



**Logbook
for Lower Secondary Education
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The Let’s Talk about Children method:

The Let’s Talk about Children Discussion © Tytti Solantaus

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INTRODUCTION TO THE LET'S TALK ABOUT CHILDREN (LTC)

APPROACH

Dear Caregiver/s and Youth,

You have been invited to discuss the youth's wellbeing and everyday life along the lines of the Let's Talk about Children (LTC) approach. **Welcome to the discussion!** Here is a brief overview of the approach, starting from its background.

Home, early education, school and leisure time environments, called developmental contexts for a child, have an independent as well as synergetic impact on child wellbeing and development. Both things that work out fine in one context as well as those that do not, are reflected on the child's demeanour, mood and behaviour in other contexts. **Understanding the overall situation of the child helps adults interact with them in the best possible way.** It is also known that **one developmental context can support the child, when there are problems in another.** This refers to children of all ages.

Let's Talk about Children (LTC) was developed to help caregivers and school professionals to support children's wellbeing, learning and development in collaboration with each other and the child. **LTC at school involves building a shared understanding around the youth and agreeing on action that is based on that understanding.** The aim is to give the youth a day-to day life that supports their wellbeing, studies and development. **Every youth is worthy of a discussion.**

Day-to-day life is focused upon in LTC as everyday interactions and routines are truly important to children and their wellbeing and development. Caregivers, teachers and youths each have their own responsibilities for and experiences of the youth's everyday life. **If shared, all three parties benefit.** It is also hoped that the LTC approach helps **caregivers and teachers appreciate even the smallest things they do with the youth in the course of the ordinary day.**

Shared understanding



Shared understanding of the youth's situation and co-operation between the youth's home and school are built through the sharing of experiences and discussing from the caregivers', youth's and teacher's perspectives on the youth's life and the flow of ordinary days at home and school and with peers, and the drawing up of an action plan. **LTC is intended to be a discussion, not an interview.**

Caregivers, teachers and young people often have different views and experiences. This is not due to being either right or wrong however as a result of simply having different points of view. In fact, **these can help with understanding the youth from different perspectives.** Home and school are two different developmental contexts and the youth and adults will behave differently in each one. A reciprocal respect for the view of the other party is essential for co-operation.

The logbook and its use

The **framework and process of the discussion** are documented in the logbook. The logbook provides structure and support for the discussion. It is not intended to be a questionnaire to be completed. It has space for family members' notes. 'Caregiver' refers to biological and non-biological parents and others in the parenting role in the child's everyday life.

The parties are asked to **discuss and evaluate the strengths and vulnerabilities (below) in each theme**. The individual that takes the initiative to explore a certain topic depends on the situation. This is not defined by the order that is listed in the logbook. The youth should not be forced to speak if they do not want to.

The logbook includes three annexes. **Annex 1 provides a list of factors that support child wellbeing and development at home and school**, Annex 2 a detailed description the method and Annex 3 issues concerning implementation of LTC in schools. The maintenance of teachers' and other school staff's confidentiality is covered in LTC Discussion and Network Meeting.

Steps in the LTC method



- **LTC at school** consists of one or two discussion sessions and if needed, LTC Network Meeting. The network meeting includes a gathering of the individuals that are identified by the caregivers, youth and teacher to explore opportunities to support the youth.
- **An overall picture of the youth's life is painted**, and strengths and vulnerabilities (below) are identified. This is done looking at different environments: home, school and leisure time.
 - **Strengths and vulnerabilities are recorded in the logbook** to serve as a reference when the individuals discuss the course of action that is required to support the youth.
 - The logbook has examples related to strengths and vulnerabilities. **They are only simplified cues to assist with illustrating the range of options**. Strengths and vulnerabilities and their personal meaning are based on the overall situation of the youth, in the specific environment.
 - Situations may arise that require immediate reflection on what needs to be done. Make a note on the action plan section and continue. **Aim is to create an overall picture of the youth's situation first, and then to consider possible courses of action.**
- **An action plan is developed** to build up and nurture the strengths that are important in the youth's life and to look for solutions for vulnerabilities. **Annex 1 is an important aid when planning follow-up action.**
- **LTC Network Meeting**
If additional people are required to carry out the action plan, LTC Network Meeting is planned and carried out in collaboration.



Definitions: strengths and vulnerabilities

- **A strength** is a functional area in the youth's day-to-day life. Focusing on the strengths supports the flow of the day-to-day life. Strengths are social situations which go well rather than being specific, isolated skills or talents.
- **A vulnerability** is something that already is a problem, plus anything that can become a problem if nothing is done. (See Examples in Annex 2)
- **Strengths and vulnerabilities are expressed in social situations and they stem from the interconnection that exists between the youth and the environment.** Adults can make a difference in this area via the use of the action plan (See Examples in in Annex 2).

List of themes in discussing the youth in the flow of ordinary days

- Introductory discussion regarding the youth, home and school
- The youth's wellbeing, mood and energy
- Curiosity and interest in new things, imagination and joy of learning
- Sense of belonging and school engagement
- School achievement
- Understanding the youth in different developmental contexts
- Routines at home and in contact and remote school
- A support person at school
- Friends, interests and activities in leisure time
- Social situations and interactions at home and school
- Disagreements and conflicts at home, at school and with friends
- A meaningful social network
- Any concern not yet discussed?
- Any delight not yet discussed?
- Goals for the youth's upbringing



The discussion proceeds to making an action plan.

It would be fruitful for caregiver/s to get acquainted with the actual process of the discussion. It is presented in the LTC logbook on the webpage of MIELI Mental Health Finland (www.mieli.fi/letstalk) Knowledge about LTC is important for caregivers who are deciding on participating in the discussion.

In closing

LT offers an opportunity and template for **a dialogue to take place on equal terms between the youth and the two parties responsible for raising and educating the youth.** The aim is to build a mutually supportive collaboration of home and school to support young people's wellbeing, learning, and development.

May working with LTC be inspiring and rewarding for all participants.



LET'S TALK ABOUT CHILDREN DISCUSSION

DISCUSSING THE YOUTH IN THE FLOW OF ORDINARY DAYS

The logbook is for family members to keep. If an item includes both strengths and vulnerabilities, specify and choose both. Participants might differ in their assessments of strengths and vulnerabilities, discuss and make a note. If an important topic is missing, it can be added. **The aim is that the discussion meets the participants' needs.**

1. Words of welcome

Date _____

2. A brief discussion about the aims and steps in the LTC method

3. Introductory discussion regarding the youth, home and school

Would you like to share something about your family? The caregivers and the youth.

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

For instance: What sort of things do you like, what do you enjoy?

Would you like to share something about the school and the class? What is the class and school environment like for the youth? How about remote education? The teacher and the youth.

4. The youth's wellbeing, mood and energy

To the youth: How are you? Have you been healthy? How is your mood? and energy?

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

Examples. Strength ...The youth is mostly energetic and in a good mood ... is open with their feelings ... is often in low spirits ... looks sad and fearful ... irritable/angry/ defiant ... has unpredictable mood swings ... self-destructive expressions ... **Vulnerability**

The youth

Strength Vulnerability

The caregivers

Strength Vulnerability

The teacher

Strength Vulnerability

5. Curiosity and interest in new things, imagination and joy of learning

Examples. Strengths... The youth is curious regarding new things ... develops ideas, art, stories, activities ... is interested and eager to learn ... the youth has little interest in new things and learning ... is often bored ... creative tasks are difficult ... a problematic content is repeated ... **Vulnerability**

The youth

Strength Vulnerability

The caregivers

Strength Vulnerability

The teacher

Strength Vulnerability

Notes



6. School engagement and sense of belonging

Examples. Strength... The youth feels part of the school community ... feels accepted and respected by teachers and peers ... enjoys their own tasks/responsibilities at school ... the youth has difficulties going to school/ entering remote sessions ... is fearful of school ... feels not accepted ... not supported ... is often late or absent ... feels alienated at school ... **Vulnerability**

The youth	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability
The caregiver	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability
The teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability

7. School achievement

Examples. Strength ... school achievement is in line with the youth's capacities ... the youth has a sense of responsibility of one's studies ... the youth is extremely conscientious or ambitious with a risk of stress/ exhaustion ... the youth's achievement does not match their capacity ... underachievement ... **Vulnerability**

The youth	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability
The caregiver	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability
The teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability

8. Understanding the youth in different developmental contexts

Understanding the overall situation of the youth helps caregivers and school staff interact with the youth 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 youth's wellbeing and learning and should be considered by the caregiver 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 youth	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability
The caregiver	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability
The teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability

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

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 youth	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability
The caregiver	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability
The teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability



Notes

9. Routines at home and in contact and remote school

The following discussion concerns daily routines at home and school. The home-related topics reflect issues that have an impact on the youth’s day also at school. It is recommended that the topics are discussed at the same time from home and school perspectives, although they are listed separately. A topic can be a strength in one and a vulnerability in the other.

a. Daily routines at home: smoothness and atmosphere (the caregiver and the youth)

- i. Day-night rhythm, enough sleep and rest Strength Vulnerability
- ii. Leaving home and coming home from school Strength Vulnerability
- iii. Clothing Strength Vulnerability
- iv. Eating Strength Vulnerability
- v. Homework Strength Vulnerability
- vi. Exercise and outdoor activities Strength Vulnerability
- vii. Screen time, social media Strength Vulnerability
- viii. Issues related to money Strength Vulnerability

If there is only in contact teaching, respond to 9b and if only remote teaching, to go 9c. If it is intermittent, respond to 9 a and b. In this case, some of the items are repetitious.

b. Daily routines at contact school: smoothness and atmosphere (the teacher and the youth)

- i. Coming to school and leaving for home Strength Vulnerability
- ii. Eating Strength Vulnerability
- iii. Clothing Strength Vulnerability
- iv. Lectures/classes Strength Vulnerability
- v. Homework Strength Vulnerability
- vi. Breaks and transitions Strength Vulnerability
- vii. School attendance Strength Vulnerability
- viii. Screen time, social media Strength Vulnerability

c. Daily routines and engagement in remote education (the teacher, youth, caregiver)

Remote education is a threesome effort involving the youth, caregivers and teachers. Therefore, the following discussion includes the situations both at home and school. The youth is a party in both.

- | | Home | School |
|---|---|---|
| | Str/Vul | Str/Vul |
| i. Managing the digital technology | <input type="checkbox"/> Str <input type="checkbox"/> Vul | <input type="checkbox"/> Str <input type="checkbox"/> Vul |
| ii. Practical arrangements at home (time, space etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Str <input type="checkbox"/> Vul | <input type="checkbox"/> Str <input type="checkbox"/> Vul |
| iii. The child’s participation in remote sessions | <input type="checkbox"/> Str <input type="checkbox"/> Vul | <input type="checkbox"/> Str <input type="checkbox"/> Vul |
| iv. Homework | <input type="checkbox"/> Str <input type="checkbox"/> Vul | <input type="checkbox"/> Str <input type="checkbox"/> Vul |
| v. Guidance from teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> Str <input type="checkbox"/> Vul | <input type="checkbox"/> Str <input type="checkbox"/> Vul |
| vi. Guidance at home | <input type="checkbox"/> Str <input type="checkbox"/> Vul | <input type="checkbox"/> Str <input type="checkbox"/> Vul |
| vii. School engagement in remote education | <input type="checkbox"/> Str <input type="checkbox"/> Vul | <input type="checkbox"/> Str <input type="checkbox"/> Vul |

(Notes on the next page)



10. A support person at school

Is there an adult or adults at school you can turn to in need of support?

The youth

Strength Vulnerability

The caregivers

Strength Vulnerability

The teacher

Strength Vulnerability

11.-13. A discussion about social situations and interactions follows. It is divided into three topics. The first concerns the youth’s personal friends and activities and the second social interactions more generally. The third one focuses on disagreements and conflicts and how they are managed. These are interrelated and they can be discussed in any order that comes more naturally.

11. Friends, interests and activities in leisure time

Examples. Strength ... The youth has friends to their own liking ... has interests/a hobby ... masters screen time ... has no interests or hobbies ... has interests, but not opportunities to participate ... adults are concerned about excessive screen time / with unhealthy content ... about problematic activities when alone/ with friends ... about possible substance use ... **Vulnerability**

The youth

Strength Vulnerability

The caregivers

Strength Vulnerability

The teacher

Strength Vulnerability



12. Social situations and interactions at home and school

Also, what might be influencing interactions in social situations?

Examples. Strength ... The youth has mostly positive interactions with both adults and youths ... is sociable and active ... prefers to do things by oneself, but is not rejected by others ... is often empathetic/helpful to others ... the youth is lonely /has been left alone is bullied ... does not ask for help ...withdraws when hurt ... the youth is defiant towards adults/peers ... tends to bully others ... to have discriminatory/racist attitudes or behaviour ... emerging idealisation of violence ... **Vulnerability**

The youth	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability
The caregivers	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability
The teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability

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

How do they arise? How do people behave, adults/siblings/friends, you the caregiver, teacher, youth? Has anyone 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.

Examples. Strength ... Disagreements and conflicts arise occasionally are mostly resolved through dialogue ... the youth is submissive and becomes dominated by others ... resolving conflicts is hard or fails ... they might lead to physical or psychological violence (physical assault, insults, verbal abuse) by someone involved, including adults ... **Vulnerability**

The youth	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability
The caregivers	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability
The teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability

14. A meaningful social network

Do you have a meaningful social network with joy and support?

The youth	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability
The caregivers	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability
The teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability

friends, school mates, relatives, adults at school, a trainer/ leader at a hobby

Notes

Only a few themes left before planning what to do!

15. Any concern not yet discussed?

To the youth: Is there anything that has bothered you and we have not talked about? Big or small?

To caregivers and teacher: How about you?

To all parties: Is there need for help?

- The youth Vulnerability
- The caregiver Vulnerability
- The teacher Vulnerability

16. Any delight not yet discussed?

- The youth Strength
- The caregiver Strength
- The teacher Strength



17. Goals for the youth’s upbringing

The goals youth’ upbringing at home and school are likely to be different to a certain extent. For example, at school, important goals include learning skills and social-emotional skills especially in classroom and groups. The youngster’s own values and goals and the variety of cultural backgrounds at home and school will feature in this very important conversation.

Examples. Strength ... Goals are similar and/or complement each other there are differences but not in conflict with each other ... **Vulnerability** ... some goals are in conflict with each other ...

- The youth Strength Vulnerability
- The caregivers Strength Vulnerability
- The teacher Strength Vulnerability

Notes



ACTION PLAN

The participants choose the main strengths and vulnerabilities to be the foci of action. **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 the network meeting is needed, proceed to its planning. If not, proceed to Ending the meeting.

Planning Let's Talk about Children Network Meeting

1. Explanation of the meeting process
2. **The individuals agree on the topics**, the relevant strengths and vulnerabilities are chosen, and agreement is reached on who introduces the topics (often caregivers, depending on the situation). It is also agreed on which topics the family does not wish to discuss.
 - a. Chosen strengths and vulnerabilities, other topics?

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

 - c. Date and time of the meeting _____
3. If the youth is not present, the Network Meeting should be discussed with them at home and at school. It is explained to the youth what is being planned and why, and also the possible participants. The youth is also invited to suggest participants; the youth is a co-developer. In Finland, the network meeting cannot be arranged without the youth's consent, unless the youth is regarded unable to make an informed decision (Pupil and Student Welfare Act).

ENDING THE MEETING

How did the discussion go for each one of you?

In any collaboration, there are things that run with little or no difficulty, and things that do not. Some issues are easier to discuss, some harder.

Do you have any wishes or requests for the future? A successful co-operation between parents and teachers is a very powerful supporting factor for the wellbeing and development of young people.

A reminder: the LTC discussion can be repeated at any time, especially if there are changes within the family or at school which may put the youth's wellbeing at risk. The initiative can come from the teacher or a parent, and of course from the youth itself.

Thank you everyone!



Notes



LET'S TALK ABOUT CHILDREN NETWORK MEETING

Mika Niemelä, Tytti Solantaus

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 youth 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 youth'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 youth.**
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)





Logbook for Lower Secondary Education

FACTORS AT HOME AND SCHOOL THAT SUPPORT YOUTH WELLBEING AND DEVELOPMENT

1. **Warm and functional relationships among family members. The youth 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 youth has hobbies and friends to their liking.** Activities are constructive and also include physical exercise and outdoor activities. The youth has friends also at school and feels part of the peer community. Adults are interested in and aware of the youth's whereabouts.
3. **The caregivers care about the youth's life at school,** show interest in the school day, discuss homework and what the child is learning, show support when something feels difficult and celebrate achievements.
4. **The teachers' relationship with the youth is positive and productive.** The youth feels that the teachers appreciate, understand and support them and are interested in their affairs. The youth's achievements are noted, even small ones. When having difficulties, the youth 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 youth is aware of the rules at home and school. They have their own tasks to carry out and to be proud of.
6. **The youth's ordinary day** includes joy and achievement as well situations, when the youth feels liked, valued and special. These feelings come from the way adults look at the youth, their facial expressions, gestures and tone of their voice, and the way they stop to listen and talk when the youth has something to say. They are also expressed in the way adults speak of the youth 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 youth 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 youth feels motivated to go to school and is valued by the teacher and appreciated in the student group.
9. **The youth'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 youth has problems,** they are not branded as problem children.
The following is understood:
 - a. Any problems that the youth may have **do not define the youth or their future**
 - b. Negative labels will **influence the way the youth is treated** and affect their learning and development
 - c. **Problems in the youth's life and coping with them are the result of interplay,** which adults can have an effect on.
11. **The youth'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 youth feels that any differences in the youth itself or in their family are understood and respected at school. The youth feels safe and trustful at home and at school.
12. **Good parent-teacher co-operation.** Every youth 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.





Logbook for Lower Secondary Education

OVERVIEW OF THE LET'S TALK ABOUT CHILDREN APPROACH IN SCHOOLS

Background and aims

Home, day care, school and leisure-time environments are all developmental contexts for the youth. They are independently significant for the youth's development, and at the same time they act in a strong synergy with one another. Both things that function normally, and things that are a problem in one developmental context will affect the youth's demeanour, mood, behaviour and learning in another. Understanding the overall situation of the youth helps adults interact with the youth in the best possible way.

It is known that **one developmental context can support the youth when there are problems in another**, if the necessary awareness and will exist. For a youth with problems at home, for example, a teacher providing understanding and encouragement can be the support that is needed to do well at school.

The LTC approach means building a **shared understanding around the youth at home and at school and agreeing on action, based on that understanding.** The aim is to give the youth a day-to-day life that supports their wellbeing, studies and healthy development, both at home and at school. The youth does not need to have problems for LTC to be set up. **Every youth is worthy of the discussion.**

The reason why focus is placed on day-to-day life is that everyday interaction and daily routines are crucially important for a youth and their development and, when conditions are difficult, for the youth's resilience as well. In the school context, the goal is to have the best school day possible in terms of learning and wellbeing at school. It is also hoped that the LTC method helps caregivers and school staff **to acknowledge and appreciate the importance of even the smallest things that they do with the youth throughout the course of the day.**

The LTC discussion offers **an opportunity and a template for a dialogue to occur on equal terms between the two parties responsible for raising and educating the youth.** It provides schools with the means for a systematic and uniform collaboration with the caregivers of all students. Caregivers and teachers each have their own responsibility for the youth and the youth's everyday life; their own tasks and expertise. **If shared, both parties benefit, and especially the youth.** Each of the listed themes in the LTC logbook are discussed from the point of view of both home and school. **The Let's Talk about Children intervention is a tool to be shared by homes and schools.**



Participants

The invitation to the LTC discussion is extended to **the youth, caregiver/s and the caregiver's possible support person**. The participation of other people is always subject to agreement with the caregivers and the youth. This applies also to the Let's Talk about Children Network Meeting. The youth's consent regarding the Network Meeting is needed, unless the youth is regarded as unable to make an informed decision (Pupil and Student Welfare Act, 2014).

The youth is included as a dialogue partner under each theme in the logbook. The discussion must be carried out using expressions that the youth is familiar with and in a manner, that keeps them involved. **Most importantly, the discussion must be constructive and supportive for the youth.**

If the youth decides not participate, the adults should discuss the discussion themes with them beforehand in order to bring **their viewpoints to the meeting**. The course of action that was planned for home and school are also to be discussed with the youth and their opinions and suggestions need to be taken into consideration.

Steps in the Let's Talk about Children process

1. **Materials given to caregivers before the LTC discussion.** Caregivers are given the first 4 pages of the logbook, and the MIELI Mental Health Finland webpage (www.mieli.fi/letstalk). The webpage includes the logbook with the process of the discussion and the corresponding annexes. Getting acquainted with the material helps the family members decide whether to participate and makes the discussion more fluent.
2. **Discussing the youth's situation.** The youth's day-to-day life at home, at school and with friends is discussed, and strengths and vulnerabilities (see below) are identified. **Each theme is discussed from the point of view of the youth, caregivers and teacher** and a comprehensive understanding of the youth's situation is created. The aim is to get an overall picture of the youth. If there is a need to discuss something in more detail, this can be included in the action plan. If this is known in advance, it is recommended to schedule two sessions.
3. **An action plan for home, school and leisure time.** The individuals involved reflect on how they can build up and nurture strengths that are important in the youth's life. They also examine the main vulnerabilities and look for solutions. Specific things that can be done to support the youth's everyday life and learning are planned. These should match the resources and possibilities of the person involved, and, in the case of the teacher, their job description.
4. **LTC Network Meeting.** If more people are needed to carry out the plan, LTC Network Meeting is called. People in the family's as well as the youth's network (e.g. friends, leaders/coaches in the youth's hobbies) as well as professionals from needed services may be called to the meeting, as appropriate. The Network Meeting may also be set up as an expert group as referred to in the Finnish legislation (Pupil and Student Welfare Act, 2014). In this case, the meeting will also involve a person representing the school's healthcare and/or welfare and psychology services.



Definitions: Strengths and vulnerabilities

1. **Strength.** In the Let's Talk about Children approach, strength means something that functions well in the youth's day-to-day life. When discussing what the youth'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, i.e. functional aspects of everyday life, 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 youth's environment touches a particularly sensitive area in the youth's life.
3. **Strengths and vulnerabilities are not inherent to the youth itself.** They stem from the interplay between the youth and the environment. Youth's temperaments and behaviours differ without youth intending problems in themselves. However, a temperamental characteristic might lead to problems depending on the environment. **It usually concerns a problem in the match between the youth and the environment.** Therefore, it is important to understand that 'vulnerability' does not mean a problem in the youth itself and that adults can have an impact upon them.
 - a. **Example 1.** In a youth with a strong and quick temperament, a restless classroom can lead to conflict and difficulties concentrating, which can also manifest as irritability at home. If a youth is timid, a home environment that has become isolated due to parental depression, can make the youth even more withdrawn at school. **Situations like these are vulnerabilities for the youth.** It is important to identify the youth's behaviour (here irritability/withdrawal) as stemming from the interaction between the youth and the environment and to take this into account in the action plan.
 - b. **Example 2.** A sensitive and shy youth might become or has already become isolated and lonely in a very active and outgoing student group. Therefore, their shyness seems like a vulnerability and can be marked as one in order to raise adults' awareness: **the youth and the student group need extra attention to help the shy student establish their place in the group and the group to learn to include someone who is different.** This should be included in the action plan. In another kind of environment, shyness might be seen as a strength.

The Let's Talk about Children logbook and how to use it

The logbook lays down the framework for the discussion. During the discussion, it serves as a reference and support to ensure everyone is involved, and that the essential contents are included. It is of great use for caregivers to read the logbook, both on one's own and with the youth, before the LTC discussion. It is important to remember that **the logbook is not an evaluation questionnaire and it is not meant to be filled out in advance.**

Caregivers are invited to **bring the logbook to face-to-face discussions.** The logbook contains space for family members' notes. Logbooks are not stored in the school's archives (see Annex 3).

In conclusion

LTC is a tool which can be used and shared in homes and schools. The discussion is structured but also flexible to meet the varying needs of different families and professional settings.



It is hoped that the LTC approach is found useful and rewarding for all participants.



Logbook for Lower Secondary Education

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LET'S TALK ABOUT CHILDREN APPROACH IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS IN FINLAND

The Let's Talk about Children (LTC) approach means building a common understanding of the youth at home and at school, and proceeding with that understanding in mind. LTC builds up parent-teacher-youth collaboration. The aim is to give the youth a day-to day life that supports their wellbeing, studies and healthy development, both at home and at school.

The organisation responsible for education, mainly municipalities in Finland, is in charge of how LTC is used in schools. The LTC approach and its aims are in line with the Finnish school legislation (Pupil and Student Welfare Act, Chapter 2, §2).

The LTC method in schools involves one discussion session, and if needed, LTC Network Meeting. The discussion can be extended over two sessions. Indeed, if a longer discussion is to be expected, it is recommended to schedule two sessions. The Network Meeting may be set up as an individual expert group as referred to in the Pupil and Student Welfare Act (2014). The youth's consent regarding the Network Meeting is needed, unless the youth is regarded as unable to make an informed decision.

The training of the LTC method follows the guidelines of MIELI Finnish Mental Health (www.mieli.fi). Any professional carrying out LTC with clients must have proficiency in the method. For teachers, the training is two full days and field work with families. The training is three days if the teacher intends to proceed to become a trainer. The trainer program itself consists of additional five to six days including carrying out a method training under supervision.

Regarding training in Finland, contact email tlp@mieli.fi

Regarding training in other countries contact Tytti Solantaus
email (firstname.lastname@mieli.fi)



Implementing options

The Let's Talk about Children method can be implemented in several ways. Each organisation can choose the options best suited to its needs. All options involve giving caregivers the first four pages of the logbook and the address to the website (www.mieli.fi/letstalk).

1. **In the first option, the LTC discussion** is universally offered to all students and their caregivers in order to promote the learning and wellbeing of the students. The method can function as a unified tool in traditional home-school interactions, e.g. in the so-called Parent Quarter and others. In many municipalities, LTC is offered universally in certain grades, to all new students and their caregivers and also in situations described in Options 2 and 3.
2. **In the second option**, an LTC discussion is convened to deal with situations or changes at home or at school which put the caregivers, educators or the youth under extra pressure. This alternative contributes to the prevention of problems, when a risk has been identified.
3. **In the third option**, the LTC discussion is convened when there are already problems. The purpose is to help steer the youth back to their own developmental trajectory and to support possible care, treatment and rehabilitation.

Documentation

1. LTC Discussion

Documentation follows the normal traditions of the school, e.g. those concerning the Parent Quarter. In many schools, teachers make a note of the LTC discussion in the internet program shared between home and school, listing the participants and the plans that the teacher made to support the student.

2. LTC Network Meeting

Participants and the agreed action plan is documented in the student records according to the respective regulations.

3. **A completed LTC without identifying details** can be logged in the appropriate municipal data system for the purpose of monitoring the use of the method and keeping statistics.
4. **The LTC method** does not require the collection of individual data for registration purposes. The logbooks are not stored at school or kept in the school's archives. Caregivers take the logbook and their notes home so that they can refer to them at a later point, both on their own and together with the youth.



Informing caregivers

1. **Caregivers are encouraged familiarize themselves with the LTC method.** Transparency is one of the principles of the method itself. LTC is not imposed onto family members however it provides an option for collaboration with the youth's school. Knowledge about LTC is important for caregivers who are deciding on participating as it helps them to understand the focus of the discussion.
2. **Ways to inform caregivers** depend upon schools, their practices and resources. All caregiver/s are informed about LTC via an internet channel that is available at home and school and in so called parents' evenings. Some schools distribute LTC leaflets to homes. **In all of these options**, parents are provided with the website (www.mieli.fi/letstalk) that describes LTC .
3. **Individual information and the first four pages of the logbook are given to caregiver/s when inviting them to attend.** In case of face-to-face discussions, caregivers are asked to print out pages 5-16 (discussion on the given themes and Annex 1) from the website and to bring them to the session. Caregivers are encouraged to discuss LTC with their youth.

