathers information on progress and gaps in learning including information from staff.
- Key teacher gathers the pupil's views (this may be part of the structured conversation).
- The key teacher holds the initial structured conversation with the parent as early as possible in Autumn term (see following framework for details)
- The pupil may also be part of this conversation, dependent on age, maturity and level of understanding.
- The key teacher informs the subject teacher and any other school staff of the outcome of the conversation and agreed curriculum targets.
- Through the communications arrangements agreed the key teacher confirms the targets, actions and support with the parent and pupil.

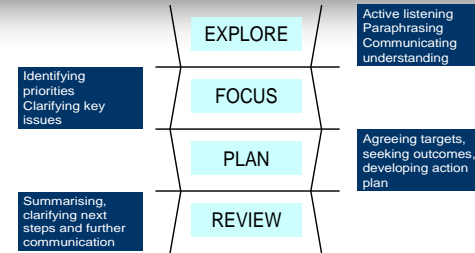
Negotiating a contract

- The contract is a concise verbal statement about the purpose of the conversation and a request for the other person's view of that purpose or for what they want from the meeting.
- For example, *'I'd like to find out as much as possible about Hannah and what you think we can do to help improve her maths. We have about thirty minutes. Is that ok with you?'*

Framework for the structured conversation



Stage 1 Exploring stage: attending



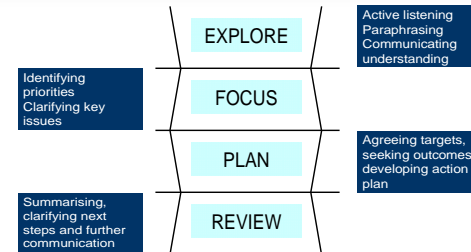
- Attending is about giving the right non-verbal messages, using open body language and maintaining good eye contact.
- It's also about asking the right kinds of questions with a tentative tone, questions around the parent's aspirations, the child's needs, what's been tried before, what barriers there are to achievement.

Exploring stage: paraphrasing

- A paraphrase is an attempt to restate in a fresh way the main part of what someone has said without adding any of your own ideas, feelings, interpretations etc. The tone is tentative and slightly questioning.
- It's powerful because it is the main way in which empathy is communicated and because it clears up miscommunications.

Exploring stage: paraphrasing exercise

- In triads, A talks about the topic of “a book (or film) / a child or parent I know.”
- B attends and listens
- During this period, B should attempt to paraphrase three or four times, maintaining a conversational rhythm as far as possible, avoiding long silences or long periods in which the speaker speaks uninterruptedly.
- C feeds back on what was effective in the paraphrase and non-verbal communication.



The Structured Conversation

Stage 2: Focusing

Focusing stage: summarising

- Summaries draw themes and points together and give some `shape' to an interview.
- They are most useful when a conversation is becoming repetitive, meandering or confused.
- A variation called Choice Point is useful when a parent raises several topics for discussion. The teacher summarises and then adds something like 'Which would you like to take first?'

Focusing stage: summarising exercise 5

- A is asked to talk about an aspect of his/her life that they wish they could change.
- B listens carefully, attending and paraphrasing at regular intervals. After around 5 minutes, B should summarise what has been said, trying to identify clearly each issue that A has introduced.
- A continues to speak. C gives feedback to B, carefully noting the impact of paraphrase, summary and choice point.

Focusing stage: questioning

Questions can destroy or illuminate the tone of a conversation. Helpful questions are those which help a parent clarify or see a new possibility.

- What do questions do? What is the value of questions?
- What are their limitations?

The Miracle Question

“If a miracle occurred overnight and when you woke your problem was solved, how would you know?”

Or

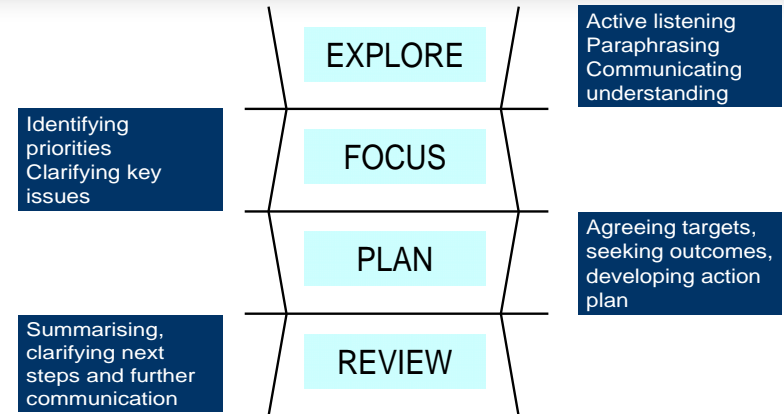
“If we put into place all the things we have discussed and they worked really well ...”

How would things be different?

What would you notice?

What would someone close to you notice?”

...phrased so as to elicit a positive answer.



The Structured Conversation

Stage 3: Planning

Planning stage: setting goals

Clear goals need to be established taking into account:

- What came out of the parent's aspirations?
- The teacher's knowledge of the child.

Commitment needs to be established:

- Benefits of achieving the goal.
- How much do we want this?

Planning stage: giving information

- Establishing goals and targets may involve giving parents information to increase understanding. e.g. pupils level of progress in literacy / maths
- Giving information is different from giving advice. It should help parents make a decision not suggest what the decision should.
- Complex information is more likely to be remembered if you: use simple words and short sentences, categorise (e.g. there are three points here), avoid jargon, check understanding.

Planning stage: giving information example

“Hayley is actually making good progress; and is very close to achieving the two levels you are speaking of. If we can agree what needs to be done to support her to achieve just a little more, she can make the two levels.”

Planning stage: setting goals and targets

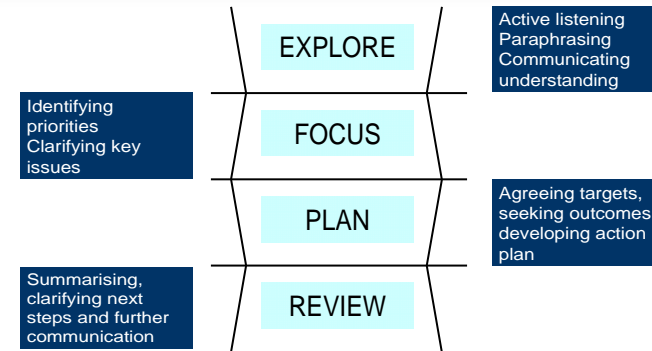
- Start with the prediction and then consider all the other factors in order to determine an appropriate challenge.

Target = prediction + challenge

- The teacher and parents need to consider what else is known about the pupil that might impact on progress in order to agree an appropriate degree of challenge.

Planning stage: the GROW Model

- **Goal:** What do you want achieve?
- **Reality:** What's happening now?
- **Options:** What could you do?
- **Way Forward:** What will you do?



The Structured Conversation

Stage 4: Reviewing

Review stage: summarising

- It is important that the Review stage includes a **written** record of what has been discussed/agreed.
- Summary of areas discussed, important issues, goals and plans put in place.
- Summary should be concise, in writing, comprehensible to parent and colleagues (limited jargon).
- Invite parents to check their understanding.
- Sets clear line of future communication, for example: regular meetings, a person the parent can contact, the date of the next structured conversation.

Reflecting on the conversation

Did I:

- Plan the structure of the conversation?
- Ensure the environment was conducive?
- Clear my mind?
- Overuse or neglect any key skills?

- How did it impact on the parent?
- What did it achieve?
- What are the implications for the future?

Next steps

Consider :

- What is our self evaluation telling us about the engagement of parents of children and young people with SEND?
- What more do we want for our parents and children with SEND?
- What outcomes will the structured conversation approach help bring about?

Consider what is needed to implement the structured conversation

- Build on existing meetings pattern with parents rather than additional e.g. Use approach of structured conversation in target / IEP review meetings
- Developing staff skills further? (Share training with other schools? Coaching.)
- Staffing – who /when / where?
- Which pupils/ parents are our priority? Consider piloting with SEN pupils in an identified year group / class