



What makes a good digital home visit?



“I got a match”



Erm I think when you're doing video calls it's so important that you look at each other and with listening skill, eye contact is so essential.

Yeah

and it just gives that reassurance and encouragement to parents so that somebody's listening.

Yeah

So it's a way of getting in touch with families to build that relationship and trust. So it does go a long way, I know it's only eye contact, but it does mean a lot.

Yeah it means a lot. So when - have you done - Are you doing video calls yourself at the moment in your work

Erm I do - I did a match with my family and volunteer today and for me the first match was really importantit is somebody that they can talk to. And there is somebody that is listening to them.

It's still very new to me, but I think it went very well. {laughs} They haven't said no yet, they've said they'll do the call and they're both looking forward to the next call next week, so fingers crossed {laughs}

“And he was in there with three kids”



I had a call recently with a dad who's moved to temporary accommodation, never met the dad before and I think it was only the first or second time I spoke to him and he erm he described his temporary accommodation in really great detail for me. 'cause I asked about it 'cause I wasn't sure if it was a flat or a house or where it was because he'd been living in a Travelodge up until that point and he described in such great detail that was really able to picture the situation he was in. And he was in there with three kids, and it helped for my understanding, but it really helped me to erh empathize what he was actually living with and what he was dealing with on a daily basis. So even though it wasn't a video call, I kind of almost know what to expect if we do video call because it's given me that image

“Just imagining that I was holding that baby”



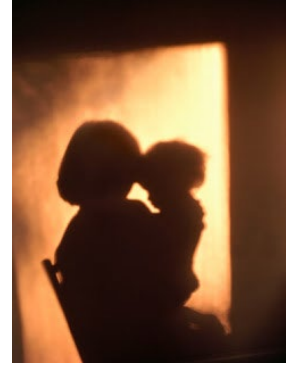
I just sort of - as I'm starting that conversation with them, just sort of pretend in a way that I'm there with them and then I'm giving them my attention and imagining they're sat there. So often the mum's got young children around and a baby on her lap and she's trying to erh feed the baby as well as doing other things, and it's usually a case of, “Right, are you - can you - can you sit comfortably? Have you got everything that you need?”

So why not just pretend in my own way? The parent doesn't realize I'm doing that, but that's what I sort of do in my head.

I'm not saying every time but more often than not, they usually can - we can do quite a lot that way. And yeah, just me, I suppose myself. Using my hands like I am - like I am now really, just - just sort of imagining that I was holding that baby

What's going on behind the door?





Here's an example that has arisen from a piece of work from a worker in a Home Start service – it's a piece of adaptive evolution. What's in the system's ecology to make that happen?

Imagine with me, think with me.



Here's an example that has arisen from a piece of work from a worker in a Home Start service – it's fluid – it was easy – just ask. What is in the system's ecology to make the work easy?

Imagine with me, think with me.



Here's an example that has arisen from a piece of work, coordination work in Home Start – matching families with volunteers. What made all the 'effort' fun? What's in the system to make this 'effort' fun and successful?

Imagine with me, think with me.

What's going on behind the door?



Values and Commitments

Diversity in the Workforce

Capacity in the workers

Positioning the co-workers
– the families

Partiality of knowledge and
ways of knowing

Frame we use





A Shy Crown

Gaps in the Canopy

Adapted to create life in
the forest ecology

Gaps – not just for
practitioner thinking,
but for practitioner
placing – imagining –
understanding –
wondering about the
place in the person and
the person in the place

References of Interest to you and to me

Some of my related references that might interest you:

James, D.M. & Weich, H. (2020). Preparing a supervision model for the aftermath of Grenfell: An auto-ethnographic inquiry of relationship-based supervision. *Journal of Social Work Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650533.2020.1737516>

James, D.M., Pilnick, A., Hall, A., Collins, L. (2016). Participants' Use of Enacted Scenes in Research Interviews: A Method for Reflexive Analysis in Health and Social Care, *Social Science & Medicine*, 151, 38-45.

Pilnick, A., James, D. (2013) "I'm thrilled that you see that": Guiding parents to see success in interactions with children with deafness and autistic spectrum disorder, *Social Science & Medicine*, 99, 89-101.

Theoretical ideas that Interest me:

Brockmeier J. (2015). *Beyond the Archive: Memory, Narrative and the Autobiographical Process*. New York. OUP.

Egan, K. (1997). *The Educated Mind: How Cognitive Tools Shape Our Understanding*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Ferguson, H. (2018). How social workers reflect in action and when and why they don't: the possibilities and limits to reflective practice in social work. *Social Work Education*, 37(4), 415- 427.

Lear, J. (2006). *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge.

Shotter, J. (2011). *Getting It: Witness-Thinking and the Dialogical.....In Practice*: Hampton Press Inc. New York.

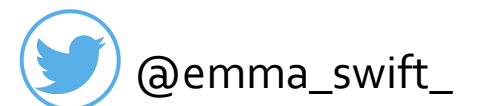
Look out for:

Creating voice of the child in Pathways to Talking with Photography (White, R., Ravetz and James).

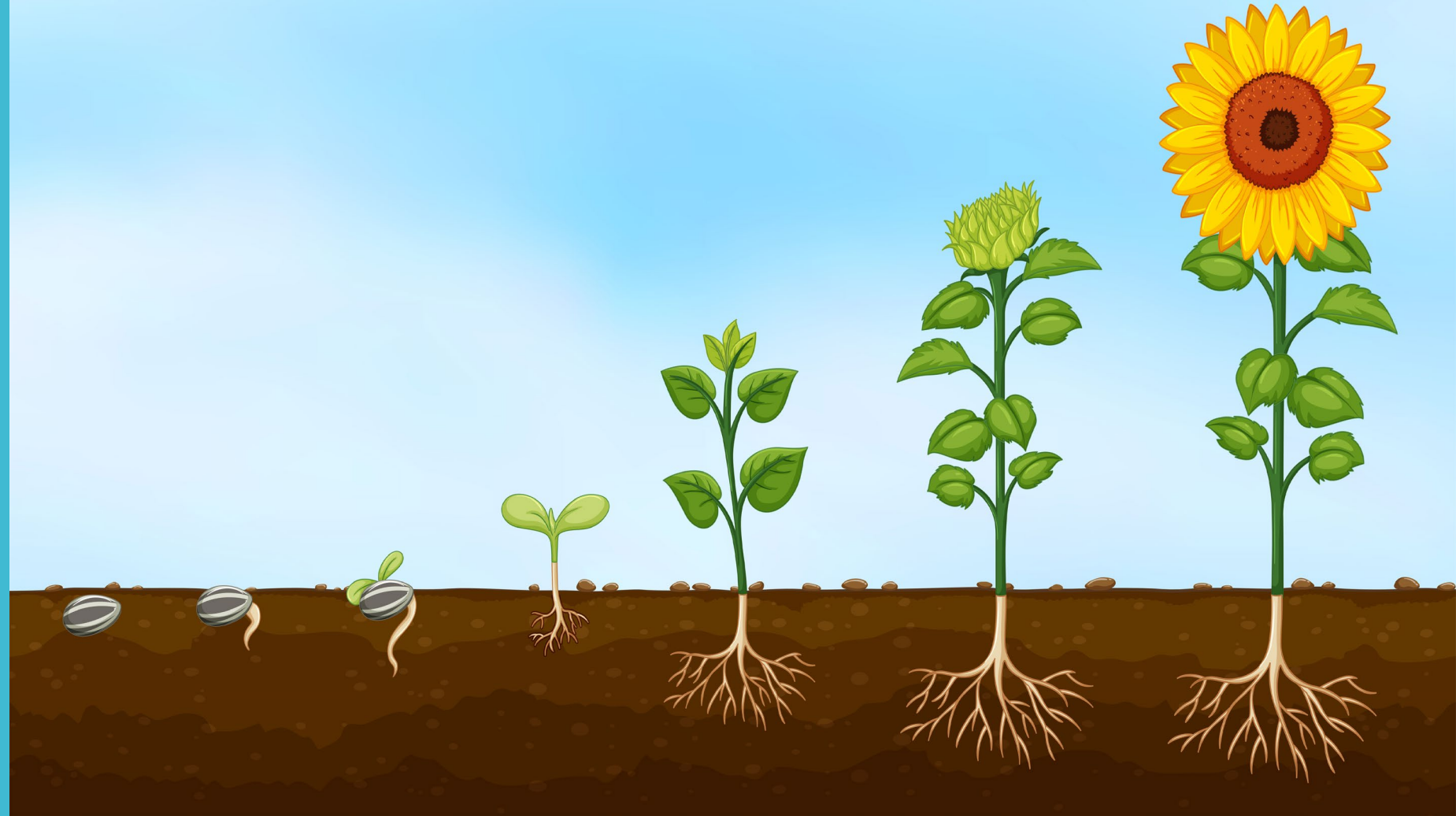


What makes a good digital home visit: Ideas to consider and 'what next?'

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“It’s a new
world, it’s a
zoom thing”
[Stockport]:

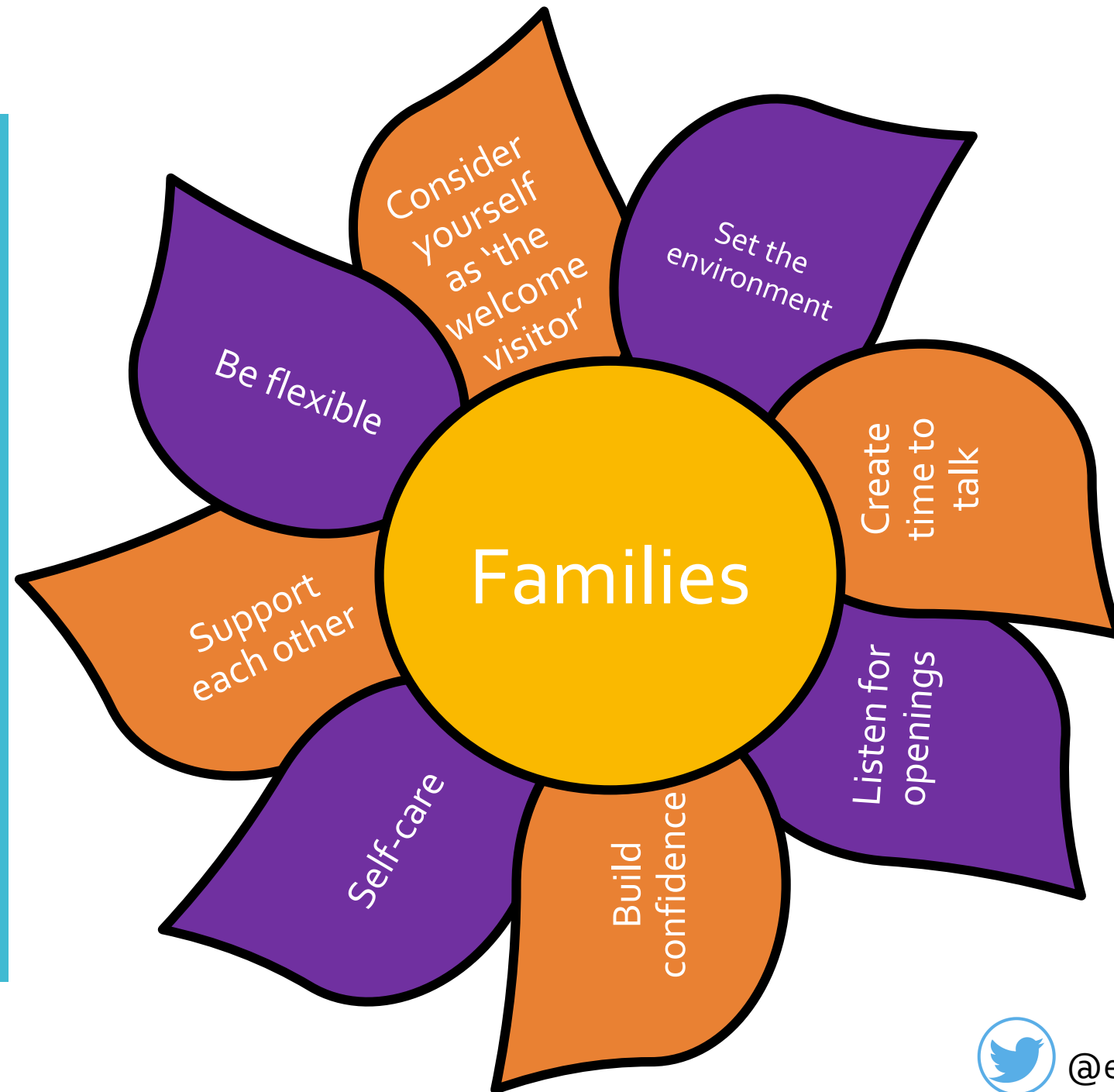


Designed by brgfx / Freepik"



@emma_swift_

We heard voices both individually and collectively from the meetings and developed some ideas to consider:



Ideas to Consider:

1. Setting the environment - The parent is observing the workers world:



Effective positioning of your camera, are you fully in the frame, does the environment look warm and inviting?



Visuals: objects which are visible a mug of tea, colourful pens, note pads.



Your posture and none –verbal communication. Try to be relaxed, calm and welcoming.

Breaks down any perceived barriers or hierarchy

“pretend in a way that I'm there with them, and then I'm giving them my attention and imagining they're sat there”
[Oldham]



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Ideas to Consider:

2. Listen for openings:



Enable parents to paint a picture or a visual of their world. You can facilitate this by asking them to describe certain aspects or provide examples.



Paint pictures for yourselves: "I have to sit there in my bedroom on the mobile phone, think-wondering what these people look like, where are they in the house? I ask are you in the living room? Are you upstairs? Where are the children? What are the children doing? So yo- it's pic- painting that - your own picture of what the house looks like" [Oldham]



"Making the unconscious conscious" [Bolton] – try to pick up on the little things.

Ideas to Consider:

'families don't want to do video calls, they just want to do it over the phone [Tameside]'

3. Be flexible offer telephone or video calls.

- During face to face interactions we constantly monitor what each other is doing.
- Video calls require a different skill set: sometimes we have to fleetingly process people's faces.

Be:	Ask yourself:	Learn:	Consider:
More observant to cues or reactions	If turning a camera off means something significant? Does it act as a cue to check in?	To reflect in the moment during video calls.	If the parent does not feel comfortable turning on their camera, could you/ the worker leave theirs on to build a sense of connection/ rapport?



Ideas to Consider:

4. Build confidence:

- Important to build your own confidence and that of the family you are working with.

With reference to the picnic under the table: "Any little thing you can spot that's positive is really good and that'll give that mum so much confidence" [Oldham]

"I like being with people, doing that one to one visiting is what I enjoy. So now sitting at home is out - was out of my comfort zone, but now I've adapted my own skills" [Oldham]



. Have confidence with the technology you are using



Consider yourself as 'a welcome visitor' [Stockport], whether that be in person or during digital visits



Ideas to Consider:

5. Create time to talk :



Use mirroring and non-verbal communication over video calls, provide affirmation or reassurance over the phone.



Offer to call back if the parent appears unable to talk. Discuss appropriate times to call, try to set a time and date.

6. Self-care:

“So I think when you do the calls ... you're going to hear a lot of different things, but you have to work out how best to protect yourself as well... if you're speaking to 3, 4, 5 families, you can hear as many traumatic stories from each of them... you can't go from one call to the next to the next if you're not able to recover in between times... I think to be effective at supporting somebody, you need to be very effective at supporting yourself “ [Bolton]



@emma_swift_

Ideas to consider:

7. Support each other :



Keeping in contact with colleagues both formally and informally.



Have a team meeting on a weekly basis to check-in and discuss case load.



Regular conversations with manager – “having an open door policy and being open for staff” [Bolton]

To reduce pressure and provide reassurance



What's next?

"Even over a phone call people can hear a smile [Bolton]"



@emma_swift_

Training needs around telephone calls, especially for the first digital visit.

It was expressed that :

- "I think 8 times outta 10 it is by telephone call" [Bolton]
- "So doing like telephone or just WhatsApp erm you're just gauging from what you been told, and sometimes I think things can be missed" [Tameside]
- "some of my staff in particular really struggled not having that face to face you know, actually sitting, chatting, seeing people's expressions ... you know seeing a smile, seeing a cry" [Bolton]

Consider:

- ✓ Use additional training resources which provide only audio clip, no visual.
- ✓ Training which surrounds how an opening can be created without a visual.

What's next:

Supporting workers and volunteers with video interactions:

Training surrounding opening up the conversation:

"starting off with something that is not what you are ringing for, How are you doing? How are you feeling?"
[Bolton]

How to overcome the hidden presence in the room:

"So when I talk to mum, I'm not gonna say, so how you been? How you've been coping with everything that's been going on with your husband or with your children when they just here? She can't say that? You know, is that gonna raise an argument [Stockport]"



@emma_swift_

What's next?

Developing further skills surrounding active listening and review questioning:

- ✓ If we listen for pictures this can create an opening which can be worked with.
- ✓ Review questioning increases clarity and understanding.

Share experiences and empower each other: Knowing how to empower, reassure and support each other during these complex and ever changing times.

'Lots of my staff have said that they do not feel like they are doing the job they have been paid to do"[Bolton]



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What makes a good digital home visit?: Linguistic observations

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Corpus linguistics

The study of language in use by analysing the occurrence and frequency of forms in a corpus



STOCKPORT



TAMESIDE



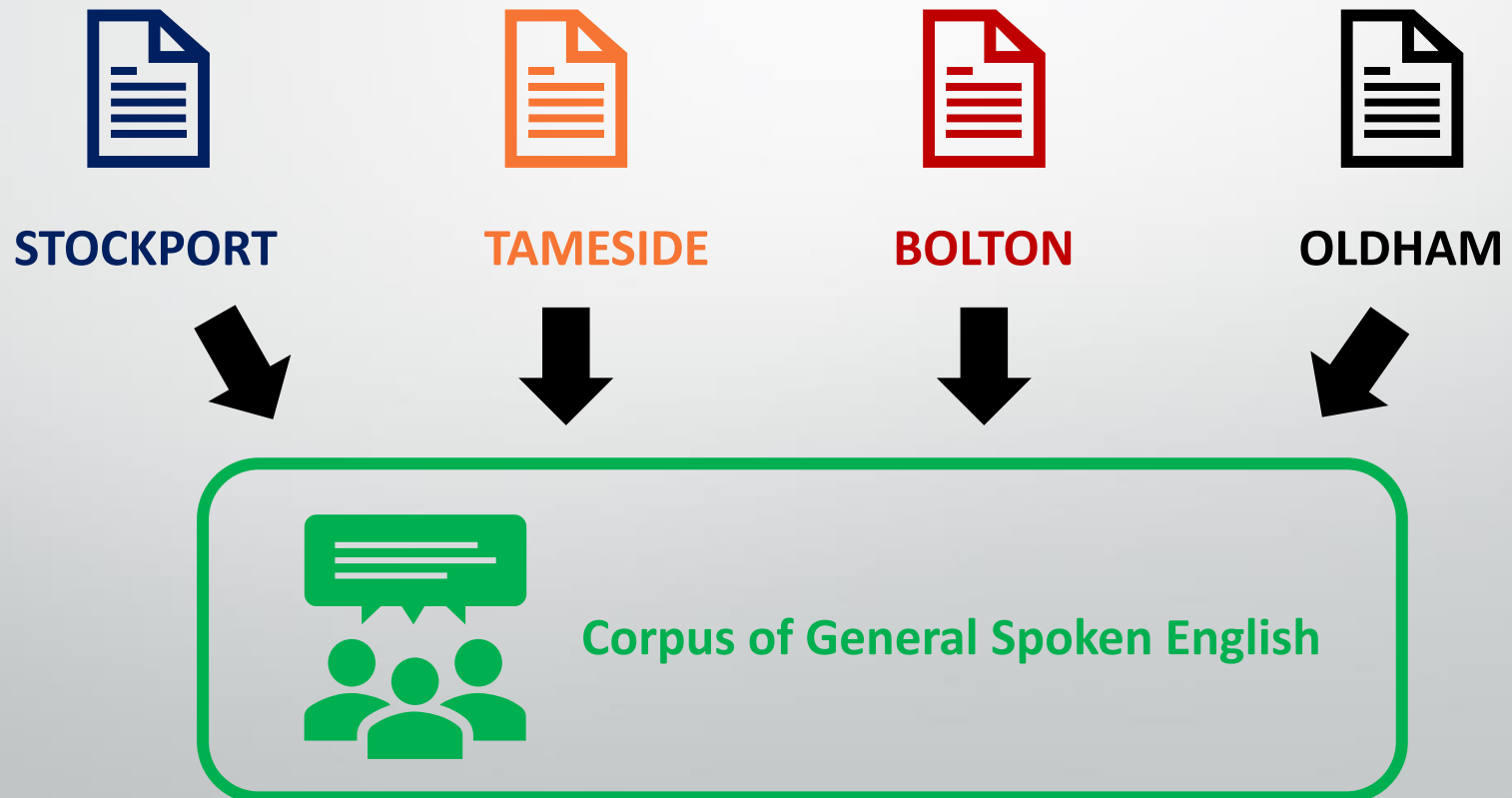
BOLTON



OLDHAM

Keyness

Looking for language that is used more frequently than 'normal'





STOCKPORT

- Miley
- Becks
- hi
- conversation
- listening
- video
- almost
- children
- hear
- hello
- show
- talk
- sometimes
- important
- hard



TAMESIDE

- Miley
- parenting
- parent
- kind_of
- child
- listening
- video
- obviously
- children
- sometimes
- exactly
- around
- maybe
- trying
- Mum



BOLTON

- body_language
- hug
- face_to_face
- virtual
- Zoom
- ok
- challenge
- worker
- families
- engaged
- staff
- kind_of
- seeing
- manager
- hi



OLDHAM

- coordinator
- volunteer
- families
- holding
- arm
- baby
- each_other
- family
- support
- myself
- usually
- obviously
- person
- at_the_moment
- maybe

What makes a good digital home visit?

The importance of 'listening'



STOCKPORT

“you can tell she was actively **listening**”

“how are we protecting the children if we’re **listening** and even encouraging to talk about their children and their life while the children are **listening**”

“[the worker] repeated what she said so it showed that she was really **listening** to her”

“**listening** to the tone of the person who’s on the telephone”

“while you’re **listening**, also try and observe which you would normally do wouldn’t you if you were in a room but it’s really hard when you’re watching a video”



TAMESIDE

What makes a good digital home visit?

From 'face-to-face' to the 'virtual'



BOLTON

“some of my staff in particular really struggled not having that **face to face** you know, actually sitting, chatting, seeing people’s expressions”

“I found it quite difficult at the start when we switched from doing **face to face** to phone support [...] I felt a little bit out of control with how I can best support the families”

“[staff] feel that working together and meeting up either **virtual** or by telephone call or **face to face**, that actually running things by each other has been the most beneficial thing”

“Even though we’re not **face to face** with somebody [...] being aware that other people can pick up on those signals”

“when you’re seeing somebody **face to face** as in even through Zoom, it kind of – it softens the approach”

“when you’re doing a virtual **face to face** like that, it’s very different because they’re engaged”

What makes a good digital home visit?

What's possible 'at the moment'



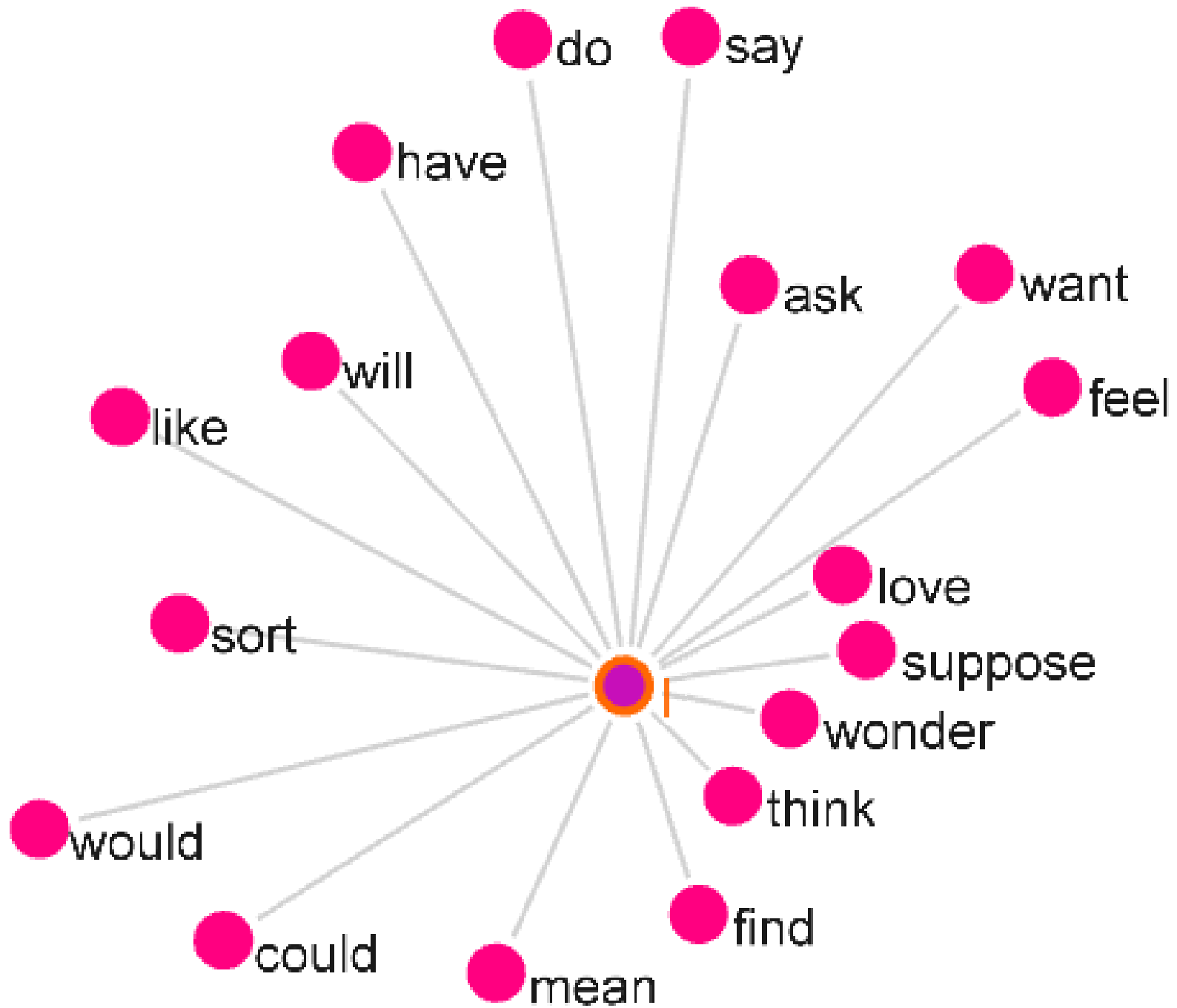
OLDHAM

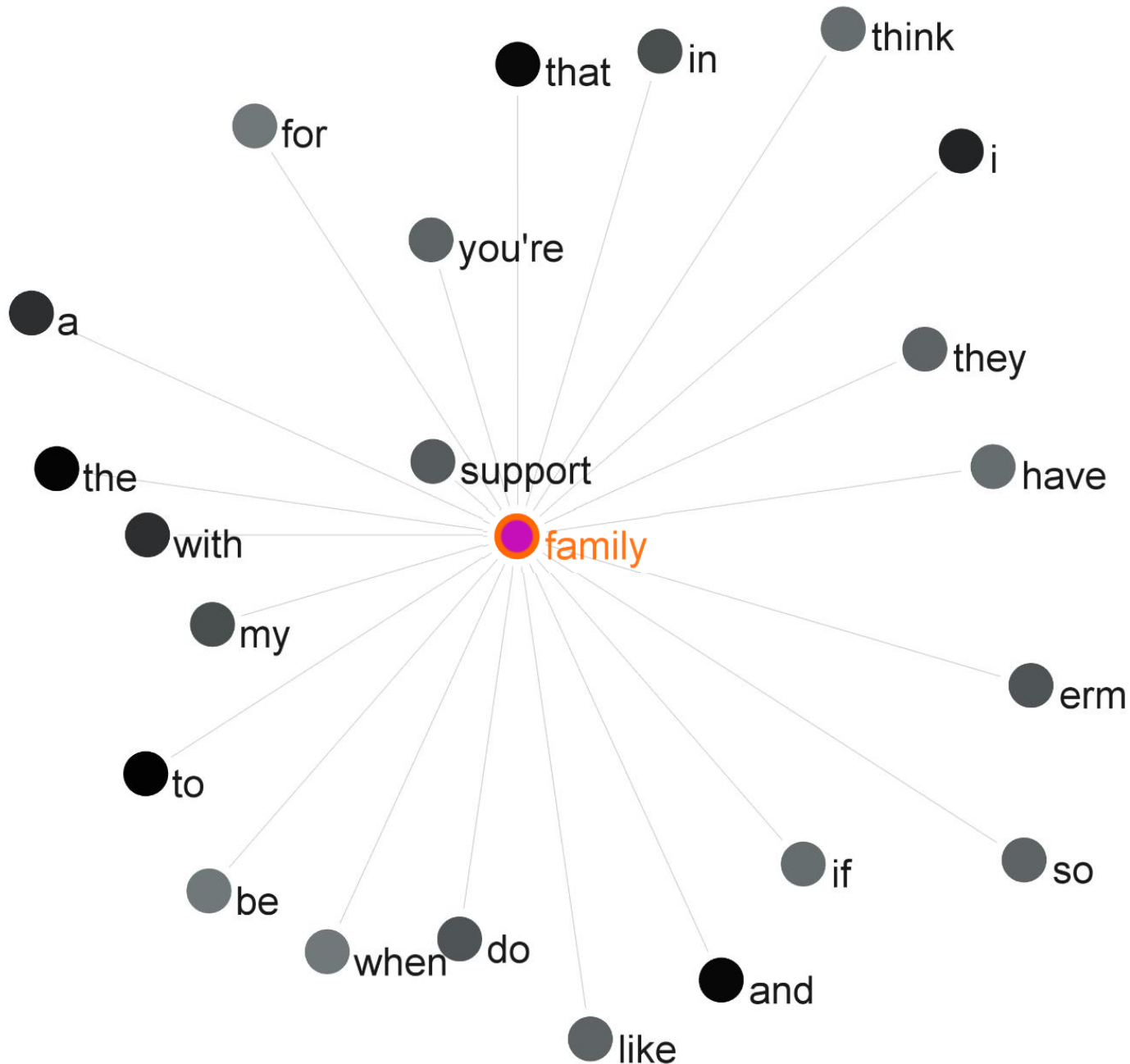
“with remote service support that we have in place **at the moment** it’s so important that we see each other and put a name to a face”

“a lot of my families that I have **at the moment**, I’ve never met these families”

“I’m doing a prep course **at the moment** [...] and a few of them have got like the videos off so it’s hard to see what the volunteers look like”

“obviously they’re at home **at the moment**, so we know where they are”





“how I can best **support** the families”

-

“what we need to do to **support** families”

-

“I had to learn to **support** the families in a different way”

-

“We’re there to **support** families when they need us and when they want us as well”