



Triangle

PRESS RELEASE 17 02 2018

Helping child witnesses: Guardian article about Triangle's work with very young children giving evidence to the police and the courts.

In spring 2016 Rachel Williams, a journalist from the Guardian, asked to observe our legal work with very young children, but we were concerned about the anonymity of the children and the possible risks to the trial process. We asked the views of some children and families and took advice from the police, the CPS, the NCA, and the Ministry of Justice. We worked out with the Guardian how they could write about what we do and still respect children's rights to privacy. Then, still with some trepidation, we said yes. We had no editorial control.

Across almost two years Rachel has seen us in action with young children in assessments and interviews and at court. We are pleased to have enabled the Guardian to produce this piece and welcome the opportunity to show that very young children can give evidence that can be relied on. We do not need to wait until they are teenagers to keep them safe.

- [Triangle](#) is an independent organisation enabling children to communicate about important things, especially in legal proceedings.
- Triangle was founded in 1997. Across the last 20 years we have worked with more than 10,000 children through our [intermediary](#), [forensic interviewing](#), [advocacy](#), [consultancy](#), [specialist support](#), and [expert opinion](#) services. We remain an independent organisation; not part of any government department or agency or charity. We work across the four nations of the UK and sometimes beyond.
- We have five directors: [Ruth Marchant](#), [Maxime Cole](#), [Lorraine Lalor](#), [Laura Jones](#) and [Charlie Orrell](#). We all work directly with children and young people alongside our leadership roles.
- Triangle is unusual in the way we link practice, training and consultancy. We understand that children are capable and competent, and so we involve them in all the work we do, including how we choose, train and assess our staff.
- Triangle's mission is to reposition children and young people in the UK as competent communicators and active agents in their own lives.

For more information www.triangle.org.uk; info@triangle.org.uk or call 01273 305888.

What next?

Much child abuse goes unreported (85% of sexual abuse, [OCC 2015](#)). In our experience this is especially so for young children, who may show and tell for months or years before someone responds. Early pick up of concerns is essential, but Triangle sees two major barriers to this:

- 'Disclosure' is often seen as a one-off, one-way event where a child 'tells' an adult. We need to reframe disclosure as an interaction in which the listening adult may need to play an active, enabling role, and also respond to what a child DOES as well as what they say.

- Many professionals are given negative, prohibitive guidance about responding to early concerns - including long lists of what not to do: *Don't investigate, don't press the child for information; avoid making promises you can't keep, don't comment, don't react...*

Such prohibitive, negative guidance can accidentally silence children, by creating anxiety, hesitancy or confusion in the adults. Triangle believes that keeping children safe is everybody's business - the responsibility of every single person that knows a child, rather than a specialist job to be done by experts or handed over to distant anonymous helplines. Triangle believes that all adults need to know how to respond when they are worried about a child, and the message to children should be to tell friends or family or other safe adults (neighbours, teaching assistants, teachers, nurses, doctors).

Therefore Triangle has developed 'Opening Doors', a framework of practical, evidence-based guidance that is entirely positive, i.e. it explains what to do rather than what not to do when children or young people may be telling or showing you that they are at risk.

Opening Doors is the theme of [Triangle's 2018 conference](#) . We are also publishing a series of papers about the approach, for social workers, doctors, nurses, psychologists, police officers, psychotherapists, early-years workers, clinical therapists, residential care workers, foster carers, parents and youth workers.

For more information

See our website www.triangle.org.uk; email info@triangle.org.uk or call 01273 305888.