

Relational Learning:

Supporting learning, development and wellbeing through relationship.

Secure relationships have a direct bearing on children's capacity to succeed in school. Relationships and belonging are key to success for all children and essential for those who have experienced relational losses and trauma.

Relational learning provides a framework for whole school development and universal provision, as well as attachment based mentoring for those who have the greatest need.

The Approach

It is clear that if we are going to effectively support all children in school we need to understand the power of relationships and the impact of adverse childhood experiences on development. We need to understand what their difficulties and behaviour is telling us about what they need. Studying the features of a secure relationship and the factors which promote social and emotional wellbeing, helps us to understand what we must provide for children if we are to enable them to succeed.

The approach draws together research from several areas of psychology, biology and education. We started by thinking about the needs of the child in school and applying the theory and research which we felt would be most helpful for them. The theoretical underpinnings come from the areas of neuroscience, attachment and connection, resiliency, solution focused coaching, restorative approaches and cognitive science. We have drawn on the expertise of therapists and educational practitioners, our own experience and the views and voices of the children we have worked with to develop a holistic model of support. **The relationship is central.**

We see Relational Learning as both a **universal approach** as well as a **targetted approach** for those who are most in need and require more intensive support. We emphasise the importance of relational skills and the need to be reflective about how we are with children, as well as what we do. We aim to turn sometimes complex theory into practical approaches that can make a difference.

Relational Learning aims to develop a belief in and understanding of how schools can support all children through individual relationships, classroom practice, and policy which supports practice systems which are responsive to their needs.

Key Principles

With the correct support all children can be fully included in their educational setting, enjoy learning and succeed.

Good relationships, within which children learn to feel safe and secure, trust and regulate, are the key to learning and development.

Schools are ideally placed to offer relational support. This support can and should become part of our everyday interactions with the children we work with.

This is a universal way of working with children and also a targetted approach for those in most need.

We believe that it is most helpful to consider what we know helps children to develop rather than to focus on deficits. We focus on the psychological theory that tells us what makes a good relationship, what behaviour is telling us in terms of what we need to do and on what the child is telling us about what helps them, rather than diagnosing or labelling children.

Children need to have a voice, feel heard and have opportunities to develop a sense of agency if support is to be meaningful and effective.



Our Relational Learning Core

- Develop an understanding of how adverse experiences and trauma may impact on emotional development and wellbeing
- Raise empathy and understanding for children who may be finding school hard
- Develop whole school practice, procedures and policy aligned to relational learning
- Enable the adults working with children to be able to read their behaviour in terms of underlying needs and provide for these needs in terms of what they are doing and how they are being with them

Attachment Based Mentoring

The Attachment Based Mentoring Programme aims to meet the specific needs of children who are most in need, by providing them with a significant adult in school who will become a safe base and is able to provide relational support through coaching and mentoring.

This three day training draws on theories and research from the fields of attachment, coaching and resilience, ABM is a comprehensive practical guide as to what to do and how to be to ensure that the individual needs of each child are met.

The approach aims to enable children to feel safe, connected, and capable - forming positive relationships and enjoying learning. You will:

- Understand the needs of all children including the most vulnerable and how they can find it difficult to engage with learning
- Learn how to become the child's significant adult
- Meet attachment needs by considering the mentoring relationship
- Develop solution focused coaching and mentoring skills
- Consider the wider role of the mentor in terms of social learning, advocacy and practical support

This course is aimed at: Teachers and Teaching Assistants who will be Attachment Based Mentors and Senior Leaders who have a responsibility for student support and wellbeing.

Relational Learning: Relationships for Learning, Development and Wellbeing

This one day course explores the theories which underpin our understanding of effective relationships and their role in learning, development and wellbeing as well as developing the skills and practical strategies that underpin the relational approach. The course includes:

- Why relationships are key to teaching and learning
- The biology of emotions, behaviour and social development
- The role of the adult as a source of safety, security, regulation and belonging
- The impact of anxious relationships on thoughts, feelings and behaviour and what we can do to help
- Using Relational Support Plans to develop universal to targetted support

This course is suitable for whole school inset and can be delivered as a conference for larger groups.

Learning Programmes

Aims

- Support adults to develop the skills they need to form secure relationships with the children they work with, use coaching skills to support their development and practical skills to support their inclusion
- Support adults to become reflective practitioners who can be responsive to children's needs and adapt to different situations

Developing Whole School Relational Practice and Policy

Aimed at senior leaders, this one day course introduces a whole school approach to relational practice and policy by providing guidance on:

- Establishing a shared understanding and framework for building relationships, regulating and de-escalating challenging behaviour and using restorative approaches to promote learning and reparation
- Developing behaviour policies which support a relational rather than behaviourist approach to personal development and which are in line with up-to-date guidance, research and evidence
- Whole school practice and systems which are inclusive, responsive and promote positive relationships and an ethos which is beneficial to all members of the school community
- A graduated response which enables schools to meet the needs of children who are most in need

This course is aimed at: [Headteachers and Senior Leaders responsible for whole school development.](#)

Train the Trainer Attachment Based Mentoring Programme

Our Train the Trainer programme is a five day training programme providing you with everything you need in order to deliver the ABM programme yourself. Updated materials, video sessions and email support are available with the programme's annual subscription. The Trainer Manual is included and delegate reference books are available.

This comprehensive, research and evidence based programme enables your Local Authority, Educational Psychology Team, Virtual School Team or Multi-Academy Trust to deliver our Attachment Based Mentoring programme to your local schools and staff. This model represents excellent value for money and offers you the opportunity to earn revenue on your delivery of the three day school programme.

Contact us to find out more and to discuss options to suit your requirements:

wendy.newton@babcockinternational.com | 01392 880783 | 07568 102728

www.babcockldp.co.uk/relational-learning

Evaluation of our training

“A blend of passion, knowledge and humour which led to exceptional effectiveness of course delivery from start to finish.” Primary school teacher (Bradley Barton School)

“Fabulous in all aspects – content, concept, application, practice, resources. This is easily the best and most useful course I have participated in.” School mentor (Appledore Primary School)

“Two outstanding trainers with different styles of delivery, experience and insights. A course filled with impactful discussion and exploration without feelings of being overwhelmed.” Head of teaching and learning (Haytor Primary School)

“Very informative and engaging, the best training ever in 16 years as a teacher.” Teacher in a specialist provision (South and West Devon Academy)

“A three day epiphany.” Head of Inclusion (South Dartmoor Community College)

Impact of our Attachment Based Mentoring programme

Evaluation of the mentoring project to date indicates that the mentoring is having a positive impact in several areas.

Adults working with the children (both teachers and mentors) commented that the mentoring had an impact on the children’s ability to be open and trusting. They also commented on increased feelings of self-worth, confidence and happiness.

In addition to the role of the significant adult, coaching has enabled the children to experience ownership, a clear sense of agency and success in areas that are most meaningful to them. This has been significant in terms of giving the children a voice and increased confidence and motivation. The children themselves appear to have greatly valued feeling listened to and having someone in school to talk to.

During the pilot study, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires were completed by the teachers of a sample of 10 children who were being mentored. Scores showed that after 12 weeks of mentoring 9/10 children showed an improvement with regard to the total difficulties score.

The findings so far indicate that Attachment Based Mentoring is supporting children to access learning and be included. Actively working on their relationship needs and sense of security as well as providing coaching to support them to move forward has had a positive effect on many areas of their development, their ability to engage with education and to experience success at school.

“Oliver had experienced trauma and being able to trust was a big milestone for him. Since the mentoring, he has made very good progress. He has turned a corner- he will now seek out adult help as he hasn’t done before.” Mentor

“Since the mentoring my attitude towards people has changed. I didn’t want to work before. I argued with the teachers and now I don’t. My teacher is really proud and says I’m doing amazingly well. My mum is impressed because I am better at home too. I think I feel happier than I did.” Child being mentored






Practical Support



Development



Attachment and Relationships

Our People

Relational Learning - meet the researchers, creators and trainers

Catherine Dunnett was a secondary school teacher working in London for 10 years before moving to Devon and training to be an Educational Psychologist. Catherine has worked in schools across Devon supporting the inclusion of children with special educational needs and disability. Catherine has a particular interest in working with vulnerable children with social emotional needs and in supporting schools to develop their practice and capacity to meet the needs of these children. Catherine has specialisms in working with CIC and using solution focused processes to support the development of children and adults.

Matt Jones was a primary school teacher and SENCo before joining the Social Emotional Mental Health Team, where he supports schools with the inclusion of vulnerable children as well as developing whole school practice in the area of Relational Learning.

Matt has worked extensively with children who have experienced relational losses and trauma and the adults who work with them, ensuring they are included and successful at school.

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Relational Audit Tool for Reflection and Planning

Area of Practice	Challenge Questions
<p>Whole school ethos/ beliefs and values</p>	<p>To what extent are beliefs and values integral to the school ethos?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>Are beliefs and values established through a collaborative process involving children, school staff, governors and the wider community?</p> <p>Does the school have clear statements expressing their beliefs and values with regard to behaviour and relationships?</p> <p>Are the beliefs and values shared with all members of the community and celebrated through activities and displays?</p> <p>Are the beliefs and values expressed through everyday interactions, teaching practice, systems and processes?</p> <p>Are the beliefs and values modelled, promoted and facilitated by school leadership?</p>
<p>Notes:</p>	
<p>Priorities for change</p>	<p>Next steps</p>
Area of Practice	Challenge Questions
<p>Staff development/ knowledge and understanding</p>	<p>To what extent are all staff trained in the theory and practice relating to behaviour, relational needs, restorative practice and the impact of trauma, adverse experience and interruptions in attachment?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>Do all staff have an understanding of how research and theory relates to their practice?</p> <p>Do newly qualified staff and those who are new to the school have opportunities to be trained in relational approaches?</p> <p>Are there opportunities for some staff to develop an expertise in this area, to lead on developments and to support others?</p> <p>Do all staff have ongoing development opportunities such as working alongside those who have more experience, mentoring coaching and supervision?</p> <p>Do school processes support knowledge and understanding to be maintained in practice?</p>
<p>Notes:</p>	

Priorities for change	Next steps
Area of Practice	Challenge Questions
Developing relationships - protection, connection, understanding and care	<p>To what extent are all staff aware of the need for secure relationships and what the key components of the relationship are in terms of providing protection, connection, understanding and care?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>Do all staff understand their role in developing relationships and what this means in terms of what they are doing and how they are being?</p> <p>Are all adults aware of the behaviour that may indicate a relational need and understand how they need to respond?</p> <p>Are there systems and processes in place to identify need, plan and implement relational support through a relational support plan?</p> <p>Does the provision mapping include support and interventions to meet relational need?</p>
Notes:	
Priorities for change	Next steps
Area of Practice	Challenge Questions
Supporting inclusion/ removing barriers	<p>How well does the school support inclusion and belonging and ensure equal opportunities for children from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>To what extent are all staff aware of the barriers to inclusion and those children who are most vulnerable to exclusion (this includes boys, children with SEN, those who have been supported by social care or come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and children from certain ethnic groups)?</p> <p>How well is data (attendance, exclusion, attainment, participation etc) pertaining to vulnerable groups collected, analysed and utilised to ensure inclusion and equal opportunities?</p> <p>To what extent are all teachers aware of their responsibility and have the expertise to meet additional needs through good quality first teaching?</p> <p>How well does the school actively challenge racism through anti-racist policies, systems, curriculum and practice?</p> <p>How knowledgeable are all members of the school staff about the diversity and differences in history, experience and culture of the children they teach?</p> <p>How well does the school respect, value and celebrate diversity of social identity, ethnicity, gender or sexuality and to what extent is this shown through the actions of all members of staff, curriculum content, whole school initiatives, celebrations and the school environment.</p>

Notes:	
Priorities for change	Next steps
Area of Practice	Challenge Questions
Limit setting/making and maintaining agreements	<p>To what extent are the making and maintaining of agreements an integral part of teaching?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>Are agreements made collaboratively with children, adults and the school community?</p> <p>Are agreements meaningful, clearly communicated, displayed and expressed positively?</p> <p>Are agreements referred to and used to support a harmonious learning environment and help children to understand the limits of behaviour?</p> <p>Are there clear processes for resolving difficulties when agreements are broken?</p>
Notes:	
Priorities for change	Next steps
Area of Practice	Challenge Questions
Keeping things calm/ Providing skilled regulation	<p>To what extent are staff skilled at using relational practice to de-escalate and promote calm learning environments?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>Do staff manage stressful situations where there is a need for regulation and containment?</p> <p>Are there clear systems and plans for managing crisis situations?</p> <p>Are plans communicated to staff and followed by staff throughout the school?</p> <p>Are plans for individual children monitored and updated regularly by the core team?</p>
Notes:	

Priorities for change		Next steps
Area of Practice	Challenge Questions	
Using restorative approaches/restorative exploration to repair harm	<p>To what extent do staff understand the concept, purpose and application of a restorative approach in school?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>How embedded is the approach in everyday interactions and conversations?</p> <p>Are staff skilled in terms of restorative encounters and following the exploration plan?</p> <p>Are there staff who have an expertise in this area and are able to lead on developments, to support others with their practice and facilitate complex restorative explorations?</p> <p>How well is change facilitated following explorations? How well do these inform what happens next?</p>	
Notes:		
Priorities for change		Next steps
Area of Practice	Challenge Questions	
Relational approaches in the classroom	<p>To what extent are staff skilled in using relational approaches to manage disruption in the classroom?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>Do staff consistently and skilfully respond to single incidents of low level disruption in order to minimise disruption and avoid escalation?</p> <p>How well do staff use relational practice such as providing positive feedback, coaching, using report cards for reflection, liaising with parents as a response to regular or persistent low level disruption?</p> <p>How well do staff adapt their teaching in order to meet the specific needs of individual children?</p> <p>How well do school systems support staff to respond to children who are regularly or persistently disruptive in a way which supports development and inclusion?</p>	
Notes:		

Priorities for change	Next steps
Area of Practice	Challenge Questions
Targeted support for those most in need/graduated assess.plan.do and review	<p>To what extent are there robust systems for targeted support through a graduated plan-do-review approach?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>To what extent are there robust systems and processes in place to identify and assess need in each area of SEN as well as needs relating to relationships, social inclusion, disadvantage and identity?</p> <p>To what extent are parents involved in the assess, plan, do, review process?</p> <p>To what extent are children involved in the plan-do –review process.</p> <p>To what extent are person centred and solution focused processes used in order to problem solve, plan and identify shared outcomes, skills and strengths?</p> <p>How well does your provision map outline universal support and support which is additional to or different from good quality first teaching including; individual support, curriculum adaptations, small group intervention and personalised/alternative provision?</p>
Notes:	
Priorities for change	Next steps
Area of Practice	Challenge Questions
Managing the environment	<p>To what extent does the school environment support a relational approach?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>Does the school environment support all children to feel safe?</p> <p>Does the school environment have areas where students can connect in a variety of ways?</p> <p>Does the school have dedicated spaces for children who require a safe base or who may need a place to calm down when they are distressed?</p> <p>Does the school have spaces, facilities and resources for children who have physical and sensory needs and those who have needs relating to sensory processing?</p> <p>Does the school have dedicated spaces for adults to work with children individually or as part of a small groups?</p> <p>Do displays in the school reflect the schools beliefs and values and the diversity and inclusivity of the school?</p> <p>Do children have ownership of their environment? For example are they involved in the design and organisation of the playground, dining hall or classroom?</p>

Notes:	
Priorities for change	Next steps
Area of Practice	Challenge Questions
Working with parents	<p>To what extent are parents involved within the school community?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>To what extent do parents feel welcome, valued and listened to?</p> <p>Do school systems support open communication between the school and parents?</p> <p>Do parents contribute to the everyday life of the school?</p> <p>How well are parents utilised and valued with regard to their child's experience of school?</p>
Notes:	
Priorities for change	Next steps
Area of Practice	Challenge Questions
Involving the child	<p>To what extent are child centred approaches integral to practice?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>Are staff skilled in eliciting the voice of the child?</p> <p>Does the school provide regular opportunities for children to express their views and feel listened to?</p> <p>Does the school support children through solution focused coaching techniques?</p> <p>How well does feedback support reflection and development?</p>
Notes:	

Priorities for change		Next steps
Area of Practice	Challenge Questions	
Supporting staff well-being	<p>To what extend are there opportunities for staff to access support for well-being?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>Are there opportunities for staff to connect with colleagues, such as exercise, well-being or relaxation groups?</p> <p>Do staff feel able to express their views and feelings about their work?</p> <p>Do staff have control over their working practices?</p> <p>How well are relationships between staff developed and supported?</p> <p>How well do systems and processes support staff to feel valued and respected?</p> <p>Do staff have opportunities for development, both personal and professional?</p> <p>How well are staff supported in their work through supervision, line management, coaching and mentoring?</p>	
Notes:		
Priorities for change		Next steps
Area of Practice	Challenge Questions	
Working with partner agencies and professionals	<p>To what extend are partner agencies involved in establishing and maintaining a relational ethos and approach?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>How well are partner agencies involved in the assess-plan-do-review process?</p> <p>Are partner agencies utilised in training, on-going staff development and complex case work?</p>	
Notes:		
Priorities for change		Next steps

Relational Support Plan

Name of Pupil:	
School:	Date:

Consider the key prompts for discussion and note down actions under the 4 headings: Protection, Connection, Understanding and Care.

The significant adult/adults – Team around the child
<p>Who is best placed to be the significant adult/adults?</p> <p>Who will be part of the wider team of adults supporting the child? Does the child need someone to be available to the throughout the day? It is helpful for the team to be composed of adults from each tier of the school organisation. Parents/carers can also be part of the team.</p>

Strengths/Qualities/Interests/Resources
<p>What are the child's strengths, skills and qualities? What are the child's coping strategies and signs of resilience? What does the child enjoy and what interests them? When are they at their best? What helps them? When have they been successful in the past and what is working well now?</p>

Protection This explains the need for safety and security. Some children may not automatically feel safe. They can find school threatening and require relationships, support and structure to develop feelings of security and safety, which are essential to effective learning and behaviour.	
Key Question Prompts: How will the child be helped to feel safe by the significant adults? What safety cues will be helpful? How will other adults in the team help the child to feel safe? How will you support the child to develop trust? How will predictable and reliable support be provided? Are there times in the day when the child feels particularly unsafe: beginnings, endings, transition? How can these times be managed? How can the environment be adapted to help the child feel safe? How can the day be structured to help the child feel safe? What does the child need to know in order to feel safe? How will this be communicated so that the child understands?	Actions:

Connection
Meaningful connections with others promote feelings of safety, trust and belonging. Experiences of connection are important in developing the cortex and higher level thinking. For some children there is a need for a high level of connection within school.

<p>Key Question prompts:</p> <p>How will the significant adults provide meaningful connection with the child?</p> <p>What needs to happen to ensure that the child experiences attuned and responsive connection?</p> <p>How will other adults in the team connect with the child?</p> <p>How will the development of positive peer relationships be promoted?</p> <p>What activities may help the child to develop their sense of belonging in school?</p>	<p>Actions:</p>
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Understanding
Children need adults to understand them and communicate this understanding in an empathetic way, whilst also maintaining clear rules, boundaries and expectations. Understanding and co-regulation from an adult will support children to develop their ability to regulate themselves.

<p>Key Question prompts:</p> <p>What does the child's behaviour tell us about how they are feeling?</p> <p>What is our understanding of the child's feelings?</p> <p>If the student is finding something hard or displaying challenging behaviour, how will adults respond and show understanding?</p> <p>How will the child be co-regulated and calmed?</p> <p>What empathic responses might be helpful?</p> <p>How will the understanding of other adults in school be supported / developed? How will they respond to incidents?</p> <p>Does the child need a responsive co-regulation plan?</p> <p>What will happen to ensure that relationships are repaired?</p>	<p>Actions:</p>
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Care
Some children will need adults in school to be particularly mindful of providing a high level of care. This includes meeting the child's basic needs, enabling them to experience comfort and joy and showing them that they are liked.

<p>Key Question prompts:</p> <p>Does the child have unmet needs in terms of basic care? If so how can these be addressed?</p> <p>How will adults communicate care to the child/young person?</p> <p>How will the child know that they are liked?</p> <p>What activities may foster shared enjoyment?</p> <p>How can we ensure the child knows they are being held in mind?</p> <p>How will the child be soothed?</p>	<p>Actions:</p>
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Supporting Inclusion Are there difficulties that are blocking the child's access to learning or social inclusion? What skills are we going to support the child to develop in their areas of need? How are we going to support access and inclusion?	
<p>Prompts:</p> <p>Control-related e.g. accepting an adult lead, co-operative working, turn-taking, requesting help.</p> <p>Social skills e.g. explicit teaching of listening skills, eye-contact, starting conversations, proximity.</p> <p>Identity-based e.g. ability to take risks in learning, accept challenges, make mistakes.</p> <p>Self-regulation and sensory regulation e.g. emotional literacy, self-soothing, managing sensory input.</p> <p>Behaviours for learning e.g. Planning, organisation, managing transitions.</p> <p>Literacy skills e.g. developing phonic skills, reading comprehension, recording skills.</p> <p>Language skills e.g. understanding instructions, expressing opinions.</p> <p>Communication and Interaction e.g. Understanding social situations.</p> <p>Building on strengths How can we enable the pupil to build on their strengths?</p>	<p>Actions:</p>

Responsive Co-regulation Plan

State of Regulation	Potential Displayed Behaviour	Agreed Response for Regulation
Calm Safe / Socially engaged		
Mild stress Alert / Aroused / Agitated		
Dysregulated Mobilised / Immobilised		
Crisis Unsafe		

Guide to supporting regulation through responsive co-regulation plans.

State of Regulation	Potential displayed behaviours	Responsive co-regulation
<p>Calm Safe/socially engaged</p>	<p>Steady heart/breathing rate. Calm state of arousal. Open to social engagement. Expressive facial expression and voice prosody. Able to listen, process language and engage in thinking to learn.</p>	<p>Maximise expressive social engagement. Fully engage and connect using the face, voice, movement. Encourage listening and expressive responses. Engage thinking skills to reflect and make connections. Introduce gentle challenge through play/activity.</p>
<p>Mild Stress Alert/Agitated/Withdrawn</p>	<p>Slightly raised heart/breathing rate. Signs of agitation, frustration, anxiety. Raised hypervigilance. Lack of focus, easily distracted. Increased mobilisation. Early signs of needing to take control or helplessness.</p>	<p>Connect through eye contact, movement and facial expression. Express calmness through storytelling prosody and open facial expression. Attune to mood, intensity and energy of the child. Respond by being more animated to attune to agitation, increase intensity to attune to anger, be gentle and delicate to attune to sadness. Respond empathically and validate feelings. Use calming, soothing and regulatory activities.</p>
<p>Dysregulated Mobilised</p>	<p>High levels of arousal/distress. Hyper vigilant. Difficulty listening and focusing. Mobilised – fidgeting, jumping, running, climbing etc. Raised voice with lack of prosody. Decreased expressivity. Threatening behaviour. Oppositional behaviour.</p>	<p>Reduce social demands whilst remaining present. Provide individual attention. Convey adult containment. Let them know you are able to 'hold' their dysregulation by remaining regulated. Convey your calm and regulated state by being confident and contained. Use quiet, calm sounds and tones which are expressive and confident. Reduce language, give short clear directions. Avoid questions and choices. Use predictable routine. Reduce sensory input, lights, noise. Use sensory soothing.</p>
<p>Dysregulated Immobilised</p>	<p>Lowered heart/breathing rate. Reduced energy. Shuts off from surroundings/dissociates. Depressed state. Immobile/frozen. May feel faint.</p>	<p>Gentle, soft and delicate manner of coming close, making them aware of your presence and support. Use comforting and predictable voice. Use invited touch to soothe. Singing, humming, music. Use sensory soothing. Calm and gentle reassurance.</p>
<p>Crisis</p>	<p>The child's behaviour means that they or other people are not safe.</p>	<p>An individualised plan of action which outlines action to be taken in the event of unsafe behaviour. This may include advice from outside agencies. The plan should be shared with the child and include their views as to what helps and with all staff working with the child. Roles and responsibilities should be clear. If the plan includes physical intervention staff should have had the appropriate training. Devon LA recommend PIPS training. Adults need to provide high levels of containment through their way of being – having a plan can help.</p>