

Three Way Street Chapters Summary.

Summary of the Introduction Video

The video introduces the concept of **three-way communication** involving:

- A **child**
- An **adult** (e.g. parent, carer, or support person)
- A **professional** (e.g. social worker, teacher, health worker)

It highlights that:

- Children are often **marginalised** in these interactions due to their dependence on adults and the way professionals typically conduct meetings.
- The goal is to **place children at the centre** of these interactions to improve outcomes and engagement.

How the Film Was Made

- Filmed in a studio at **Triangle**, using **real professionals** and **children/young people** from Triangle's consultative groups.
- No scripts or actors were used — participants acted as themselves.
- Some interactions were **deliberately flawed** to show what doesn't work.
- Children were then asked to reflect on what helped or hindered their involvement and to share messages they wanted adults to hear.

Key Themes

- The footage is **authentic**, showing real dynamics in three-way interactions.
- Children's **voices and opinions** are central — they explain what works and what doesn't.
- The film offers **practical strategies** for professionals to improve communication and engagement with children in multi-party settings.

Chapter One.

Core Message

This chapter focuses on how to **centre the child** in the planning phase of three-way meetings — even before the meeting takes place. It highlights the importance of **involving children early**, respecting their preferences, and preparing both them and the supporting adult.

Key Themes & Strategies

Involving the Child in Planning

- Children are often **excluded** from planning — appointments are made without their knowledge or input.
- The video includes children’s voices expressing frustration at being left out:

“No one even told me where I was going until we were in the car.”

Giving Choices

- Wherever possible, professionals should offer children **choices** about:
 - **When** and **where** the meeting happens
 - **Who** will be present

Gathering Information

- Before meeting a child, professionals should learn:
 - Their **communication style**
 - **Favourite activities**
 - Any **specific needs or preferences**

Making Direct Contact

- Contacting the child directly (in addition to the adult) helps build trust.
 - Methods include: **letters, cards, leaflets, emails, or texts**
 - Example: “Hi Amelia, looking forward to seeing you next week. Let me know if you have any questions.”

Controlling the Narrative

- Children often receive **inaccurate or unhelpful information** about professionals.
 - Example: “My dad said I’d get in trouble with the policeman.”
- It’s important to **manage what others tell the child** and ensure they understand who you are and why you’re meeting.

Preparing the Supporting Adult

- Adults should be **briefed clearly** about their role in the meeting.
 - Sometimes they need to be present but **not actively involved**.
 - Example: “We need you to be there but to take a back seat.”

Setting Expectations

- Children are more willing to participate when they understand:
 - **Why** the meeting is happening
 - **What** is expected of them
 - **Who** they’ll be meeting

Chapter Two.

Core Message

This chapter explores how to **begin a three-way meeting** in a way that makes children feel **included, respected, and comfortable**. It focuses on the physical setup, initial greetings, seating arrangements, and establishing clear roles and expectations.

Key Themes & Strategies

Prepare the Room Thoughtfully

- Children notice whether a space is set up **with them in mind**.
- A welcoming environment includes:
 - Appropriately sized chairs
 - Toys or activities
 - Clear physical cues about who is there to communicate with them

Greet the Child and Adult Properly

- First impressions matter — children are **judging from the moment they arrive** whether they are meant to be part of the interaction.
- Greetings should:
 - Be **directed to the child**
 - Include **introductions** for all present
 - Sometimes involve the child in introducing their accompanying adult

Sort Out Seating Arrangements

- Seating impacts communication dynamics.
- If the adult is there to support communication, their position should reflect that.
- Be **flexible** — adjust seating if needed once the child arrives.

Clarify Roles and Rules

- Even if the adult has been briefed beforehand, the child needs to hear:
 - **Who everyone is**
 - **What their roles are**
 - **What the meeting is about**
 - **What the ground rules are**
- Example: “Mike’s a policeman. He’s going to talk to you about something, and you’ll get to choose what he talks to you about.”

Children’s Requests (Quoted)

- “Find me a chair that fits.”
- “Talk to me, not just my mum.”
- “Listen to me, not just my parents.”
- “Tell me what everyone’s job is.”
- “Tell me what the rules are.”

Chapter Three.

Core Message

This chapter focuses on how to **actively and respectfully engage children** during three-way interactions. It highlights the importance of **prioritising the child's voice**, building rapport, managing adult behaviour, and adapting communication to meet the child's needs.

Key Themes & Strategies

Prioritise the Child

- Children are often **talked over** or **excluded**, even when the meeting is about them.
- Research shows children contribute **less than 10%** to three-way consultations, often limited to greetings or small talk.
- Professionals must **intentionally centre the child** in the conversation to understand their views and experiences.

Establish Rapport First

- Building trust and comfort is essential before discussing serious topics.
- Activities like **drawing or playing Lego** can help ease into the interaction.
- Using information gathered beforehand (e.g. hobbies, strengths) shows genuine interest.

Respect the Child's Communication

- Adults often dominate or speak on behalf of children.
- Children may feel undermined or confused when two adults interact more with each other than with them.
- Example: A child corrects an adult who assumed they did art that morning — they had actually been reading.

Use Gaze and Body Language Wisely

- Looking at the adult during a child's pause can prompt the adult to interrupt.
- Maintain eye contact with the child to encourage their participation.

Clarify Roles and Intentions

- Children want to know:
 - Who is in charge
 - What their choices are
 - That adults aren't "ganging up" on them
- Be transparent and direct about the purpose of the meeting and each person's role.

Adapt to Communication Needs

- If a child uses **sign language**, professionals must make efforts to understand and respond appropriately.
- Children expressed frustration when adults didn't know how to sign or continued speaking despite communication barriers.
- Quote: "Learn to sign."

Children's Requests (Quoted)

- "Tell me who's in charge."
- "Tell me what my choices are."
- "Don't gang up against me."
- "If you don't understand me, get some help."
- "Listen to Alicia."
- "Learn to sign."

Chapter Four.

Core Message

This chapter explores how to **effectively engage the accompanying adult** in three-way interactions without allowing them to dominate or derail the focus on the child. It offers strategies for balancing adult involvement, managing challenging behaviours, and using the adult's knowledge to support communication.

Key Themes & Strategies

Balance Support and Presence

- Adults may unintentionally **override the child's voice** due to anxiety, strong personal agendas, or misunderstanding their role.
- Professionals must help adults **strike a balance** between supporting the child and stepping back when needed.

Clarify Roles Early and Repeatedly

- Even with preparation, confusion can arise if adults think they're expected to speak for the child.
- Be **explicit** about when you need the adult to be quiet, helpful, or simply present.
- Example: "Maxine, I'm going to ask you to be as quiet as you can while I ask some hard questions."

Use the Adult's Knowledge Strategically

- Adults can provide valuable insight into the child's preferences, communication style, and emotional state.
- Especially useful when the professional is **unfamiliar with the child** or when the child needs reassurance.

Give Adults Permission to Ask Questions

- Adults may hesitate to speak up if they or the child don't understand something.
- Encourage them to **ask for clarification** and help ensure the child understands.

Working with Interpreters and Communication Support

- When language or communication needs are present:
 - Use **interpreters or intermediaries** appropriately.
 - Always **address the child directly**, not the interpreter.
 - Keep sentences short and clear to aid accurate interpretation.
 - Retain responsibility for the interaction — **don't hand it over** to the adult or interpreter.

Monitor Non-Verbal Cues

- Pay attention to both the child and adult's **body language** and emotional signals.
- Children may withdraw if adults **speak for them** or **dominate the conversation**.

Children's and Professionals' Reflections

- Children feel alienated when adults “gang up” or speak on their behalf.
- Professionals note that while adults can **ease tension**, they can also **inhibit the child's participation** if not managed carefully.

Chapter Five.

Core Message

This chapter demonstrates how **well-prepared three-way interactions** — involving the child, a professional, and an accompanying adult — can be **more effective** than two-way conversations. When adults collaborate and share responsibility, they can better support the child's understanding, expression, and engagement.

Key Themes & Strategies

Collaborate to Engage the Child

- The adult can help build **trust and confidence** for the child.
- Professionals can **model activities** with the adult to ease the child into participation.
- Example: Using a pulse oximeter first on the adult to show the child how it works.

Work Together to Communicate

- Adults familiar with the child can help **initiate or sustain** communication.
- They can reframe questions or clarify misunderstandings.
- Example: Helping a child explain what they eat at school when they assume adults already know.

Explore Complex Ideas Together

- Two adults can simplify or **contextualise abstract concepts** (e.g. truth vs. lies) using relatable stories.
- This helps children grasp difficult topics more easily.

Support Difficult Conversations

- Children may direct sensitive or emotional communication to the adult they trust most.
- Professionals should **share the communication space** to gather meaningful insights without overwhelming the child.

Help with Recall and Explanation

- Adults can assist children in **recalling events**, clarifying timelines, and expressing details.
- Example: Working together to pinpoint when a child went ice skating by linking it to school holidays.

Key Takeaway

When professionals and accompanying adults **work together effectively**, children are more likely to:

- Participate actively
- Feel understood
- Share accurate and meaningful information

Importantly, **three-way interactions don't take longer** — they're often **more efficient and productive** when done well.

Chapter Six.

Core Message

This final chapter focuses on how to **navigate transitions** within three-way interactions — including switching accompanying adults, moving between three-way and two-way formats, and **closing meetings thoughtfully**. It reinforces the importance of **child-centred practice** throughout.

Key Themes & Strategies

Switching the Accompanying Adult

- Children may feel **unsafe or uncomfortable** discussing certain topics in front of familiar adults (e.g. teachers, parents).
- Professionals should:
 - Be prepared to **change the adult** mid-meeting if needed.
 - **Ask the child** who they'd prefer to help them.
 - Recognise when a different adult might enable **more open communication**.

Switching from Three-Way to Two-Way

- Some children, especially teenagers, may prefer to speak **alone** with the professional.
- Offer **choice and control** over whether the adult stays.
- For younger children, negotiate gently (e.g. "Mummy can stay or wait next door — what do you think?").
- In safeguarding contexts, **seeing the child alone** may be essential, but often only possible after building trust in a three-way setting.

Closing the Interaction Carefully

- Endings should be **clear, respectful, and child-focused**.
- Key steps include:
 - **Recapping** what was discussed and agreed
 - **Checking** if the child has anything else to say
 - **Explaining** what will happen next
 - **Offering feedback opportunities** (e.g. "How did Mike do?")
 - **Ensuring the child knows how to contact you**

Children's Requests (Quoted)

- "Let me choose who helps."
- "Don't ask me how school's going in front of my teachers."
- "Tell me how long till we're finished."
- "Tell me what will happen next."
- "Ask me to explain it back to you."

Final Reflection

The chapter ends with a powerful message:

Children are often the **primary client**, yet rarely treated as such.

Professionals should **write to, talk to, and see the child directly** — not just through adults.

The goal of the series is to **shift the culture** so that children are **clearly recognised** as central participants in services designed for them.