

## Engaging children pathway

This pathway of courses offers a range of practice skills for working with children in relation to their mental health and social and emotional wellbeing. These skills are underpinned by a commitment to accountability to children's experience and enabling children's participation in the therapeutic process through attending to children's strengths, skills, know-how, values, and preferences.

This pathway has been developed to support practitioners to develop a range of practice skills for working with children in ways that are helpful and hopeful, and that are further supported by child-focused supervision, reflective practice and an organisational authorising environment.

Broadly, this pathway will support practitioners to:

- understand the importance of engaging children in therapeutic practice for children, families, practitioners and organisations;
- become familiar with some key perspective shifts that practitioners can implement to place the child at the centre of their work;
- increase their confidence in the practice skills of beginning to engage children in the therapeutic process;
- increase their confidence in the practice skills of exploring children's strengths, skills, know-how and values;
- increase their confidence to explore children's perspectives on the problems they are facing.
- increase their confidence to explore children's perspectives on the problems they are facing;
- increase their confidence to expand and extend on the ways children are responding to problems;
- increase their confidence to engage parents in the therapeutic work with children.

### Who is this pathway for?

This pathway is designed for all practitioners who work with children, particularly those where this may not be a regular focus but is within their scope of practice. This includes GPs, paediatricians, psychiatrists, psychologists, allied health professionals, child protection workers, social workers, child mental health practitioners, and specialist counsellors.



### What are the courses about?



#### Engaging with children: (1 hour)

This course introduces practitioners to the concept of engaging children as partners in practice, as a foundation for responding to child mental health concerns. Through this course, practitioners will become familiar with the key values that underpin this concept and consider how these relate to the values and practice ethics practitioners bring to this area of their work. Learners will also be introduced to the key shifts in position and perspective required to effectively engage children as partners in practice.

*The following six courses each present a range of practice skills that are adaptable to diverse service contexts, applicable to a wide range of presenting concerns brought by children and families, and are flexible enough to be used alongside of other practice modalities and interventions. The courses feature interviews with multiple practitioners, video demonstrations of experienced practitioners working with child and adult actors, reflective exercises, reflections from parents, and the opportunity for course participants to contribute additional content.*



### **Engaging children: Paving the way with parents (3 hours)**

This course will assist practitioners to develop a range of practice skills for working with parents who have concerns about their child's mental health and wellbeing. These skills can contribute to engaging parents in the therapeutic process either prior to or in the early stages of working with children.



### **Engaging children: Ideas that stick (2 hours)**

This course will assist practitioners to develop a range of practice skills for exploring and expanding on children's skills, know-how, values, creativity and interests to respond to the problem the child is facing.



### **Engaging children: Good Beginnings (2 hours)**

This course will assist practitioners to develop a range of practice skills to draw on at the beginning of working with children in relation to their mental health and social and emotional wellbeing.



### **Engaging children: Creative conclusions (1 hour)**

This course will assist practitioners to develop practice skills in creating opportunities for children to contribute to other families facing similar circumstances, as well as finishing their work with children and families.



### **Engaging children: Rich Pictures (2 hours)**

This course will assist practitioners to develop a range of practice skills for beginning to explore children's strengths, skills, know-how, and values that can provide a foundation for reducing the impact of problems on their mental health and social and emotional wellbeing.

### **Why was this pathway developed?**

It was developed to promote the enabling of children's active participation in service delivery, and in particular therapeutic practice, in ways that acknowledge, expand and draw on children's agency in helpful and hopeful ways. It explores what these intentions might mean for 33 areas of therapeutic practice with children.

### **How was this pathway developed?**

A literature review was initially undertaken into what Australian children had reported as being important to them in terms of how adult practitioners seek to work with them. Additional literature was reviewed, child and family practitioners were consulted and interviewed. The content was then reviewed by Emerging Minds and Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) staff, and tested via a presentation to practitioners from diverse contexts and a Child Family Community Australia (CFCA) webinar.



### **Engaging children: Shrinking problems (2 hours)**

This course will assist practitioners to develop a range of practice skills for working with children to understand the child's perspective on the problems they are contending with, and begin to reduce their impact on the child's mental health and wellbeing.

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