REPORT OF THE CHILDREN FOCUSING TASK FORCE

September 2015

Report of Children Focusing Task Force

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Background to this Report

At the Irish Conference 2014 the previous Board of Children Focusing agreed to dissolve itself. It was agreed to establish an interim Task Force to begin to look at the future of Children Focusing. The Task Force consists of Mary Jennings (Trustee of The Focusing Institute Board), three Children Focusing Certifying Coordinators - Heidrun Essler, Simon Kilner and Rene Veuglers, and Catherine Torpey (the Executive Director of The Focusing Institute). It was immediately decided that a broader set of views was needed to try and create some clarity around issues of training and certification and of communication and networking. With this in mind each party agreed to canvas the views and experience of members of the CF community through one to one interviews.

This report is the result of this piece of qualitative research and analysis undertaken by the Task Force. It also includes points taken from written submissions made to the Task Force.

September 2015

Executive Summary of the Children Focusing Task Force

This report was undertaken by The Children Focusing Task Force set up in November 2014. The purpose was to find out what was alive in Children Focusing among practitioners, trainers and Coordinators across the world and to seek ways to address issues raised by them. A qualitative approach was taken to the main task, with one-to-one interviews conducted with 14 people in different countries generating the main information in this report. In addition, points from the written submissions received are also included.

The report attempts to lay out the terrain of what's happening, what exists, not to evaluate, but to begin to create a map. It also makes some concrete recommendations for further research and action. It invites a response from people interested in Children Focusing to what is laid out here.

Pathways to becoming a Children Focusing Trainer/Companion/Coordinator

This path is full of twists and turns, with different countries having different rules. Some themes stand out:

- There is considerable variation in the entry points and pathways to certification as practitioners and trainers which vary from country to country; this is confusing for people.
- Some people would like the training pathways to be more streamlined; it is a long and expensive path. It is not always clear to everyone why there are parallel paths for training in Adult Focusing.

Certification Process

In theory, it is The Focusing Institute that certifies people who have followed varying paths at different levels as:

- Children Focusing Companions
- Children Focusing Trainers
- Children Focusing Certifying Coordinators

While trainers and coordinators believe in providing good quality training, some are highly ambivalent about the value of certification by The Focusing Institute, or any form of 'certification' while others see certification by The Focusing Institute as essential to the credibility of the quality of training they offer.

It is important to note that there are many ways to learn and teach Focusing. Focusing sharing is a huge field and certification as a trainer is only a small element of that. This becomes clearer as the Models of Training, outlined below, demonstrate.

Models of Teaching & Training

The models of training offered by different trainers and Coordinators reflects different approaches or, in some cases, a creative 'crossing' of different models. Some are more formal in structure, some are more informal – about teaching adults/children in specific

situations where they learn 'on the go'. Some take those interested in learning more, or those wishing to train as trainers along the path of becoming a companion/ trainer.

Learn-in-the-situation Model

This model or over approach, is based on teaching adults and/or children particular skills and concept such as 'listening and following the child', Focusing Attitude (and more) in particular, often informal, situations. For instance, this might be teaching parents for short periods, teaching Occupational Therapists or Health Workers as part of their on-going training or teaching support staff in a school. The purpose is to teach some skills that would enhance their interactions with children. There would be, for instance, little or no concern with doing certified training.

Community Wellness/ Model

This model has evolved over the years into a 'dual model'; formal training/mentoring in Focusing/Children Focusing is one side; the other is "sharing what you are learning from the beginning". Developed initially for use in developing countries in the field, the learn-in-the-situation model, used in 'developed' countries and Community Wellness are close in approach.

60 Hours + Structured Levels

- The core initial training in Children Focusing is the 60 hour training. Some concerns - some contradictory - were expressed about this model. These include:
    - Not clear what the learning outcomes are for the 60 hours
    - 60 hours is 'too prescriptive'
    - There is too much of a gap between the 60 hours and the next steps as a trainer

'Open Standardised' Model (proposed)

This model, not actually in use and has not been tested in practice, was outlined in a submission to the Task Force. It proposes greater standardisation of content of courses. It proposes closer supervision of the trainers at all levels by The Focusing Institute for which there is currently no established mechanism.

Core Proficiency Model (proposed)

This model was suggested by one Coordinator as a possible model. It would be based on the Core Proficiencies for (Adult) Focusing as set out by The Focusing Institute.

'Creative Mentoring'/Apprentice Model for Trainers-in-Training

This refers to a one-to-one based mentoring model where an experienced Certified Coordinator works closely with a trainee over an 18 month- 2 year period to enable them to teach Focusing at all levels, including training other trainers.

Supports Practitioners Would Value

Having the opportunity to network and learn from peers was a consistent theme that emerging in the course of conversations.

Some felt that The Focusing Institute should take a greater role in structuring and guaranteeing the quality and overall content of the courses and training in Children Focusing.

Role of the Focusing Institute

There is a lack of clarity on some fundamental issues in relation to Children Focusing as outlined in this report. This includes lack of clarity around the role of the Institute in relation to issues such as certification for instance.

Recommendations

The Children Focusing Task Force recommends setting up of at least 5 Working Groups to begin to tackle some of the issues raised by this report.

Members of the Working Groups would be drawn from people involved in Children Focusing. The working groups include:

Working Group One: Core Proficiencies in Children Focusing

Working Group Two: Models of Teaching & Training in Children Focusing

Working Group Three: Pathways to Certification in Children Focusing

Working Group Four: Communications and Connections (e.g. web site, Conference)

Working Group Five: Role and Function of a Coordinating Committee to Nurture Children Focusing

Thanks!

Thanks to all the people who gave of their time to share their views, their expertise and their passion for Children Focusing with the Task Force. We hope that this report will serve to assist Children Focusing grow and develop throughout the world.

The Children Focusing Task Force now invites views on this report. We would welcome any expression of interest from people who would be part of these Working Groups. Replies can be sent to: children@focusing.org

Report of the Children Focusing Task Force

This report was undertaken by The Children Focusing Task Force set up in November 2014. The purpose was to find out what was alive in Children Focusing among practitioners, trainers and Coordinators across the world and to seek ways to address issues raised by them. A qualitative approach was taken to the main task, with one-to-one interviews conducted with 14 people in different countries generating the information in this report. The report also includes points taken from submissions received.

The report attempts to lay out the terrain of what's happening, what exists, not to evaluate, but to begin to create a map. It also makes some concrete recommendations for further research and action.

Section One: Overview of Children Focusing

The term Children Focusing is used to describe the practice of using Focusing with children. This can be:

1. One a one-to-one basis as an intervention with a child who has been referred to a Focusing-oriented professional, such as a Focusing-Oriented Therapist, for help with some particular difficulty; Focusing would form part of the techniques/skill mix used by the professional
2. In a classroom or group setting where children are taught Focusing skills for themselves
3. In everyday, usual interactions with children – at home, at school, where the adult (parents/teachers) is adopting a 'Focusing attitude' with children through listening for the felt sense of the child while attending to their own felt sense of a given situation.

Section Two: What is *Alive* in Children Focusing Now?

It was striking that those spoken to all valued the practice of Children Focusing and would like to see it develop and flourish in their own countries. This is so, despite a lot of confusion with regards to training and certification and feelings of being 'isolated' or not having enough support/connection from peers in the field.

In most countries, the number involved in Children Focusing is small. Many countries have less than 10 people certified as trainers or Children Focusing companions either by The Focusing Institute or by local Focusing Associations. One of the issues thrown up by this research is that it is difficult to get exact or even approximate numbers of people active in Children Focusing, even by asking Children Focusing Coordinators in each country. In some countries there are several people on the long path to becoming a trainer; in others there has not been growth or development for some years. This report touches on these issues further as we attempt to explore the terrain and to make recommendations for action that would support the development of Children Focusing.

This report is organised in different sections:

- Pathways to becoming a Children Focusing Trainer/Companion/Coordinator
- Certification Process
- Models of Training
- Supports Practitioners Would Value
- Recommendations for Action

Section Three: Path to becoming a Children Focusing Companion/Trainer/Coordinator

This path is full of twists and turns, with different countries having different rules. In general, the most common path is outlined here (subject to correction, as not every country has been covered) and is based on what was agreed between Marta Stapert, the former Children Focusing Board and The Focusing Institute or between the former Board and The Focusing Institute.

Firstly, it is important to distinguish between two types of training offered to different groups; there are different pathways outlined below:

1. Training of people who use Focusing in the ways 1-3 outlined above (parents, teachers, children themselves, professionals working with children)
2. Training of Trainers and Coordinators

The Path of the Children Focusing Companion

The entry points for people who are not already Focusing Trainers but who wish to begin a formal training in Children Focusing are varied and include:

- People are invited to participate in a short introductory workshop on the topic and then begin 60 hour training as a Children Focusing Companion
- People must complete a Level One Adult Focusing training before the 60 hours training
- People must complete Levels One and Two before the 60 hour training
- People start right away with the Children Focusing training without any introductory workshop – usually in a Community Wellness context.

Next steps for this group is that, if they want to go on to become Children Focusing Trainers, people must first complete all the Adult Focusing Levels to Level 5, or equivalent, and become Adult Focusing Trainers. They are then eligible to be become Children Focusing Trainers if they have completed the 60 hour training. i.e. to give

workshops and presentations but not facilitate the 60 hour training for others (see below on Path of Adult Focusing Trainer).

The Path of the Adult Focusing Trainer into Children Focusing

The entry point for people who are already Adult Focusing Trainers is that they can start the 60 hour training to become Children Focusing Companions.

Next steps for this group are varied:

- In some countries, it would appear, they can go on then to deliver the 60 hour training to others, generally under the supervision of a Children Focusing Certifying Coordinator for the first time they deliver this training. They can then go on to become Coordinators themselves
- In other countries these Adult Trainers/Children Focusing Companions are not strictly entitled to then train others in the 60 hour training, but they can give Children Focusing Workshops and Presentations to parents, schools etc. This is generally a very contentious area – trainers who have trained in both fields believe they should be able to train others in the 60 hours Children Focusing after this point. They cannot give the 60 hour training unless they are supervised by a Children Focusing Certifying Coordinator – not just a Certifying Coordinator for Adult Focusing
- Participants also reported that Adult Focusing Trainers who had done some training/attended workshops in Children Focusing were also offering courses and workshops in this, without the formal 60 hour path being followed.

The Path of the Children Focusing Certifying Coordinator

Having done all the Adult and Children Focusing training, and having delivered the 60 hour training and other workshops under the supervision of an existing Children Focusing Certifying Coordinator, trainee and mentor come to an agreement - from their own sense of the readiness of the trainee, as well as the training schedules/materials/journals/videos that they present - that the training is complete. The person can then go on to:

- Deliver the 60 hour training to others and certify them as Children Focusing Companions
- Train and certify people who have satisfactorily completed training in the Adult Levels (recommended by certified trainers)
- Run workshops of their own in the subject
- Over time, begin to mentor others as trainers/Coordinators

While there may be other variations on the paths outlined here, some themes stand out:

- There is considerable variation in the entry points and pathways which vary from country to country or regions within countries; this is confusing for some people and means people start with different levels of competence and proficiency in Focusing as they go forward to the next level of training; this can be contentious, particularly when it comes to certification.

- What seems to be very contentious is that people who are interested in pursuing further training as trainers/coordinators in Children Focusing also have to train in parallel, often with different people offering different styles and models from Children Focusing, in Adult Focusing. They would like the training to be more streamlined; it is long and expensive and not clear always to them why there are parallel paths and different styles. This needs further discussion and clarification
- Some reported that the Adult Certifying Coordinators did not always support the Children Focusing Certifying Coordinators – the latter come through a different route and the former can be 'territorial' or 'minding their patch', leading to isolation within their own country sometimes. This needs discussion between all Coordinators
- Not every country has a Children Focusing Certifying Coordinator, making access to certification more difficult for some
- Several people said that it was essential that people who are training/certifying others in Children Focusing should have a background in working with children and demonstrate an understanding of the psychology and development stages of children in order to be effective as trainers.

Section Four: Certification Process

While the pathways outlined – with all their twists and turns - are roughly followed in most countries, the questions around 'who certifies? and 'why certification' are not always that clear. It is important to note that there are many ways to learn and teach Focusing. Focusing sharing is a huge field and certification as a trainer is only a small element of that.

In theory, it is The Focusing Institute that certifies people as:

- Children Focusing Companions
- Children Focusing Trainers
- Children Focusing Certifying Coordinators

Trainers or coordinators recommend people they have trained as one of the above and on payment of a fee, The Focusing Institute provides them with a certificate to endorse this. It is the Coordinator, in conjunction with trainers, who decide that people are ready to be certified and recommend them to the Institute for inclusion on their list of accredited trainers. The lack of a central data base of who's involved in Children Focusing is another source of confusion. Coordinators/Trainers make their own assessment of readiness – usually informally, it would appear – based on the courses they have designed. These courses follow (or not, it was hard to ascertain) some generally agreed syllabus or topics that are considered core to Children Focusing, although this is not anywhere written down. It has emerged over the years and is shared through meetings conferences and informal networking. It was originally shaped by Marta Stapert and her work and approach remain very influential.

As in Adult Focusing, Trainers and Coordinators in Children Focusing are free to design their own courses or devise their own mentoring programmes for trainees they are supervising. One person said of her role in mentoring a coordinator-in-training that it was to "bring out her talents and help her develop her own style for her context; that context will be different for others, so the shape of the training/mentoring/course development will vary to suit their context". This is in line with The Focusing Institute's long practice and Statement of Diversity (see below).

While trainers and coordinators believe in providing good quality training, some are highly ambivalent about the value of certification by The Focusing Institute, or any form of 'certification' while others see this as essential to the credibility of the training they offer, particularly where they are involved with state or educational institutions who want training to be endorsed by credible institutes. Often, the context or culture of a particular country also plays a part in perceived value of certification by The Institute. Here are some widely different views:

"Parents and teachers don't want certification - they are interested in having a life skill they can use – they integrate it into their lives." (Coordinator)

"It's hard to get people to go down the certification route – they don't want to be that structured – it does not have a value in their context or culture – it's just not important with everything else in their lives" (Coordinator)

"I encourage people to get certified by The Institute as I want The Institute to have a source of funding – they can act as a hub for information and connection - but it's not about them certifying the quality of the training – I stand over that. Certification is about helping The Focusing Institute to do its work – which helps us be good trainers ultimately" (Coordinator)

"Central to the developing of Children Focusing Training is the need for clear guidelines and protocols under the governance of TFI for this training worldwide. Children Focusing training, regarding the duration of the courses, specific modules and content and structures needs to be in unison in each country" (Coordinator)

"We had about 30 people given certification as Children Focusing Trainers back in 2001, 2002 and 2003, but we have put further ones on hold now, there isn't a system for training in our country – but there are many people practicing children focusing in schools, with parents, in different work areas anyway – these are difficult areas for us – particularly the difference between Children Focusing Trainer and Focusing Trainer is not clear". (Trainer)

"I wonder should I pay my tax (fee) as a Certifying Coordinator – there are very few people training – it's not worth it. People get the quality training and I can certify that" (Coordinator)

"The motivation for certification is important – is it to have the 'certificate' or to really put time into the practice – sometimes it's about money – for trainers and trainees - the certification is part of that". (Coordinator)

This raises serious questions for the certification process. This is discussed further under the Models of Training in the next section and in the role of The Focusing Institute in Section Seven.

Section Five: Models of Teaching & Training

At this point, it may be useful to outline some of the different models of teaching and training for Children Focusing. These are either being used currently or are models/suggestions that emerged from this consultation. This is not fully comprehensive and a recommendation in this report that it would be useful to collect more of the models so that people can learn from each other. Some are more formal in structure, some are more informal – about teaching adults in specific situations where they learn 'on the go' skills and approaches that assist them in their interactions with children or teaches children how to listen to their own 'felt sense' of a situation or express themselves with greater authenticity.

Some are more structured such as the training involved in becoming a Children Focusing Companion or a Children Focusing Trainer.

In line with The Focusing Institute's long practice of valuing diversity as set out in its 2009 statement on the topic, quoted below, the topic of 'diversity versus standardisation' was raised again and again by the research participants in relation to the models of training used to train people.

> Focusing is a practice that honours what arises freshly in the moment. Frozen structures of any kind are antithetical to the ethic of Focusing. Therefore, the Focusing Institute takes as a core value the principle that the practice of Focusing, how it is taught by certified Focusing teachers, and its application in different fields will not be standardized. Diversity of approaches will be protected. Constructive critiques among Focusing Trainers or between TFI and individuals presenting or applying Focusing are welcome and should be offered by means of open, respectful communication. TFI itself will seek to honour the values of non-standardization in its operations while recognizing that tension can arise between maximum diversity and the need for effectiveness and efficiency in meeting its goals.

Currently, as might be expected from this clearly enunciated diversity statement, the models of training offered by different trainers and Coordinators reflects different approaches or, in some cases, a creative 'crossing' of different models. As stated, the collection here is only based on discussions with a number of trainers, but it serves to illustrate the diversity.

The models include:

Learn-in-the-situation Model

This model or over approach, is based on teaching adults and/or children particular skills and concept such as 'listening and following the child', Focusing Attitude (and more) in particular, often informal, situations. For instance, this might be teaching parents for short periods, teaching Occupational Therapists or Health Workers as part of their on-going training or teaching support staff in a school. The purpose is to teach some skills that would enhance their interactions with children. There would be, for instance, little or no concern with doing certified training.

Community Wellness Model

This model has evolved over the years into a 'dual model' ; formal training/mentoring in Focusing/Children Focusing is one side; the other is " sharing what you are learning from the beginning" – you don't have to wait to be certified to 'train' others or to start using your skills which you can teach others quickly. This dual model works for instance in Afghanistan with formal training for psychology students and inviting villagers to 'learn and share' on the day; it works in Gaza (where more formal Levels Training would be welcome but is not possible now), in Pakistan, in Liberia, in El Salvador, in refugee camps in Syria where Focusing skills are built into other programmes or elements of Focusing (listening, being aware of what's inside, finding a safe space) are taught. The approach is seen in developments such as The Pause, developed by William Hernandez in Ecuador.

The thinking is that, in these often extreme situations, the Focusing professional is providing 'what's useful right now'. This might, for instance, involve teaching children about 'safe space' or 'listening without talking' and inviting them to pass these techniques on to family members. It's important therefore to understand the context in which this model arose and that is has a place and a value outside of a more structured training programme such as the 60 hours and the Levels training.

This model is therefore similar to learn-as-you-go model so that increasingly, these might be described as one overall model, in effect.

60 Hours + Structured Levels

The core initial training in Children Focusing is the 60 hour training (with Levels 1 or Level 2 of the Adult Training an entry point). This was initially developed by Marta Stapert. Her approach covered core areas to be included over the period, such as:

Part 1: General focusing, focusing attitude, focusing for parents in the family
Part 2: Focusing in schools, institutions and in other groups, individual and group programs
Part 3: Focusing in child psychotherapy, play therapy and individual focusing sessions with a child.
As with other programmes developed with the ethos of The Focusing Institute, this is an open model; there is not a prescriptive HOW to teach or convey these concepts or ideas, that is the domain of the skill, creative process and prior training of the trainer. From discussions with interviewees, it seems that the 60 hours has evolved differently in different places and it is not as yet clear to what extent it is followed as laid out. This needs further research.

Specific concerns about the '60 hour' model

In the course of the discussions with people, and in submissions received, some concerns - some contradictory - were expressed about this model. It should be noted again that it is not that clear what different trainers now actually cover in this mode. Points raised include

- Not clear what the learning outcomes are for the 60 hours – not clear to describe to an organisation looking to understand how this kind of training relates to other, more structured models
- 60 hours is 'too prescriptive' – should be at the discretion of the trainer/coordinator as long as they cover 'core competences, proficiencies' (See Appendix Two for a description of these)
- The whole process of what is actually involved in Children Focusing not well covered or not covered in depth enough, according to a number of people, i.e. there is a need to understand, particularly in one-to-one sessions with children, how to approach the child, what the responsibility is towards working with the parents, the school or other institution, how to end the process etc. The emphasis in the 60 hours is more on 'what works', i.e. what activities/steps you can take in particular situations while working individually with a child or a group
- Similarly, one person believes that the issue of child protection/safety/disclosure needs to be dealt with and that trainers have to work within the guidelines of particular countries in this regard – this should form part of the training, it was suggested as " there is even more responsibility when you are working with children than when you are working with adults" as one person put it
- Included should be training in child development and a knowledge of what would be appropriate for different ages and stages (babies, young children, teens, children with autism etc.) so that Focusing is done in a useful and safe way with these different groups. This was suggested a number of times, in different ways by those involved in the consultation
- The 60 hour model is geared too much towards more towards one-to-one working with children rather than, for example, how to integrate the skills into professional teaching, or parenting at home etc. in a 'natural' way, was another theme emerging
- There is too much of a gap between the 60 hours and the next steps as a trainer –you have to spend time and money doing the adult training in the middle of your Children Focusing training or doing it in parallel – should be an integrated model
- The 60 hours is flexible enough so that trainers can train different people for different contexts – it is up to the trainer to decide what is needed but there is a need perhaps to have 'core proficiencies' - this topic needs further consideration as recommended here.

'Creative Mentoring'/Apprentice Model for Trainers

This refers to a one-to-one based mentoring model where an experienced Trainer – usually a Certified Coordinator - works closely with a trainer/coordinator-in-training to help them develop their skills, their approach and their own programmes/workshops over an 18 month - 2 year period. This is a good example of the 'diversity versus standardised' issue. The mentor decides, working with her/his felt sense and the felt sense of the trainee, when the trainer is ready to work on their own. There is some assessment of programme schedules,

video of sessions, journaling but it's different for each person. There is not a standard way of developing a Coordinator. When they both feel they are ready, the Certifying Coordinator, on their own, recommends the trainee for Certification by the Institute. (See Appendix Six for further information on this).

'Open Standardised' Model (proposed as a model – not existing)

In summary, this model outlined here is being developed by a Coordinator and is being suggested as a model for Children Focusing. It was outlined in a submission to the Task Force. It proposes greater standardisation of content of training courses, with some fixed core modules with specific content (e.g. module of development stages of children; module on child protection issues; how to refer children on for specialist services), with specific learning outcomes proposed, which would have some form of assessment (to be developed). It includes a proposal for closer supervision by The Focusing Institute over the quality of training, including being more specific about standard content that must be included, the amount of time required for each element, the assessment procedure and the process involved in the granting of Certificates - or not. It would (in theory) however allow an openness for the input of the specific trainer in HOW they delivered the courses proposed. Currently, there is no mechanism within The Focusing Institute to take on the role envisaged by this model.

If the 'Creative Mentoring Model' outlined above is at one end of the spectrum, this latter proposed model is at the other end of it. Taken together, these show the tension between the 'diversity v standardisation' debates. This model would mark a distinct shift in how training and certification is currently organised. It would mark a distinct shift in the role, power and freedom currently accorded to Coordinators and also in the role and function of The Focusing Institute.

Core Proficiency Model (proposed as a model)

This model – not yet in use per se – was suggested by one Coordinator as a possible model. It would be based on the Core Proficiencies for (Adult) Focusing as set out by The Focusing Institute (see Appendix Two for a copy of these and see http://www.focusing.org/proficiency.html on The Focusing Institute's website). It uses these high level concepts as the basis of creating training programmes, according to one Coordinator spoken to during this research. The Coordinator or trainer is free to find ways to teach these concepts in engaging, non-standardised, diverse ways. It does not specify how these would be assessed. It is not known how widespread this model actually is, but is offered here as an example of the way The Institute itself sees its current role, operating providing high level concepts, leaving the fleshing out of the details to trusted Coordinators to develop in their own way. It should be noted that this approach is similar to the way the British Focusing Teachers Association developed guidelines for training. http://www.focusing.org.uk/

Section Six: Supports Children Focusing Trainers/Coordinators Would Value

Having the opportunity to network and learn from peers was a consistent theme that emerging in the course of conversations. Many felt “isolated”; “working on my own”.

Specifically, they mentioned that the opportunity to meet other people involved through Conferences, FISS, and other gatherings – online – discussion lists/forums - and offline were highly valued. Having the ability to ‘ask someone how to deal with an issue’ was mentioned – simple lists of trainers/coordinators, with perhaps their area of speciality on a web site “would be great so I can contact them for advice “. Access to resources such as, for instance, Conference presentations, research papers or published resources was another topic of interest. It was noted that the current Children Focusing website is way out of date and as such, its use is limited. A new website or section on The Institute’s website should be considered as a way to help people connect with each other and access resources.

A particular area of concern was that Focusing and, even less so, Children Focusing, was not well known in educational, academic circles or more broadly in the public domain. This made it difficult to market courses to the public or schools for instance.

Trainers/Coordinators often spent large sums of money on training and were not able to make a living from work they enjoyed. While gaining access to work in schools is different in every country, this was mentioned as being particularly difficult. They would welcome support on how to market their courses and how to promote Focusing (see also role of The Focusing Institute in this).

What has been very valuable over the years, has been able to learn other models of Focusing such as Whole Body Focusing, Interactive Focusing, Domain Focusing, use of creative and somatic practices and integrating these into their practice in Children Focusing. Several people, particularly those training/mentors others, mentioned that it was important to “keep fresh, up to date” so that new thinking or methods could be incorporated into their training. This was particularly so as Coordinators were given a lot of trust and flexibility – “Gene set it up this way” – to develop programmes and training; this meant that there was an onus on Coordinators to repay that trust by continuous training for themselves.

Section Seven: Role of the Focusing Institute in Children Focusing

The role most frequently mentioned role for The Focusing Institute was, “to act as a hub, a connector”, ensuring that the supports outlined above were made available and that, through Conferences, FISS, web resources, networking events that those with an interest could meet/connect/learn from each other. Specifically, and this came up on several occasions, it was felt that the teachers at FISS or other Institute events should rotate more often so that there were opportunities to learn different skills, see different perspectives on Children Focusing; it was through this kind of variety that people could keep up to date.

The Focusing Institute’s role in certification has two very different aspects, it emerged in discussions.

- For some, certification through The Institute is a way for the Institute to generate revenue; this is what enables it to be "the hub and connector". The certification process of The Institute is not, therefore, a guarantee or endorsement of quality – that comes from the trust placed in the Certifying Coordinators. This begs the question – what does The Focusing Institute know about the work/quality/standards/re-skilling of Coordinators in reality; as one respondent put it, "when the Focusing Institute agrees to appoint a Coordinator they are stuck with them for life!"

- For others, certification is not at all much of a concern for a large number of people who take courses in Children Focusing – it's about a life skill. There is no reason to have The Institute certify them; the Institute is of no interest or value

- For yet others, The Focusing Institute has little or no role to play in their countries – some have national institutes or centres which is the focus of those who are involved in training or offering workshops. One Coordinator said "there is no structure for Children Focusing training in our country (so no certification of trainers has taken place in some years). It was understand that this was seen as an internal matter in that country, not a matter for The Focusing Institute

- For a minority, it is imperative that The Focusing Institute take a greater role in structuring and guaranteeing the quality and overall content of the courses and training offered under the name of Children Focusing; they see this as an urgent project if Children Focusing is to be of a high, quality standard that meets the needs of children of all ages. They are aware of the paradox that this proposed standardisation is to be achieved without compromise of the creative capacities of the individuals delivering training in different contexts and cultures but makes no concrete proposals as to these tensions might resolved in practice

- It should be noted that those involved in this piece of initial consultation also expressed a willingness to engage with The Institute to develop/resolve the issues raised by them in different ways

- A specific role that The Institute had was to make Focusing better known and better understood so that when people were proposing courses, workshops or interventions, the process was both understood and valued

- The Institute's role as an endorser/guarantor of quality training that meets the needs of people wishing to train in Children Focusing is not clear. It is not clear who then sets the agenda or has the power/willingness to tackle issues identified here. For instance, there is a need to provide clarity on the pathways to certification (whoever endorses it) as outlined above. There is an expressed need to amend/adapt the 60 hour training to include modules on child development or perhaps age appropriate activities. There is a need to provide a means for people to learn from each other. The former Children Focusing Board played some role in dealing with these issue, but had no real means of implementing change. For example, the former Children Focusing Board did not have any resources to update the section on The Focusing Institute's website dedicated to Children Focusing.

This lack of clarity on fundamental issues has led to a sense of frustration in some countries or lack of development in others. There is a kind of vacuum at the centre of the situation which is hindering the development of Children Focusing; the recommendation in this report set out to begin to address ways that the issues raised here can be addressed by people involved in Children Focusing across the world in concert with The Focusing Institute.

Section Eight: Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Action

It is clear that the development of Children Focusing needs attention and nurturing if it is to grow and develop. Some core issues emerged relating to:

- Pathways to training and certification
- The type and content of training in different models
- The process and value of certification
- The development and connecting of people with an interest in Children Focusing
- Access to new ideas, fresh thinking and on-going development,
- And the role of The Focusing Institute in relation to all of these

In order to address some of these issues, The Children Focusing Task Work recommends setting up of at least 5 Working Groups, each one would tackle a specific major topic that would benefit from further input and consideration. These might be:

Working Group One: Develop Core Proficiencies in Children Focusing

Working Group Two: Models of Teaching &Training in Children Focusing

Working Group Three: Pathways to Certification in Children Focusing

Working Group Four: Communications and Connections (e.g. web site, Conference)

Working Group Five: Role and Function of a Coordinating Committee to Nurture Children Focusing

The Children Focusing Task Force now invites views on this report. We would welcome any expression of interest from people who would be part of these Working Groups. Replies can be sent to: children@focusing.org

Section Nine: Appendices

Appendix One: Term of Reference for Children Focusing Task Force

Overall Aim

To strengthen and support the work of TFI members involved in Children Focusing throughout the world.

Key objectives to achieve this aim:

- To first gain an overview of the current issues that are of concern to Coordinators of Children Focusing, Children Focusing trainers and TFI Executive

  In particular, to understand the issues around the route to certification as:

  - A Children Focusing Companion
  - A Children Focusing Coordinator
  - A Children Focusing Trainer
  - A Children Focusing Practitioner

- To find appropriate ways to promote and strengthen the practice of Children Focusing in the Focusing Community through, for example, conferences, TFI website, a network of Children Focusing as well as the wider channels of the Focusing Community (e.g. at Annual Conference of TFI, in Coordinators' meetings etc.)
- To make key recommendations to TFI Executive on specific actions that might be taken by TFI in relation to these two points in a way that values diversity (a value of TFI) and, at the same time, promotes consistent standards of practice across the board

Method

To create a short-term working group (9 months-1 year) which will:

- Consult with the Children Focusing community across the world and with TFI Executive on the issues outlined above
- Create draft recommendations for action and consult further with the Children Focusing community on these
- Prepare final recommendation for TFI Executive following feedback

The working group, called the Children Focusing Working Group, replaces the former 'Children Focusing Board', will meet by Skype/Zoom at least once a month and carry out key tasks assigned to each member by agreement.

Membership of the Children Focusing Task Force

The group consists of:

Heidrun Essler

Simon Kilner

Mary Jennings

Catherine Torpey

René Veugelers

Appendix Two: Focusing Proficiencies (from The Focusing Institute's Website)

Focusing Proficiency

Focusing is a skill that requires development over time, and acquires some of its shape and color according to the life and goals of the practitioner. Below is a general description of Focusing stages of proficiency. Find out about how to become a Certified Focusing Professional.

STAGE 1 Proficiencies

Focuser can sense the body, be with it, from inside.

- Focuser can get a "felt sense," a physical sensation that contains meaning and pertains to a particular situation, for example, an issue with one's work, a creative project or a relationship.
- Focuser can recognize how a felt sense differs from feelings and emotions.
- Focuser can recognize when words or images have come directly from the felt sense.
- Focuser is able to notice what would feel right to say from the felt sense of a particular situation.
- Focuser knows when a decision regarding the situation "sits right" and when it does not.
- Focuser can name or describe the crux of a situation in a way that "fits" the felt sense.
- Focuser is able to recognize a distinct bodily knowing even when she/he has no words yet to describe it.

STAGE 2 Proficiencies

- Focuser is able to access a felt sense easily and comfortably.
- Focuser can stay with and return to a felt sense, so that it is a stable referent even as it may open and shift.
- Focuser recognizes and is comfortable with the experience of not wanting to attend to a particular situation or bodily knowing.
- Focuser knows how to stay near something difficult, neither leaving it nor going further into it.
- Focuser is able to find a "right distance" from difficult or complex issues.
- Focuser is able to have self-empathy, friendly attitudes toward oneself and the bodily knowledge that arises, even when it involves suffering or seemingly "negative" things.
- Focuser can easily get a felt sense of what is in the way when friendly attitudes seem impossible.

- Focuser is able to identify the several "situations" being carried by her/his body just now, and to "place" them one at a time, gently, at some distance from the body. Each placing brings a release of tension in the body.
- Focuser is able to connect intellectual understanding with bodily knowing, and to carry on a dialogue between the two.

STAGE 3 Proficiencies

- Focuser is able to attend to a felt sense and allow many aspects of it to emerge.
- Focuser often finds whole new fields or "subtexts" emerging from a felt sense.
- Focuser can let the subtexts inform a resulting decision on an issue.
- Focuser can choose to wait for subtext changes before taking action on a particular situation.
- Focuser recognizes new possibilities within a situation, which were not apparent from the original "given facts." New facts can be formulated.
- Focuser can discover new questions arising from the felt sense of a situation, leading to a new gathering of information.
- Focuser is able to make better decisions based on greater bodily knowledge.
- Focuser finds an expanded bodily-sensed realm in which one can move between different "places," clusters, and attitudes.
- Focuser can choose to live from the intricacy which is now always accessible.
- Focuser experiences a sense of reliable safety inside.

Appendix Three: List of people spoken to or proposals submitted and reviewed

Interviews held with:

Lucy **Bowers**, Canada, Certifying Coordinator

Beatrice **Blake**, USA, Certifying Coordinator

Elli **Coumoulus,** Greece, Children Focusing Trainer

Celia **Dawson,** UK, Certifying Coordinator

Emanuela **Fonticoli,** Italy, Certifying Coordinator

Eiko **Ishii**, Japan, Children Focusing Trainer and Coordinator

Yarden **Karen,** Israel, Children Focusing Trainer

Nina Joy **Lawrence,** USA, Certifying Coordinator

Bettina Markones Bettina, Germany, Children Focusing Trainer

Angela **Mackenzie** Australia, Children Focusing Trainer

Juan José **Mendinueta** Spain Children Focusing Trainer

Chantal Résibois, Luxembourg, Children Focusing Trainer

Tine **Swyngedouw,** Belgium Children Focusing Trainer

Kie **Yano,** Japan, Coordinator in Training

Submissions received from:

Zack **Boukydis,** Hungary Certifying Coordinator

Derek **McDonnell,** Ireland, Certifying Coordinator

Camilla **Sim,** UK, Focusing Oriented Therapist, Trainee Children Focusing Companion

Appendix Four: Background to Development of Children Focusing

The History of the Former Board of Children Focusing

When Marta Stapert retired earlier this century she agreed with the then Executive Director of The Focusing Institute to create 3 International Coordinators to oversee the continuation of her work. Heidrun Essler, Simon Kilner and Rene Veuglers had all been supervised by her and the late Ynse Stapert, and they were selected for the role. From this inception there was a lack of clarity about the scope and authority of the role. Nevertheless a number of themes can be identified:

1) The naming of the three as "international coordinators" created a role not found in any other branch of Focusing. However there were distinct reasons for this. Marta Stapert was trying to ensure there was a way for people from counties without Children Focusing Coordinators to be trained, and if they wished Certified, as Focusers. The International Coordinators thus travelled to many countries throughout the world offering different kinds of trainings and many countries without coordinators were given a start in Children Focusing that would otherwise not have been available, these included Chile, El Salvador, Italy, South Korea (including the translation of Marta's book into Italian and Korean), Greece, Gaza, Syria, Australia, Afghanistan and many other countries.
2) There have been other gains internationally from these International Coordinators (and other's). The booklet "Guidelines for Children Focusing Companions" has been translated into many different languages including Arabic, German, French, Italian, Japanese, Spanish, Swedish, Dutch and Greek and these translations are available on the website as shareware. They are used in many ways all over the world. Children Focusing has been made available at FISS, benefitting people from many countries.
3) As mentioned elsewhere in this report the International Coordinators, where needed, have assisted in continuing the International Children Focusing Conferences, which Marta Stapert began. With the assistance of committed people they have watched over and contributed to life on the discussion list and generally promoted Children Focusing throughout the world. The offering of international trainings has led to many styles of course depending on the needs of the participants. Some have been certified companion or trainer courses, many others have not followed any general syllabus but, more in the community wellness mould, were designed to meet a specific need at a specific time, with things blossoming from there as people were able. It is to be emphasised that there are many invaluable forms of training that do not lead to certification. Participants just want the skills.
4) The 3 International Coordinators agreed amongst themselves to create a "Board". As a group they had no powers or finances or clear way of liaising with The Focusing Institute. One of the first tasks they undertook was to attempt to clarify the position of Children Focusing. To this end

they wrote an article for The 30th Anniversary Folio in which they identified many of the issues raised in this report. But having no finances their room for manoeuvre was limited.

The group saw the coordination of conferences as one, but not the only, priority. They continued the existing pattern of biannual conferences. It became apparent that there were widely varying skill sets in the world of Children Focusing regarding the organisation of Conferences. To ensure continuity and a level of financial security the Board created a set of conference organisation packs to guide people if they needed. This also served to ensure a similar experience in the conferences.

At the Netherlands Conference in 2010 the group found a web designer who was prepared to design a website for nothing. She began to liaise with the webmaster but unfortunately found she could not comply with the coding needs and she withdrew. This meant that it was not possible to keep the website up to date.

Thus the International title was apt.

In 2012 one of the three had a serious stroke and the group, working without resources or a clear role ceased to function. This culminated in the setting up of the Task Force in 2014 to address issues that were of concern to people working in Children Focusing.

Appendix Five: The Focusing Institute's Guidelines for Trainers to Become Certifying Coordinators

GUIDELINES FOR TRAINERS TO BECOME CERTIFYING COORDINATORS
1. Ask a current Certifying Coordinator to mentor you as a Coordinator in Training. Mentoring Coordinator informs TFI of this arrangement. TFI will add Coordinator in Training to the CC discussion list.
2. The Trainer needs to have a full training program on file with TFI.
The program needs to train people all the way through from beginning to Certification, e.g. workshops, partnering, reading materials used, individual mentoring sessions, supervision, assisting at workshops etc.. The program is designed by the Trainer and approved by the mentoring Coordinator. It can replicate an existing program or it can reflect the new Coordinator in Training's own style and interests. Every Coordinator has a somewhat different program and we value this diversity.

3. The trainer needs to have taken at least one and preferably several people all the way through the program in conjunction with the mentoring Coordinator. These Trainers-in Training need to be co-recommended by the mentoring Coordinator and the Coordinator in Training for certification. The mentoring Coordinator should work out with the Trainer how this co-training will take place. The arrangement needs to satisfy the mentoring Coordinator that the trainer is offering a high quality of training.

4. The Trainer needs to be recommended to The Institute as a Certifying Coordinator, by a mentoring Coordinator.

5. The Trainer needs to want to work actively with the Institute e.g. connect trainees with the Institute, attend Coordinator meetings periodically, keep up on the web site resources,

stay in touch with TFI, read posts to the Coordinator's list, develop resources and outreach, help think about the overall situation of Focusing in the world, in their interest area and in their geographic location, support local trainers in building infrastructure and working in concert as a team. Help collect membership dues.

These guidelines (Coordinators' Resource page) are loose and open to modifications in any particular situation. This procedure is a continuation of our apprenticeship model which protects diversity and upholds quality without a standardized curriculum.