



Child-centred and communication-focused practice with children with disability online course

Professionals can support the mental health of children with disability by helping them to develop alternative coping strategies and new ways of communicating their needs.

About this course

Building on the knowledge introduced in Emerging Minds' foundation course, *Understanding child mental health and disability*, this course looks at ways to support children with disability to express themselves. It centres on a communication-focused approach, which is about prioritising the expression of a child's social and emotional development needs and working with the child and their family to overcome any communication challenges.

This course introduces the PATH approach to working with children with disability:

Possibilities – *what is the child trying to communicate?*

Alternatives – *how else can we meet this need?*

Trying out – *how can we go about trying a different approach?*

Holistic – *am I considering the child's strengths as well as their difficulties?*

Why was this course developed?

Children with disability can often find it hard to communicate their needs and preferences in ways that adults can readily understand and respond to. Instead, they may attempt to communicate through their behaviours, which can sometimes be seen as 'challenging' or 'concerning'. These behaviours can

cause further difficulties for the child and result in greater marginalisation, rather than inclusion and connection.

A communication-focused approach acknowledges that children with disability are doing the best they can to communicate with the people around them. When the child is supported to express their emotions in ways that are understood and acknowledged, their social and emotional needs can be met more consistently and calmly.

How was this course developed?

This course was developed in collaboration with stakeholders from academia, child and family services, child mental health experts and families with lived experience of disability.

Who is this course for?

This course is suited to all practitioners who work with children and families, across a range of settings. It will help you to better incorporate approaches to your work that promote the social and emotional development and wellbeing of children with disability.

What is included in the course?

This course features fictional video demonstrations of conversations between practitioners and parents and children, along with reading materials and reflective activities. It is designed to be undertaken individually, but can also be used as a prompt for conversations between colleagues.