

Words and Pictures

A Guide for Families with a Social Worker



What is a Words and Pictures?

Words and Pictures is a way of explaining important information to children.

It is created by parents, with support from a Social Worker or other professionals, to share information in a child friendly way, as a clear, age appropriate story with pictures.

This guide explains what Words and Pictures is and what creating a Words and Pictures will involve.

To help you understand this, your Social Worker will share an example of a Words and Pictures explanation with you.

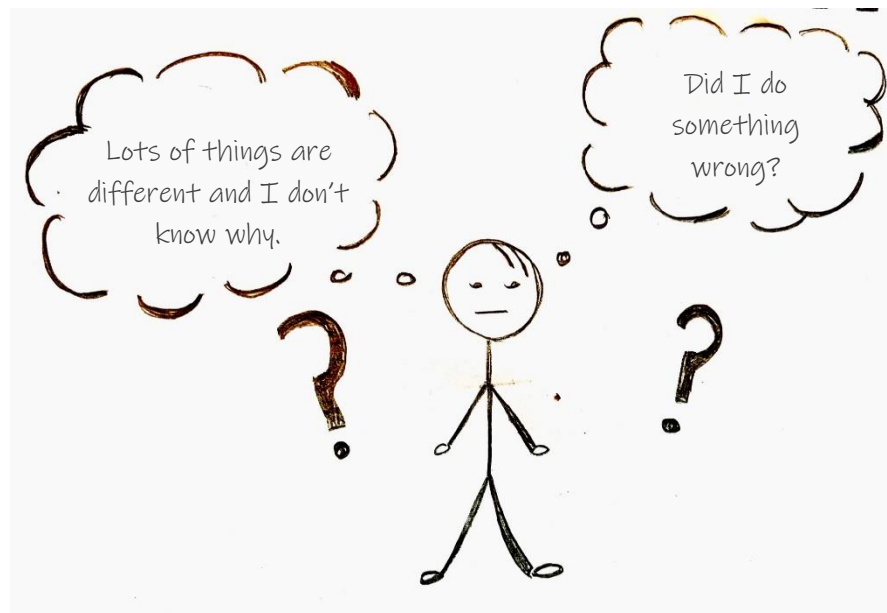


Why complete a Words and Pictures?

It's likely your child will have lots of questions about what's happening at the moment, especially if this has resulted in some changes to their day to day life. They might be wondering why new people, like their Social Worker, are visiting and they will have probably overheard some conversations that they don't understand.

Creating a Words and Pictures will help you explain to your child why a Social Worker is involved in their life, so they understand why people are worried and what you and everyone else are doing to keep them safe.

It's an opportunity to answer any questions your child might have, and, because you are involved in creating and sharing the Words and Pictures, everyone will be on the same page and give the same answers.



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What needs to be included in the Words and Pictures?

The Words and Pictures is your explanation to your child about the worries that have resulted in the Social Worker and other professionals becoming involved in their life. It will explain the history and the events that led to the worries in a child friendly way, it's an opportunity for you to explain this from your perspective.

There are certain facts that the Social Worker will ask you to include to make sure your child understands the worrying things that have happened. This will include factual information that other agencies have reported like school, health professionals or the police.

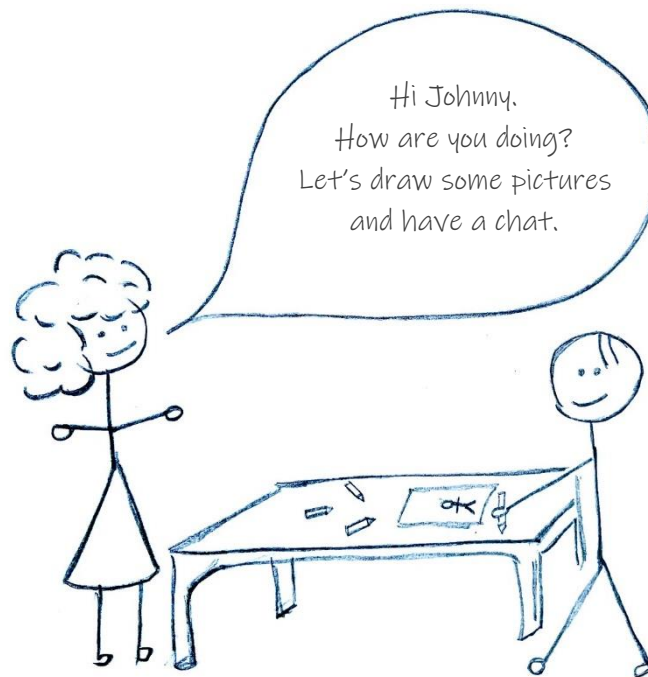
The Words and Pictures will also include information about the good things that have happened in their lives, for example, what you and others did to try and address the worries and how you tried to keep them safe. It is important that we help you to tell your child the most important things you want them to know, like how proud you are of them and how much you love and care for them. It will also talk about meaningful happy events in their life.



Where to start?

Your Social Worker will talk to you about the key things that need to be included from their perspective. They will explore with you what your child already knows, what questions they have and what they might have overheard. They will need to have similar conversations with members of your extended family, or your network, and other significant adults in your child's life. The Social Worker will talk you through this when you meet.

The Social Worker will also speak to your child to understand what questions they have and what they are worried about so that you can cover this in the Words and Pictures story that you make for them.



Writing the story

Words and Pictures should start with something positive, for example, how much you love your child and how you have tried your best to be a good parent, before talking about the worries. We do not want the story to be too hard for your child to read, so your Social Worker will help you include the good things throughout the story as well as the worries. It should also end with something positive, like how you are trying to get the worries sorted out so that they will be safe and happy in the future.

The story will be written using words and language that your child would use and understand, like the words you use to describe things that might be unique to your family or culture.

So, if you always use the word 'bairn' to talk about children, that's the word that would be used in the Words and Pictures or if a child had a particular way of describing a bump or bruise as 'a hurt' that word would be used, if the Words and Pictures needed to include a description of a time a child was injured.

Your Social Worker will talk to you about this to make sure that the story uses the words and language you use in your family. They will also discuss with you how to explain any worries in a way that is appropriate for your child's age.

You can write the story yourself or share information with your Social Worker and ask them to write it for you. The Social Worker will take all of this information and use it to create a first draft of the story, they will share this with you, so you have the opportunity to ask for any changes and further develop it. Once this is agreed the next step is to add the pictures.

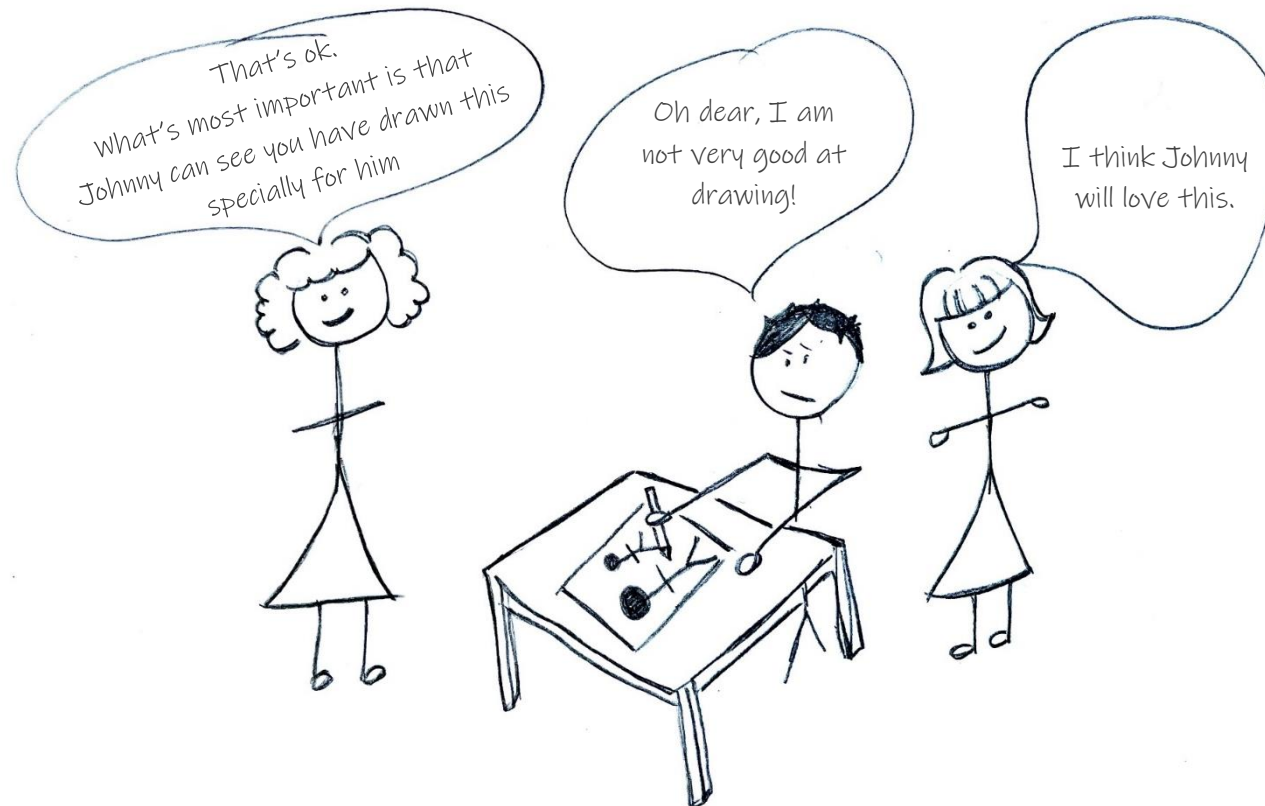


Drawing the pictures

When the Social Worker shares the first draft with you, they will make suggestions about what pictures to include.

The Social Worker will ask you to draw the pictures. Don't worry you don't have to be an artist, we ask you to use simple stick figures (and include speech and thought bubbles). Your stick figures will help communicate the story, and your child will know that you have taken the time to do this, which will also show them how much you care.

It's important not to use photos or clip art as it's unlikely you will find images to fit your story and something drawn specially for your child will be much more meaningful to them.



Sharing the Words and Pictures

We would like you to share the Words and Pictures with your child and the important people who are part of your chosen support/ safety network.

This is so everyone understands the agreed story so that no matter who the child speaks to they get the same story from them too. This will avoid the adults giving confusing or conflicting messages to your child in the future.

Your child might have more questions about the Words and Pictures document after they have processed the information and it is possible that the story might need some further work to get this just right. Once this is done everyone will be given a copy so that, no matter when, or where your child is, if they need someone to explain what has been happening again the story can be read.

