

Head, Heart, Hands: social pedagogy in UK foster care

Robert Tapsfield, Chief Executive, the Fostering Network

Sam McDermid, Senior Research Associate, Centre for Child and Family Research

Helen Trivedi, Research Associate, Centre for Child and Family Research

Programme aims

This programme will demonstrate the impact that introducing a social pedagogic approach can make to foster carers and the lives of the children they foster

By doing so we will improve the outcomes for children in care and contribute to them being able to fulfil their potential

The long term aim is then to embed this approach across the UK and enable far more children in care to fulfil their potential

Programme aims

To develop professional, confident foster carers who can improve the lives of children in care

To provide a platform for transforming the role of foster carers

To implement cultural and systemic change to support this approach

To develop social pedagogic foster care

Programme aims



The programme partners

The Head, Heart, Hands programme is led by the Fostering Network with delivery partners Jacaranda Development, Professor Pat Petrie and ThemPra Social Pedagogy.

The Social Pedagogy Consortium

Professor Pat Petrie



Demonstration sites



Evaluation partners



Social pedagogy is well established across Europe...

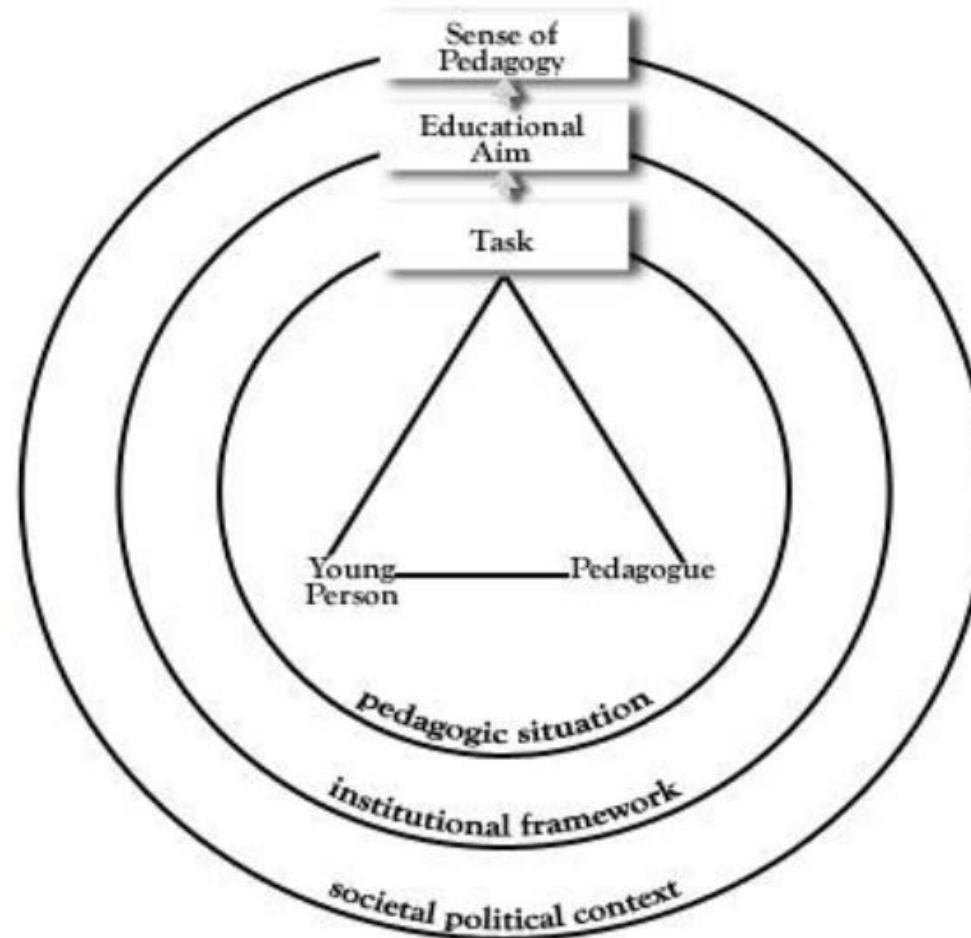


...but looks different in every country...

...our job is to find out what it might look like in the UK.

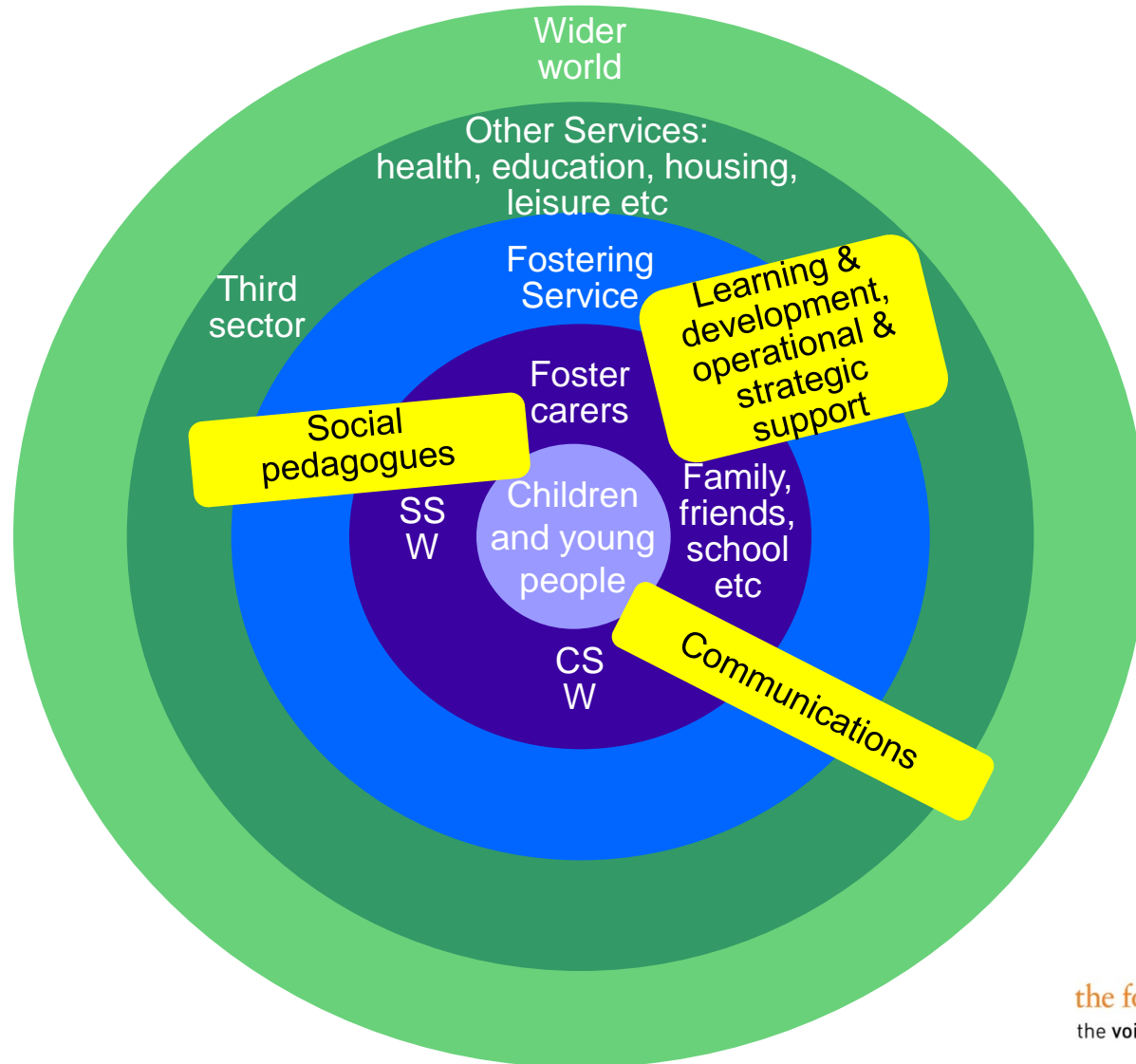
A systemic approach to developing a social pedagogic approach to foster care

Developing Modern Social Pedagogy



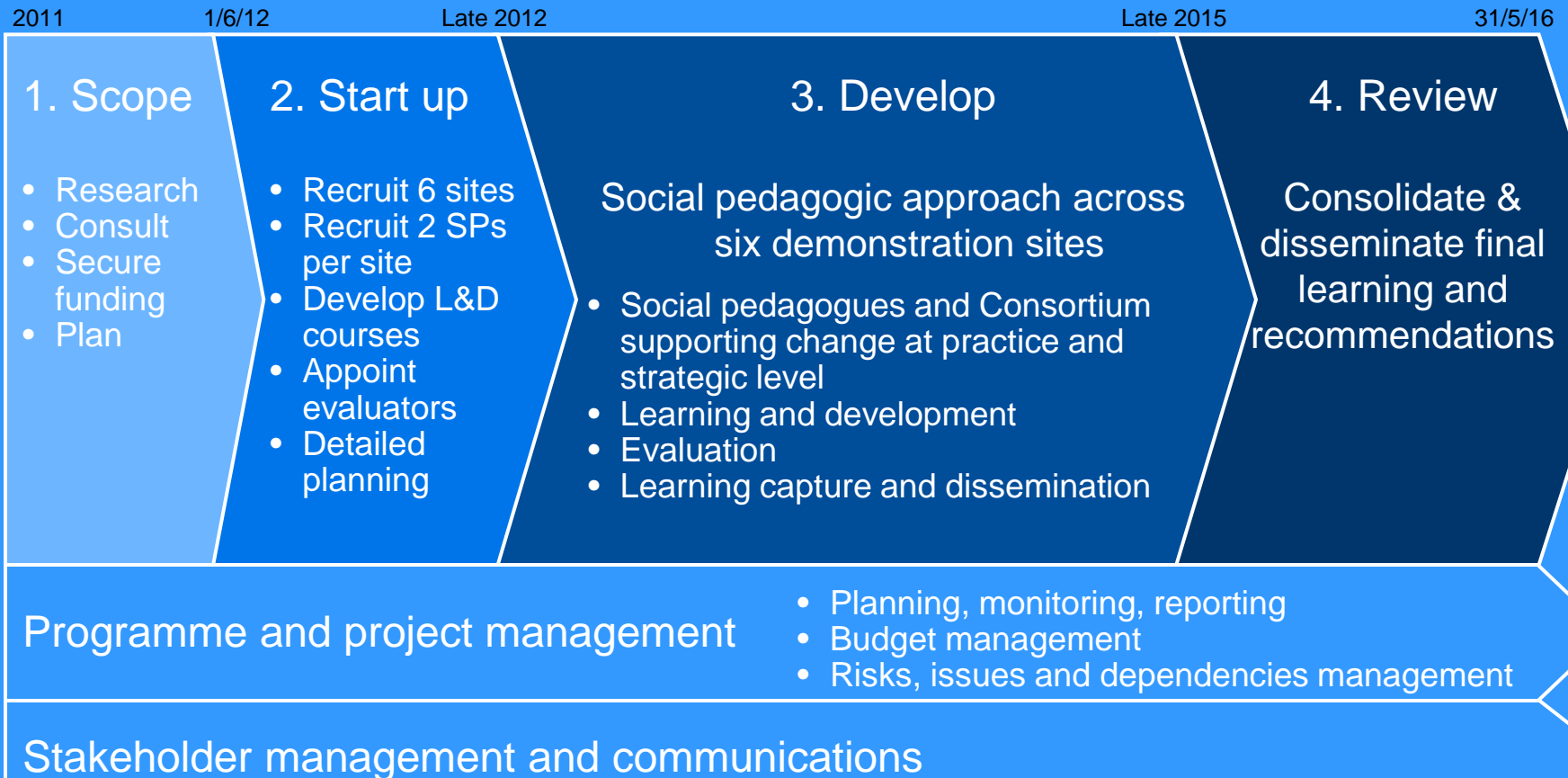
Badry & Knapp,
2003

Children in foster care are the programme focus



We are now in the develop phase of a four year programme

Head, Heart and Hands Programme



Achievements and challenges

Achievements

Passion, hard work and dedication across the programme.

Learning and development courses completed and positively received. Wider programme of activities to support learning and cultivate systemic change.

Foster carers and social workers turning theory into practice:

- Stronger relationships
- Confident advocates
- Theoretical underpinning
- Meaningful peer support

Systemic changes starting to emerge:

- Recruitment and training
- Reflective practice
- Attitude to risk
- Shared language
- Addressing silos
- Making new links

Achievements and challenges

Challenges

Embedding social pedagogic practice

Sites are feeling the strain! But programme has great energy. Resource demands of the programme (both financial and time) have been higher than sites originally anticipated.

Nurturing systemic change. Facing a general culture of risk aversion and a continuing 'tick-box' approach with high levels of both real and perceived red tape.

Co-creation, reflection and dialogue perceived as challenging and time consuming.

The nature of the personalised journey

Sustainability and roll out in sites

Measuring impact and demonstrating cost benefit



Evaluating social pedagogy

- Social pedagogy is an ‘approach’ not a method
 - A way of thinking or a value base
 - Not a manualised programme with key features
- Difficult to define
 - ‘We’re doing it already’
 - Differentiating it from good quality fostering ‘as usual’
- Constructed through the context
 - ‘meaning making’
 - Individual’s relationship with the context is of primary importance

Overview of the evaluation

- Complimentary and overlapping modules
- Baseline and two follow up data collection points
 - **Module 1: Impact on children and young people**
 - Face to face interviews children and young people
 - Analysis of management information systems data and additional case file information
 - **Module 2: Impact on foster carers and on practice**
 - On-line survey and telephone interviews with foster carers
 - Chaired group discussions with practitioners
 - Face-to-face interviews with social pedagogues
 - **Module 3: Implementation process, outcomes and changes in the system**
 - Interviews with programme managers
 - On-line survey with practitioners
 - Case studies (includes face-to-face and telephone interviews)

Foster carers' reflections on social pedagogy as an approach

- An approach or a method?
 - Two discourses
 - The learning journey will these conceptualisations change over time?
- 'Doing it already'
 - Both positive and negative
- Validating tacit knowledge
 - Confidence
 - Re-affirming of the role of foster carers
 - Does this validation have any impact in the longer term?

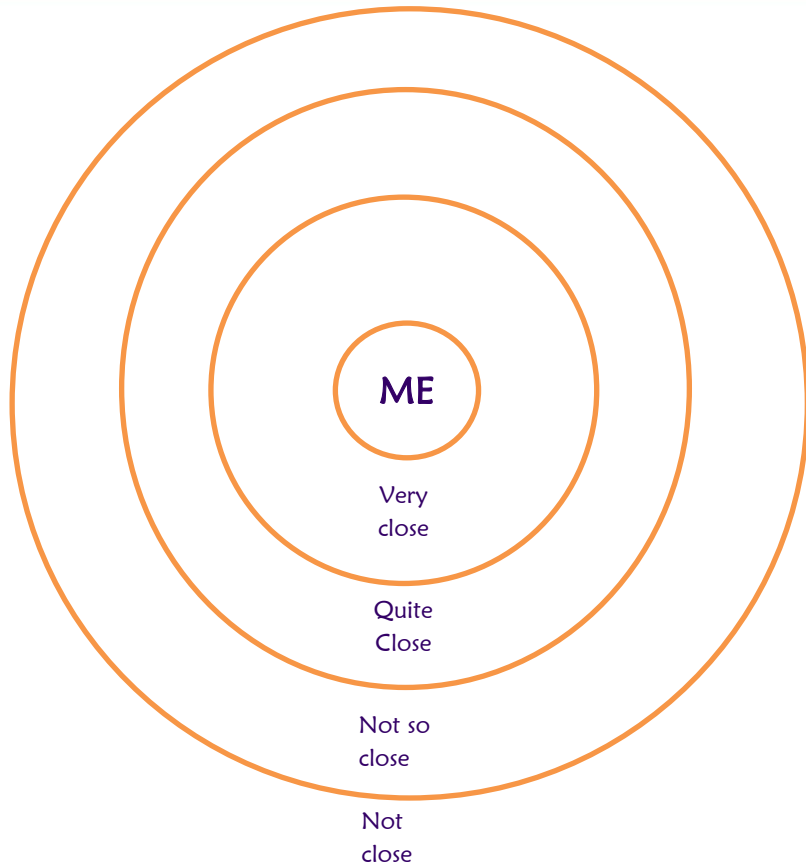
Foster carers' reflections on social pedagogy within a context

- Assimilating social pedagogy into existing practices and language
 - What is the impact of a new way of thinking about certain practices?
- Social pedagogy as a way to change the wider system
 - System understood by foster carers as being bureaucratic and risk averse
- How 'ready' is the wider system for social pedagogy
 - The importance of the role and support of supervising social workers
 - The importance of a (perceived) commitment from the system

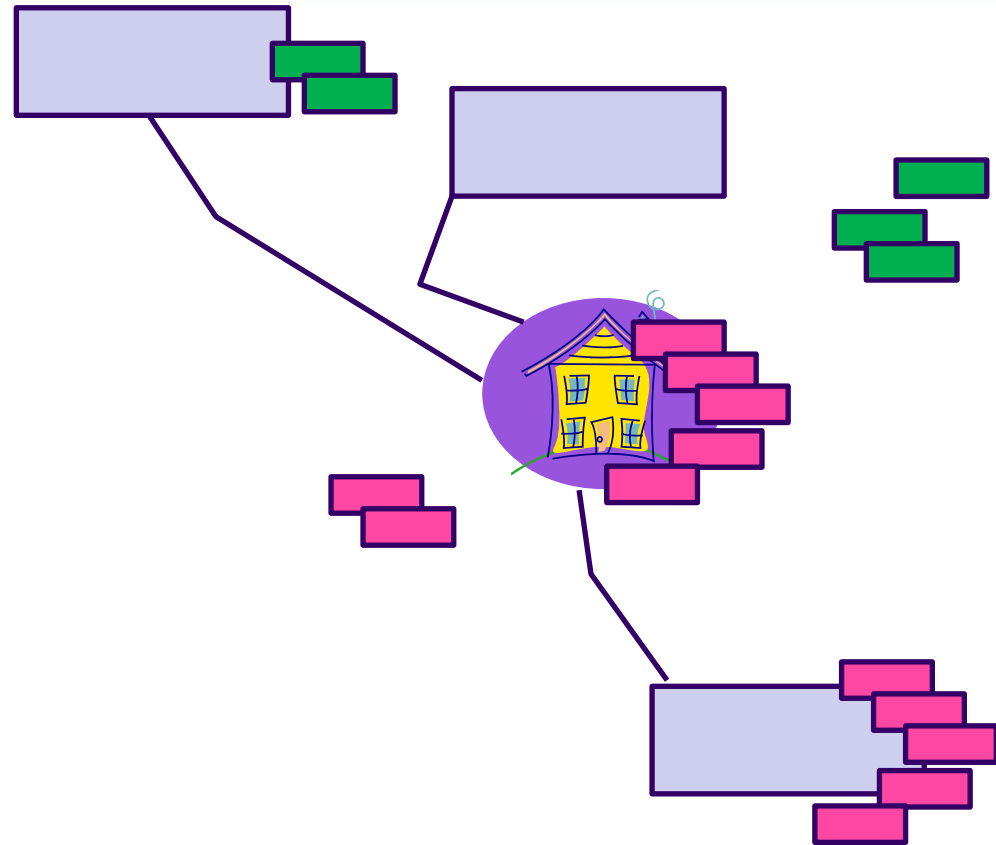
Interviews with children and young people

- Child led informal interviews
- Adaptable
- From support circles to the ‘lifemap’
 - ‘Lifemap’ rich data created and interpreted by the participating young person

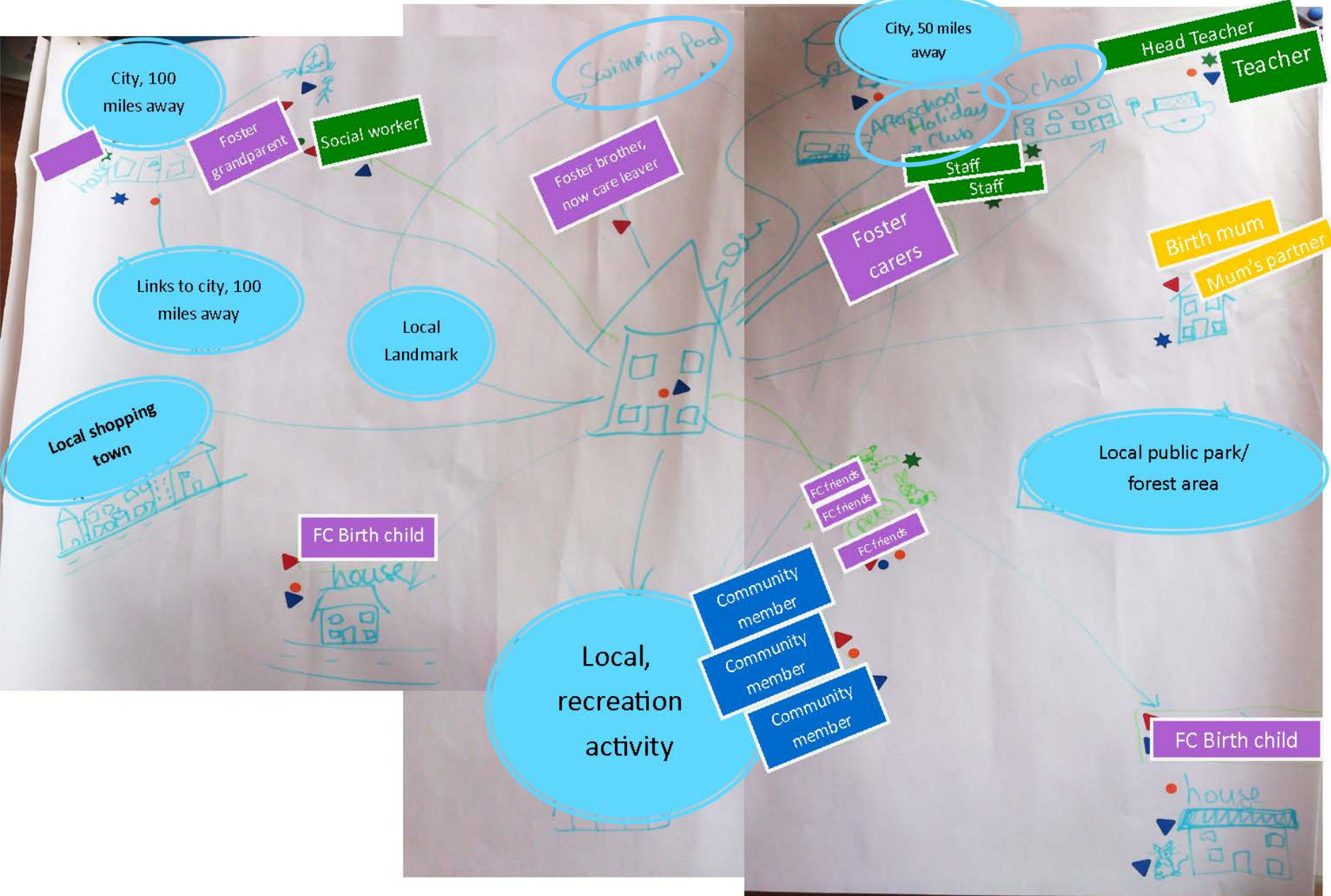
Support circle



Lifemap

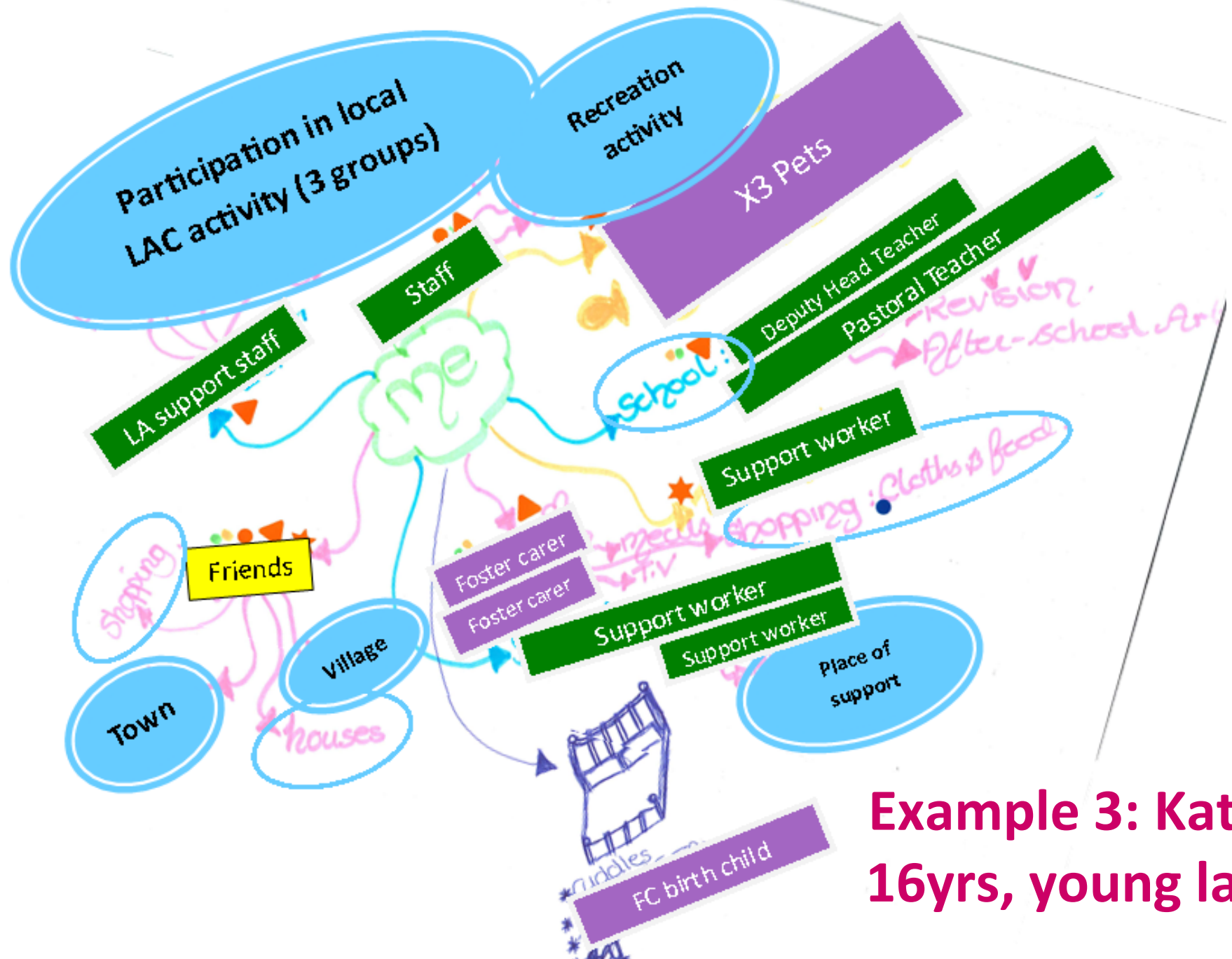


Example 1: James, 6yrs, boy



Example 2: Sophie, 9yrs, girl





**Example 3: Katie,
16yrs, young lady**

Summary findings

- Role of the foster carer
 - Children and young people's lifemaps
 - Re-affirming the foster carer role
- Complexity
 - Children and young people's 'lifeworld'
 - Complexity of social pedagogy assimilation for foster carers
- Professional network
 - Role of professionals for children and young people
 - Relationship between foster carers and the system

Next steps

- Follow up with foster carers and children and young people
 - How the understanding of social pedagogy is developed and its impact of practice
- Views from social care personnel
 - Exploring their conceptualisation of social pedagogy and the Head, Heart, Hands programme
 - Role of the social worker and other social care personnel and the interplay with foster family and key decision making