Let's Talk about Children

**Logbook
for Primary Education
January, 2021**

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The Let's Talk about Children method:
The Let's Talk about Children Discussion © Tytti Solantaus
The Let's Talk about Children Network Meeting © Mika Niemelä and Tytti Solantaus

INTRODUCTION TO THE LET'S TALK ABOUT CHILDREN APPROACH

Dear Caregiver/s,

You and your child have been invited to discuss your child'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 development and wellbeing. 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 the child in the best possible way.** It is also known that one developmental context can support the child, when there are problems in another.

The LTC method was developed to help caregiver/s and school professionals to support children's wellbeing, learning and development in collaboration with each other and the child. **It 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 give the child a day-to day life that supports their wellbeing, studies and development. **Every child is unique and worthy of a discussion.**

The child's day-to-day life is focused upon as everyday interactions, encounters and routines are truly important to child wellbeing and development. Caregiver/s and teachers have their own responsibilities for and experiences of the child and the child's everyday life. **If shared, both parties benefit, as well as the child**. It is also hoped that the LTC approach helps **caregiver/s and teachers appreciate even the smallest things that they do with the child in the course of the ordinary day.**

Shared understanding

Shared understanding of the child's situation and co-operation between the child's home and school are built through the sharing of experiences and discussing from the caregivers', child's and teacher's perspectives on the child'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 child from different perspectives.** Home and school are two different developmental contexts and the child 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 the 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 child 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 the LTC approach 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, child and teacher to explore opportunities to support the child.

- **An overall picture of the child'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 child.

  - 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 child, 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 child'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 child'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 child'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 child 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 child in the flow of ordinary days

- Introductory discussion regarding the child, home and school
- The child'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 child 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 child's upbringing

The discussion proceeds to making an action plan.

It is 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

LTC offers an opportunity and template for **a dialogue to take place on equal terms between the child and the two parties responsible for raising and educating the child.** The aim is to build a mutually supportive collaboration of home and school to support young people's wellbeing, learning, and development. It is hoped that the discussions started in LTC will continue as a natural part of home-school collaboration.

May the discussion be inspiring and rewarding for all participants.

LET'S TALK ABOUT CHILDREN DISCUSSION

DISCUSSING THE CHILD IN THE FLOW OF ORDINARY DAYS

The logbook is for caregiver/s to keep. If an item includes both strengths and vulnerabilities, specify and choose both. Participants are likely to 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 on the aims and steps in the LTC method**

3. **Introductory discussion regarding the child, home and school**

   Would you like to share something about your family? The caregiver/s and the child.

   To the child: Would you like to share 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 this particular child? The teacher, the child

4. **The child's wellbeing, mood and energy**

   To the child: How are you? Have you been healthy? How is your mood? and energy?
   Also, what might be influencing your mood and energy? What do others think?

   Examples. Strength … The child 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 child	☐ Strength	☐ Vulnerability
The caregiver/s	☐ Strength	☐ Vulnerability
The teacher	☐ Strength	☐ Vulnerability

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

   Examples. Strength … The child is curious regarding new things … develops ideas, art, stories, activities … is interested and eager to learn … the child shows limited in new things and learning … is often bored … creative tasks are often difficult … the same or problematic content is repeated … **Vulnerability**

The child	☐ Strength	☐ Vulnerability
The caregiver/s	☐ Strength	☐ Vulnerability
The teacher	☐ Strength	☐ Vulnerability

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6. **School engagement and sense of belonging**

   Examples. Strength… The child enjoys school … has a sense of being part of the school community … feels accepted and respected by peers and teachers … participates in activities … the child enjoys their own tasks/ responsibilities at school … has difficulties going to school/ entering remote lessons … the child is fearful of school … feels not accepted … alienated …
   Vulnerability

   The child   ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

   The caregiver/s   ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

   The teacher   ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

7. **School achievement**

   Examples. Strength … school achievement is in line with the child's capacities … the child is extremely conscientious or ambitious with a risk of stress/ exhaustion … the child's achievement does not match their capacity … underachievement … **Vulnerability**

   The child   ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

   The caregiver/s   ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

   The teacher   ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

8. **Understanding the child in different developmental contexts**

   Understanding the overall situation of the child helps caregiver/s and school staff interact with the child 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 child's wellbeing and learning and should be considered by the caregiver/s and teacher when interacting with the child?**
   For example, a disorderly class, bullying, racist attitudes, multiple substitute teachers, lack of equipment for remote teaching, an atmosphere of exhaustion among teachers, etc.

   The child   ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

   The caregiver/s   ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

   The teacher   ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

   b. **Is there something in the child'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 child?** For example, bullying outside of school/on the internet, lack of peaceful space or equipment for remote learning at home, stressful situation for the caregiver/s, an atmosphere of exhaustion at home, etc.

   The caregiver/s   ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

   The child   ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

   The teacher   ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

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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 are shared or have an impact on the child's day also at school. It is recommended that home and school perspectives are discussed together, although they are listed separately. A topic can be a strength in one and a vulnerability in the other.

a. Routines at home: smoothness and atmosphere

i. Leaving home and coming home from school ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

ii. Clothing ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

iii. Eating ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

iv. Homework ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

v. Exercise and outdoor activities ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

vi. Screen time, social media ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

vii. Issues related to money ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

viii. Day-night rhythm, enough sleep and rest ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

If the child is only in contact teaching, respond to 9b and if only in remote teaching, go to 9c.
If the child is intermittently in both, respond to both.

b. Routines at contact school: smoothness and atmosphere

i. Coming to school and leaving for home ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

ii. Clothing ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

iii. Eating ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

iv. Homework ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

v. Lectures/classes ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

vi. Breaks and transitions ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

vii. School attendance ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

viii. Screen time, social media ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

c. Routines and school engagement at remote education

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

	Home Str/Vul	School Str/Vul
i. Managing the digital technology	☐Str ☐ Vul	☐Str ☐ Vul
ii. Practical arrangements at home (time, space etc.)	☐Str ☐ Vul	☐Str ☐ Vul
iii. The child's participation in remote sessions	☐Str ☐ Vul	☐Str ☐ Vul
iv. Homework	☐Str ☐ Vul	☐Str ☐ Vul
v. Guidance from teacher	☐Str ☐ Vul	☐Str ☐ Vul
vi. Guidance at home	☐Str ☐ Vul	☐Str ☐ Vul
vii. School engagement in remote education	☐Str ☐ Vul	☐Str ☐ Vul

(Notes on the next page)

Notes

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10. **A support person at school**

Does the child have an adult or adults at school they can turn to in need of support?

The child   ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

The caregiver/s   ☐ 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 child'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. **Interests, friends and activities in leisure time**

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

The child   ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

The caregiver/s   ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

The teacher   ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

12. **The child in social situations at home and school**

Also, what might be influencing interactions in social situations?

Examples. Strength … The child has mostly positive interactions with both adults and children … is sociable and active … prefers to do things by oneself, but is not rejected by others … often empathetic/helpful to others … the child is lonely /has been left alone … bullied … withdraws when hurt … frequent expressions of verbal or physical aggression … tends to bully others … to have racist attitudes … emerging idealisation of violence … **Vulnerability**

The child	☐ Strength	☐ Vulnerability
The caregiver/s	☐ Strength	☐ Vulnerability
The teacher	☐ Strength	☐ Vulnerability

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

How do disagreements and conflicts arise? How do people behave, the child/ adults/siblings/friends? 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.

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

The child	☐ Strength	☐ Vulnerability
The caregiver/s	☐ Strength	☐ Vulnerability
The teacher	☐ Strength	☐ Vulnerability

14. **A meaningful social network**

Does the child have a meaningful social network?
e.g. friends, school mates, relatives, adults at school, a trainer/ leader at a hobby

The child	☐ Strength	☐ Vulnerability
The caregiver/s	☐ Strength	☐ Vulnerability
The teacher	☐ Strength	☐ Vulnerability

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15. Any concern not yet discussed?

To the child: Is there anything that has bothered you and has not yet been talked about?

Big or small?

Do the adults have any worries not yet talked about? Is there need for special help?

The child   ☐ Vulnerability

The caregiver/s   ☐ Vulnerability

The teacher   ☐ Vulnerability

16. Any delight not yet discussed?

The child   ☐ Strength

The caregiver/s   ☐ Strength

The teacher   ☐ Strength

17. Goals for the child's upbringing

Goals for child 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 child's own values and goals and the variety of cultural backgrounds can feature in this very important conversation.

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

The child   ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

The caregiver/s   ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

The teacher   ☐ Strength ☐ Vulnerability

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ACTION PLAN

The participants choose the main strengths and vulnerabilities to be the focus of the action plan. **Plan specific and concrete courses of action** based on the participants' possibilities and resources, and the professional's job description. **Use Annex 1, the factors that support child development** as a planning aid. Also consider whether additional resources are needed 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 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 caregiver/s, depending on the situation). Everyone agrees also 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

   _____

   _____

   c. Date and time of the meeting _____

3. If the child is not present, invite them to the Network Meeting. Explain to the child what is being planned and why, and who will participate. Ask the child to suggest participants; the child is a co-developer. If the child does not want to participate, afterwards **explain to them regarding what was decided, why, and include them in carrying out the action plan at home and at school.**

ENDING THE MEETING

How was this discussion 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? **Successful co-operation is a very powerful supporting factor for a child's wellbeing and development.**

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

Thank you everyone!

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LET'S TALK ABOUT CHILDREN NETWORK MEETING

Mika Niemelä, Tytti Solantaus

1. The caregiver/s 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 child as an equal participant.**

   a. Clarifying questions and the 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 are listed on the template (below). Record what they agree to do. 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 the 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 date, time and participants.

   a. **The follow-up meeting follows the structure above.** However, begin with a short outline of the child's situation and state whether the plans have been realised. Keeping 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 their number depend on the overall situation. **In case of a longer process, the meetings build up a functional scaffolding around the child.**

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

Logbook for Primary Education

FACTORS AT HOME AND SCHOOL THAT SUPPORT

CHILD 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 include physical exercise and outdoor activities. The child has friends also at school and feels part of the student group.

3. **The caregiver/s care about the child'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 together.

4. **The teacher-child relationship is positive and productive**. The child feels that the teacher appreciates, understands and supports them and is interested in their affairs. The child's achievements are noted. When having difficulties, the child can ask for and receive help, and feels supported.

5. **The day-to-day life at home and at school 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 and has their own tasks to be proud of.

6. **The child's ordinary day** includes joy and achievement as well as 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 the child is not present. This applies to both home and school.

7. **In case of problems at home, school or in leisure time environment,** the child is helped to make sense of what is happening and to cope with the situation**.**

8. **Engagement in and sense of belonging to school**. The child feels motivated to go to school and is valued by the teacher and appreciated in the student group.

9. **The child's feelings, mood and behaviour are understood**. Home and school co-operate to support the child 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:

    (1) any problems that the child may have **do not define the child or the child's future,**

    (2) negative labels will **influence the way the child is treated** and affect the child's learning and development and

    (3) **problems in a child's life and coping with them are the result of interplay**, which adults can have an effect on.

11. **The child's caregiver/s 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 child feels that any differences in the child itself or in the child's family are understood and respected at school. The child feels safe and trustful at home and at school.

12. **Good parent-teacher co-operation.** Every child needs to feel that the adults in their life co-operate and respect one another. This is especially important for children who have difficulties.

Logbook for Primary Education

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

Background and aims

Home, day care, school and leisure-time environments are all developmental contexts for the child. They are independently significant for the child'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 child's demeanour, mood, behaviour and learning in another. Understanding the overall situation of the child helps adults interact with the child in the best possible way.

It is known that **one developmental context can support the child when there are problems in another**, if the necessary awareness and will exist. For a child 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 child at home and at school and agreeing on action, based on that understanding**. The aim is to give the child a day-to day life that supports their wellbeing, studies and development, both at home and at school. The child does not need to have problems for the intervention to be set up. **Every child 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 child and their development and, when conditions are difficult, for the child'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 child 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 child**. 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 child and the child's everyday life; their own tasks and expertise. **If shared, both parties benefit, and especially the child**. 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 discussion is extended **to the child, caregiver/s and the caregiver/s' possible support person**. The participation of other people is always subject to agreement with the caregiver/s. This applies also to the Let's Talk about Children Network Meeting, which is organized in collaboration with the family members and observing the respective Pupil and Student Welfare Act, 2014.

The child is welcome to participate and the attendance is decided by parents and the child. If the child attends, they must be treated as an equal partner, not a bystander. Therefore, the child is included as a dialogue partner under each theme in the logbook. The child's developmental age must be considered. The discussion must be carried out using expressions that the child is familiar with, and in a manner which keeps the child involved. **Most importantly, the discussion must be constructive and supportive for the child**.

If the child does not participate, the adults should discuss the themes in the logbook with the child beforehand in order to bring **the child's viewpoints to the meeting**. The course of action that is planned for home and school are to be discussed with the child later on, and the child's opinions need to be taken into consideration.

At the **Let's Talk about Children Network Meeting**, the participants discuss how to support the child. **The child's own opinions are important**. The child is always invited, observing the points stated above and the respective Finnish legislation

Steps in the Let's Talk about Children process

1. **Materials given to caregiver/s before LTC Discussion.** Caregiver/s are given the logbook, the first four pages of the logbook and MIELI Mental Health Finland webpage (www.mieli.fi/letstalk). The webpage includes the logbook 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 child's situation.** The child'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 child, caregiver/s and teacher** and a comprehensive understanding of the child's situation is created. The aim is to get an overall picture of the child. 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 child's life. They also examine the main vulnerabilities and look for solutions. Specific things that can be done to support the child'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, also 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 network, professionals and people involved in other activities 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).

Definitions: Strengths and vulnerabilities

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.**

Vulnerability. In the Let's Talk about Children approach, a vulnerability is a situation that contains problems or can lead to problems if nothing is done.

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 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 for the child.** It is important to identify the child's behaviour (here irritability/withdrawal) as stemming from the interaction between the child and the environment and to take this into account in the action plan.

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 seems like a vulnerability and can be marked as one in order 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.** This should be stated in the action plan. In another kind of environment, shyness might be 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 caregiver/s to read the logbook, both on one's own and with the child, before the discussion takes place. It is important to remember that **the logbook is not an evaluation questionnaire and it is not meant to be filled out in advance**.

Caregiver/s are invited to **bring the logbook pages 5-16 to face-to-face discussions**. The logbook contains room for family members' notes. Logbooks are not stored in the school archives (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 Primary 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 child at home and at school, and proceeding with that understanding in mind. LTC builds up caregiver-teacher collaboration. The aim is to give the child 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 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 about Children method can be implemented in different ways. Each organisation can choose the options best suited to its needs. All options involve giving caregiver/s the first four pages of the logbook and the address to the website (www.mieli.fi/letstalk).

1. **In the first option,** LTC is universally offered to all students and their caregiver/s 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 caregiver/s and also in situations described in Options 2 and 3.

2. **In the second option**, LTC is convened to deal with situations or changes at home or at school which put the caregiver/s, educators or the child under extra pressure. This alternative provides the prevention of problems, when a risk has been identified.

3. **In the third option**, LTC is convened when the child has problems. The purpose is to help steer the child 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 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**

   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. **LTC 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. The logbooks are reference material for the caregiver/s to keep.

Informing caregiver/s

1. **Caregiver/s are encouraged to 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 child's school. Knowledge about LTC is important for caregiver/s who are deciding on participating as it helps them to understand the focus of the discussion. **Caregiver/s are also encouraged to discuss LTC with their children.**

2. **Ways to inform caregivers** depend upon schools, their practices and resources. All caregiver/s are usually 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.