

Communication Friendly Spaces™ for Families

Communication Friendly Spaces™ (CFS™) focuses on the role of the learning environment in supporting speaking and listening skills. CFS™ involves getting the physical environment right for children, offering developmentally appropriate resources and understanding the role of the adult in supporting children's speaking and listening skills. It is critical to understand how an environment can help or hinder engagement. **CFS™ for Families** is an important strand of our work, which emphasizes the importance of partnerships between families and practitioners.



CFS™ Bags for Families is our training and resource programme designed to share thinking about the way that the home environment can support children's speaking and listening skills.

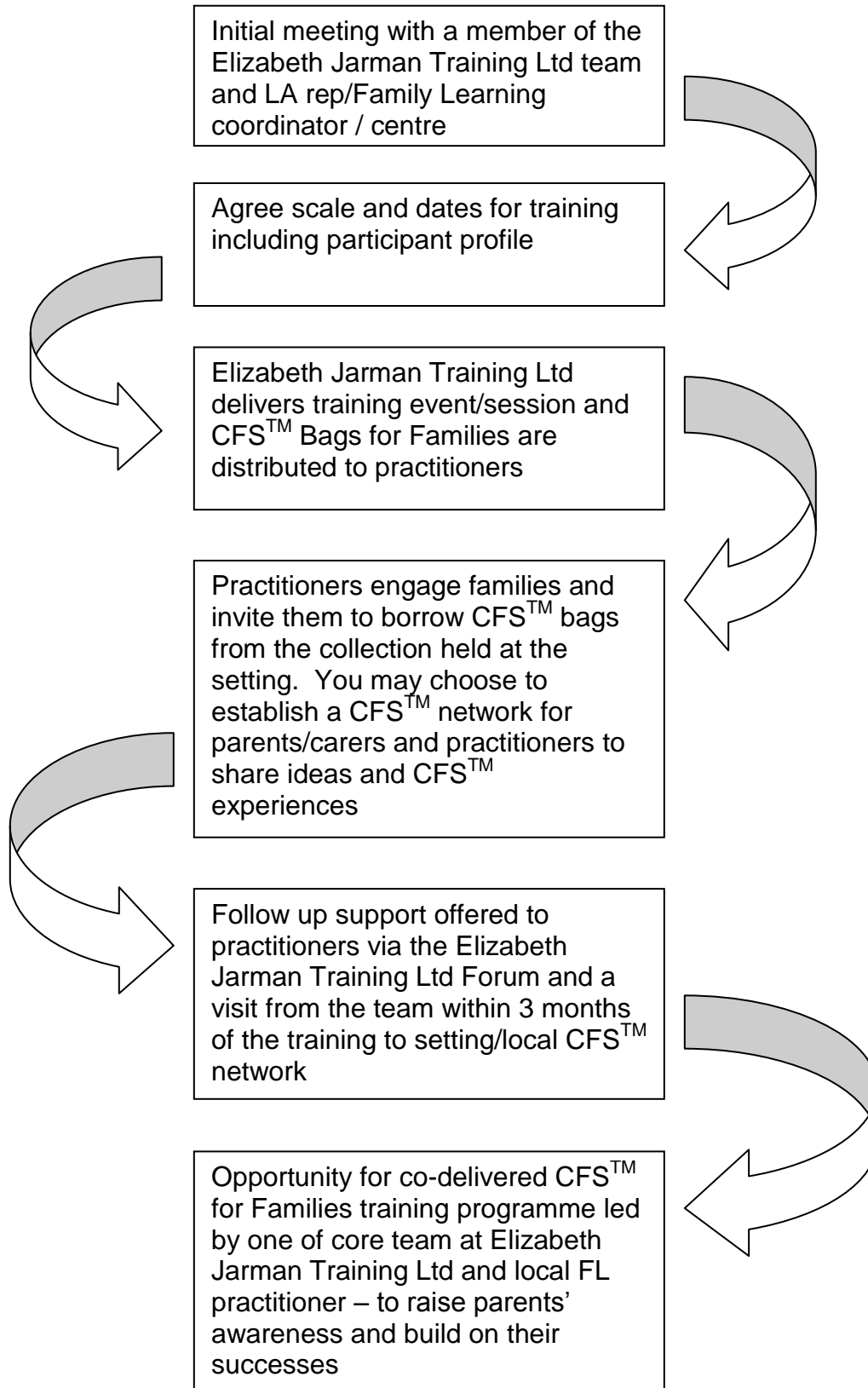
CFS™ Bags for Families helps parents and carers to explore ways to maximise the use of space within the home context to facilitate and enhance communication skills.

Sharing the CFS™ approach with parents and carers can effectively support transition for children between the home and setting contexts.

Family Learning teams across the country are exploring innovative ways to engage with families in order to meet ambitious FLLN and wider family learning targets. **CFS™ Bags for Families** is an accessible and effective approach to facilitating parental support at home and builds on the impact of parental engagement initiatives in settings.

The outdoor resources available in the training and resource package encourage exploratory outside play opportunities and provide a coherent contribution to the Healthy Living agenda. Effective family learning and parental engagement provision is that which meaningfully links to the children's curriculum - **CFS™ Bags for Families** supports this connection.

The Model: Getting Started



Case Studies



Feedback from practitioners and families who have used the bags has been overwhelmingly positive.

“It’s really opened up our dialogue with families. They have all been amazed at how they can easily create a space using very simple resources. They have all said that they didn’t realise it could be so simple and yet so effective.” Dawn, Bury

“I borrowed the bag with the igloo. Gemma was so upset when I had to return it, we had to go out and buy her one. She’s got it in her bedroom and spends loads of time playing in there. Sometimes she lets us in.” Lisa, Cardiff.

“It’s made a difference to our shy children. They now really like coming in and showing us the photos of what they’ve done with the bags at home. Sometimes we let them re create the spaces here and it just helps make a lovely home- setting connection for the children but also parents.” Julie, Bromley.

“I think it’s helped our parents to re consider the sorts of things they give to their children to play with, in a positive way.” Steve, Birmingham.

The Resources

The *CFS™ Bags for Families* resources are organised into bags for indoor/outdoor use, with some specifically aimed at outdoors to encourage families to explore a range of potential spaces. Settings receive a Starter Set of 5 CFS™ bags and each bag contains a collection of carefully selected items.

There is also a CFS™ Families handbook for practitioners. This includes best practice approaches to sharing the bags with parents/carers and a checklist supporting effective collection of feedback from families. Some practitioners have added a disposable camera to their bags, allowing families to record their Communication Friendly Spaces™ and the chosen activities of the children in and around those spaces. Parents/carers are encouraged to keep a journal with any photographs, comments or observations, where appropriate.

The Starter Set of 5 bags is held at the setting and loaned to families. Practitioners invite parents/carers to borrow CFS™ bags. They are sometimes presented as part of an established parental engagement programme but have also provided a catalyst for getting parent groups or workshops started. Some settings may establish a CFS™

network for parents/carers to share ideas and CFS™ experiences to strengthen the links with the home context.

Follow up support is then offered to practitioners via the Elizabeth Jarman Training Ltd Forum – a space for the lively exchange of questions, tips and ideas. There may also be a visit to the setting/local CFS™ network from the Elizabeth Jarman Training Ltd core team within 3 months of the initial training.

Training and Dissemination

Elizabeth Jarman Training Ltd's team deliver one-day training events and shorter twilight information sessions for local authority Family Learning teams interested in the **CFS™ Bags for Families** approach to work with parents/carers. Each training session explores the rationale and successes of CFS™, investigates case studies of the approach to working with families and presents the resource bags for participants to explore, take back to settings and begin to use with their families.

By the end of the training, participants will:

- Understand the importance of the child's environment in developing speaking and listening skills
- Have considered how to create time, space and opportunities for speaking and listening by exploring the CFS™ approach
- Have explored ways of supporting families in their setting up of CFS™ at home e.g, setting up a forum or network at their school/setting for sharing CFS™ ideas and questions

Aims for parents/carers and children using the *CFS™ Bags for Families*:

- Understand the importance of the child's environment in developing speaking and listening skills
- Considered how to create time, space and opportunities for speaking and listening using the CFS™ approach
- Share CFS™ success with other families, identifying their contribution and its impact on their child(ren)'s speaking and listening skills

Our website contains further information about our CFS™ for Families work and other CFS™ programmes.

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Creating optimum conditions for learning