

# The Thogomelo Project

## Responding to children

### Providing services to children through the continuum of care

#### Sit squarely facing the child

This will help you to centre yourself and communicate to the child that you are present and focussed. It may be helpful with smaller children to sit on the floor with them.

#### Lean slightly forward

Lean slightly forward to show that you are attentive rather than a “lounging” position leaning back, which may make it harder for the child to communicate with you.

#### Head nodding

Nodding your head in moderation indicates that you are listening, attentive and interested in what the child is saying.

### Speaking to children



#### Eye contact

Eye contact is important to show the child that you are concerned and interested. However, be sensitive to the fact that in some cultures children are discouraged from maintaining eye contact with their elders or seniors, and change your behaviour as required to encourage the child to feel comfortable with you.

#### Open and relaxed posture

An open and relaxed posture will help both you and the child develop a sense of calm and focus. Rest your arms on your lap rather than in a “closed” or defensive position. Keep your feet “grounded” on the floor rather than crossed which can be seen to be a defensive posture.

#### Relaxed attitude

A relaxed attitude from you will help the child relax in what might be a very stressful situation for him or her. Remember to breathe!

#### Verbal interaction

Use minimal verbal responses such as “Mmmhmm,” “Yes,” “I see,” etc. Listening, and letting the child talk is much more important than talking a lot yourself. When we are nervous or uncomfortable ourselves, it is easy to talk a lot, and very fast, rather than focusing on the child’s needs.

#### Prevention

Parenting skills; caregiving skills; children’s rights; early childhood education; education and schools; and awareness campaigns to access social services.

#### Early intervention

Income generation; early intervention for child at risk or showing signs of abuse or neglect.

#### Legal services (statutory)

Placement of child in alternative care; responding to child abuse and neglect in the law; child justice system; and Children’s Court for adoption or placement.

#### Reunification and after-care (healing of children and families)

Therapeutic programmes; monitoring of children and families by social workers; restoring family relationships.

