

Organising your ideas

Organising information can be described as a process in three stages:

- Creating a structure of ideas

- Collecting the evidence to support those ideas

- Writing an outline to show the key ideas and their relationships

Creating a structure

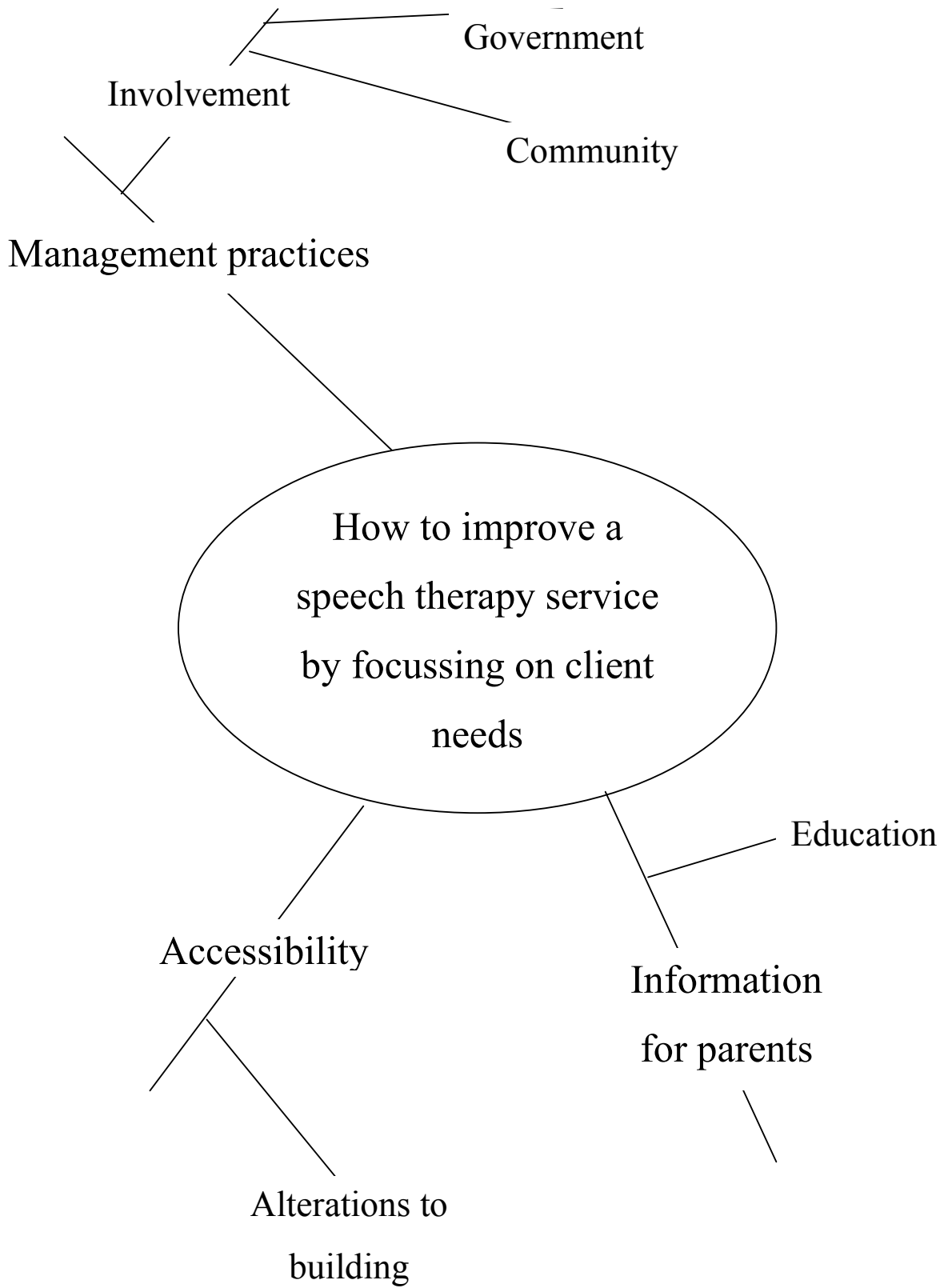
Creating the structure of your document is done in two stages:

- **First-stage thinking:** generating ideas
- **Second-stage thinking:** organising the ideas into a robust structure

First-stage thinking

i. Generating ideas: Drawing a mindmap

- Take a piece of paper, in landscape format
- Write your main message in a balloon in the centre of the paper. You may want to turn the message into a question
- Now, generate answers to that question. Be creative: don't censor or judge your ideas
- Write completely new answers on branch lines from the central balloon
- Some answers are subsets of the branch lines. Draw 'twigs' from the relevant branches.



ii. Creating headings: Grouping the elements

- Identify the main elements from your mindmap
(these are the lines connecting to the central balloon)
- Place these elements in a logical order, either:
rank (importance, relevance, priority)
process steps
chronology
logical reasoning
- Try expressing each one in the form of an action

Example

➤ Elements listed in an arbitrary order:

Management practices

Accessibility

Information for parents

➤ Ordered elements, expressed as actions:

1. Widening management practices

2. Supplying information for parents

3. Improving accessibility

iii. From headings to key points

Example

Message: Speech therapists can improve the services provided for children by focussing on client needs

1. They can involve their communities and governmental agencies in developing new management practices

2. They can provide educative programmes to improve information given to parents

3. They can make building alterations to improve physical accessibility for children with disabilities

Second-stage thinking

i. Managing the detail

- Take your list of key points

- For *each* key point, ask what question it provokes ('why', 'how', 'which ones')

- Identify the answers to those questions (between two and six) and write these as **sub-points**

- You should never have to create a pyramid of more than **four levels**:
 - message
 - key point
 - sub-point
 - minor point

Example

Speech therapists can improve the services provided for children by focussing on client needs

They can involve their communities and governmental agencies in developing new management practices

They can provide educative programmes to improve information given to parents

They can make building alterations to improve physical accessibility for children with disabilities

**The
Ministry
of
Health**

**Local
CBR
progs.**

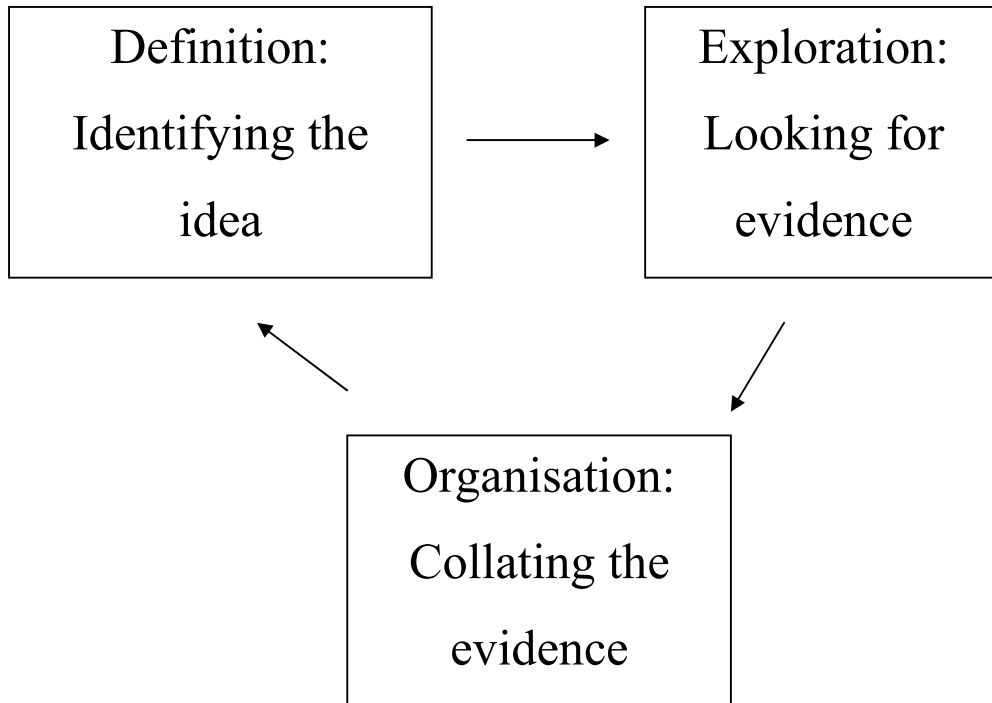
**To
empower
parents in
the rehab.
process**

**Asking
parents
what they
need to
know**

**Children
with
physical
disabilities
cannot
access
services**

**Create
ramps,
bars,
modified
toilets
etc.**

Collecting the evidence



What evidence do you need?

People tend to be persuaded by strong, simple pieces of evidence:

- concrete examples
- numbers
- names
- clear and convincing comparisons

Paradigms

Paradigms (or mindsets) are the deep values by which we live: they are the patterns through which we see reality...

Paradigm	Type of evidence that may persuade
I'm a doctor	medical terms, biological information
Decisions are driven primarily by cost	financial information, cost analysis
If I can't reproduce the experiment, I distrust the results	detailed information on materials and methods
Users can't cope with complicated equipment	user friendly manuals

Where to look for evidence

- **People**
- **Publications**
- **Events and places**
- **IT**

Using the internet as a research tool

i. Search tips

To search successfully you will need to think about:

- What words might be used to describe your topic, including:
 - synonyms
 - words which should be excluded
 - words describing related ideas
- Whether you wish to limit the search:
 - by language
 - by date
 - by form
 - by output
- What sources to use for searching:
 - general sources
 - subject-specific sources

ii. Boolean logic and Search Maths

Some search engines use the **Boolean operators** "AND," "OR" and "NOT" for refining searches. Boolean operators should generally be written in capital letters.

- Use **AND** to require that more than one term appears in all search results
- Use **OR** if you want all your search results to include either term (or both). This can be useful if there are alternate spellings or synonyms for terms
- Use **NOT** to exclude terms you don't want to appear in your search results. For example, if you are looking for information about cabinet ministers rather than ministers of the church you could use the NOT operator

Search maths uses common mathematical symbols to refine searches.

- Use + (plus sign) in front of each term which *must* appear in your search results
- Use – (minus sign) in front of every term which *must not* appear in your search result
- Use “ “ (quotation marks) around words you want to mark as a phrase
- Use the wildcard * (asterisk) for truncation

iii. Using search services

There are two major types of search services available for the Web:

➤ Subject indexes

- index arranged by subject categories and sub-categories
- useful for browsing a subject
- examples (Yahoo, BUBL)

➤ Keyword search engines

- a database of web pages
- useful for finding specific information
- often retrieve many irrelevant sites
- important to refine search
- examples (AltaVista, HotBot, Excite)

iv. Evaluating information on the Internet

- Authorship
- The publishing body
- Bias
- Referral to and/or knowledge of the literature
- Accuracy of details
- Currency

If you find information that is ‘too good to be true’, it probably is

Never use information that you cannot verify

Collating your evidence

- Establish a 'trail'
- Arrange material under the sections of your planned structure

Organising the evidence

- 'Visual' evidence
 - Pictures (photos, diagrams, drawings)
 - Stories
 - Examples from experience
 - Quotations
 - Metaphors or symbols
- Numerical evidence
 - Look for the number that justifies the word
 - Concentrate on the single decisive number
 - Put large quantities of detailed data in an appendix

Writing an outline

Example

Title: Improving speech therapy services for children in Lordun District

Message: Speech therapists can improve the services provided for children by focussing on client needs

Introduction: Speech therapists continue to rely on service-centred methods. Records show that 70% of children with communication difficulties are not accessing the clinic. Evidence from other clinics suggests that focussing on client needs may help to improve the service. This article identified three strategies that can be implemented easily and quickly.

1. Speech therapists can provide educative programmes to improve information given to parents.

1.1 They can ask parents what they need to know

1.2 This process will empower parents