

Better Together

BUILDING
RELATIONSHIPS,
STRENGTHENING
FAMILIES

SUPPORTING FAMILIES PRACTICE HANDBOOK

Supporting Families Division,
Tower Hamlets



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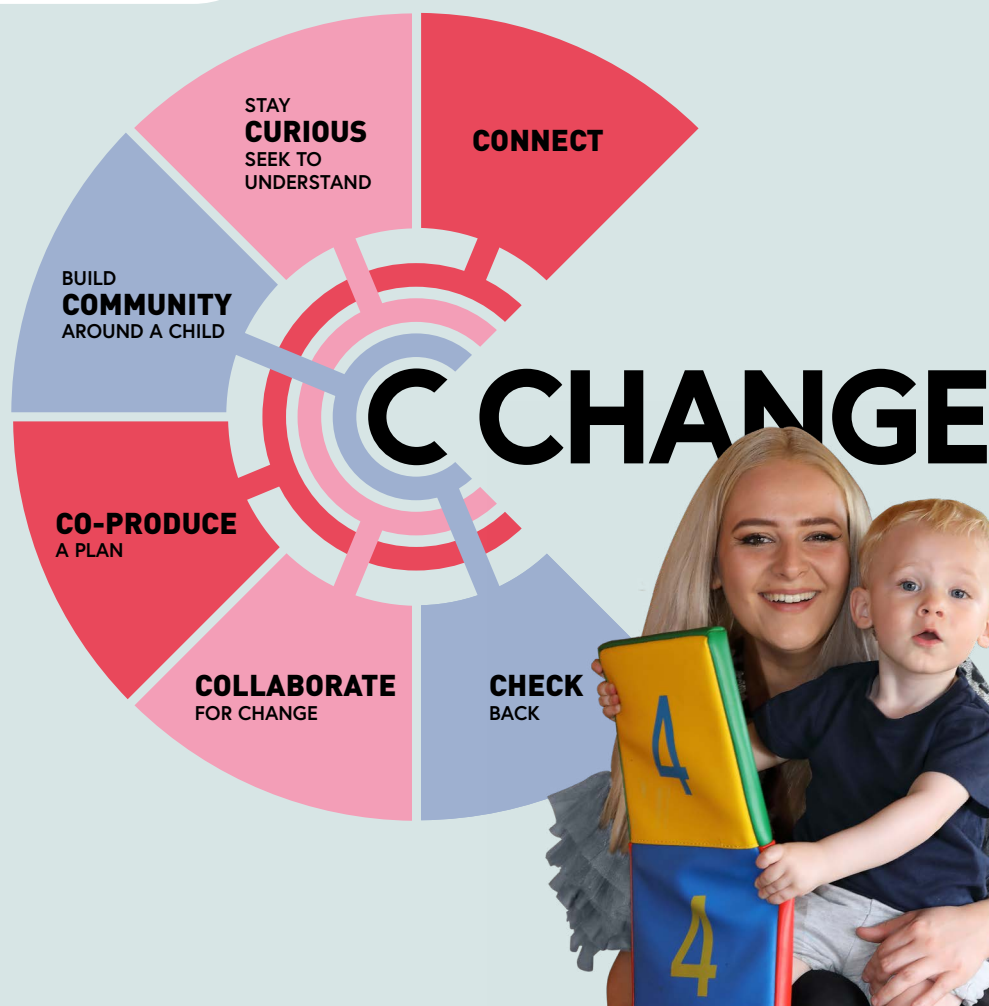
Introduction

We want to deliver outstanding services for children and families in Tower Hamlets. Services that build relationships, that seek to understand and work with children and families. Our goal is to enable children to thrive within their own families, immediate or wider, when it is safe and appropriate to do so.

We believe that **together** we can build communities where children are healthy, happy, safe and successful. Evidence shows we achieve our collective goals when everybody knows what is expected of them and what to expect. It works better for us all when we work **together**.

Better Together is our shared vision of what we are trying to achieve. It reminds us how we are expected to work with children and families. This framework is based on the ethos of Restorative Practice. It draws from other relationship-based approaches, such as systemic and trauma informed practice.





The approach sets out six core practices (C-Change) that enable us to put relationships at the heart of our practice. They help us work together, bring about change and repair harm.

This could mean doing simple things well, like spending more time with children and families we work with, playing with them or using direct work tools that help us remain curious and better understand their culture and lived experiences.

Children and families have noticed we are changing. They tell us we're better at listening. We build on their strengths. We respect them and are open and honest, even when tough decisions are being made. And our staff have noticed too. Very few people are leaving us to work elsewhere. In fact, lots of people are choosing to come and work in Tower Hamlets.

We are working this way across Early Help, Youth Services and Statutory Children's Services. Practitioners and leaders are using it to address various practice priorities, such as domestic abuse, neglect and harm outside the home.

We believe this way of working enables us to work together, with children and families and professionals, to deliver outstanding services and build communities where children learn, thrive and enjoy their childhood.

Our Shared Behaviours

After extensive consultation we have agreed to work in these five ways:

1

Be open and honest - do what we say we'll do, and explain what happens next.

2

Value families' experience - work with families, don't do to them, or work for them.

3

Listen to understand – be curious, not judgemental.

4

Work to prevent harm and repair damage - to people and relationships.

5

Empower people - giving high support and having high expectations.

Our Practice Standards

Practice Standard 1: Connection - Building connections and relationships with children and families is key to creating change

Practice Expectations

We will:

- Forge relationships with children and families to achieve sustainable change.
- Provide easy access to services to ensure children and families receive appropriate support at the earliest opportunity.
- Understand and identify what it is like for this child, living in this family, at this time and the relationships that are important to them.
- Work with families' agreement, with respect and with recognition of boundaries.

Our approach

- The starting point is building relationships based upon values of respect, empathy, inclusion, collaboration and social responsibility. This is similar to models such as signs of safety, motivational interviewing and systemic practice. Skills from these approaches are transferable.

- We promote simple ideas such as social capital or the idea of 'marginal gains' or phrases such as 'connect before content' to emphasise the need to build relationships.
- We recognise that difficulties are embedded in relationships, not assigned to individual children or parents. To rebuild those relationships, our relationships with families must be positive and strong.
- We are creative in our work with families, adapting our approach to the needs of the family, actively encouraging them to be involved in the development of plans. Every contact is a chance to create change with a family.
- We want to connect with families on an equal level. Finding common ground and being willing to share a bit of ourselves and our humanity.

Our Practice Standards

Outcomes

- Families can seek and access support promptly.
- Children's voices are central and evident in all interventions.
- Families feel included and empowered in the process of seeking to achieve sustainable change from the start.

Useful Tools

Restorative circles

Direct work tool rucksack – a variety of engagement tools and strategies to build relationships

Check-in questions

Language tools

Practice guidance on visits

Resources

Introduction to restorative practice training

Direct work guidance document and training - Learning Hub and Learning Wednesdays

Introduction to restorative practice training

Learning Wednesdays and practice guidance documents

Tri-x and Intranet



Our Practice Standards

Practice Standard 2: Curiosity - To understand the child and family's experience

Practice Expectations

We will:

- Ensure that the voice of the child and the young person is at the core of our work, and this comes through in our practice, using creative, age appropriate, child focused ways of relating and working with children.
- Gain an understanding of family history, including behaviour patterns, and how this may have influenced their current lifestyle, parenting capacity, and family functioning.
- Use appropriate assessment tools and work with families to understand what it is like for the children living in these families and communities.
- Remain curious about the influence of our own experience and how that links to our understanding of children and families.

Our approach

- Restorative and trauma informed practice provides a lens to understand any trauma, loss or harm a child or family may have experienced before seeking to find solutions or ways to repair or mitigate the impact of harm.
- A strengths-based approach – Identifying families' strengths and looking for positive aspects of family life and parenting. Seeking to build on families' own solutions and using these to address jointly agreed goals.
- Systemic approach - Families do not exist in isolation, they are influenced by their relationships with the wider community, with schools, and by parents' own experience of school and family life.
- We expect managers and leaders to use the restorative supervision framework, based on the Integrated Model of Restorative Supervision developed by Tony Morrison and Jane Wonnacott.
- The Framework promotes the practice of individual and group supervision as well as peer to peer and reverse mentoring.

Our Practice Standards

Outcomes

- We have a robust understanding of what life is like for the child living in their family and community.
- We have identified positive aspects of family life and parenting strengths that can be used to support change.
- We understand the needs of children and families, the risk areas, and factors that influence our safety planning.
- We understand the parents' capacity to change, in the context of their own experiences, culture, values and motivation.
- We make recommendations about the way forward, based on good quality analysis and decision making.

Useful Tools

Restorative Practice 3 step process

Systemic tools

Chronology, genogram and ecomaps

REPAIR (DVA) Tool Kit

Neglect tool kit

Harm Outside the Home Tool Kit

Trauma informed practice

Restorative supervision framework

Resources

Learning Hub, Introduction to Restorative Practice, Action Learning Set - restorative practice training

Learning Hub, systemic training offer

Learning Hub, Direct work training

Learning Hub and practice guidance documents, Learning Wednesdays

Learning Hub and practice guidance documents, Learning Wednesdays

Learning Hub and practice guidance documents, Learning Wednesdays

Learning Hub

Learning Hub

Our Practice Standards

Practice Standard 3: Community - Culturally competent practice that enables children to live and thrive within caring communities

Practice Expectations

We will:

- Recognise that the best place for children to grow up is within their own immediate or wider families, wherever it is safe and appropriate for them to do so.
- Identify all significant people in a child's life and try to involve them to enable the family to find their own solutions.
- Embed culturally aware and sensitive social work practice that ensures respect and good understanding of the child and family.

Our approach

- We employ culturally competent practice, a combination of cultural awareness but also sensitivity to cultural nuances. For example, we do not make assumptions based on religion or ethnicity.
- We recognise the social GRACES, a wide range of factors like gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, class, culture, ethnicity, education, employment, sexuality, sexual orientation and spirituality and the influence that these have.
- We seek to develop the 'Community Around a Family', drawing on opportunities and strengths within the local community.
- We use Family Meetings and Family Group Conferences, informal and formal meetings bringing together children, parents, wider family, practitioners from various disciplines and others recognised as important to securing positive change.
- We seek permanency for children - for children to have stable, permanent and loving homes that promote their culture and identity; seeking reunification with their birth families if and when appropriate to do so.
- We want to develop lifelong links - where children are not cared for in the family home, short or long-term, ensuring they remain connected to the family and to their community, as far as is possible and positive to do so.

Our Practice Standards

Outcomes

- All significant adults in a child's life are identified and enabled to find solutions.
- Children remain in or return to family homes where safe to do so.
- Family stay involved in a child's life wherever they live.

Useful Tools

Social Discipline Window

Cultural Genograms

Listening circle

Social GRACES

Family Group Conference

Lifelong Link

Tree of life

Resources

Introduction to restorative practice training

Learning Hub, Learning Wednesdays

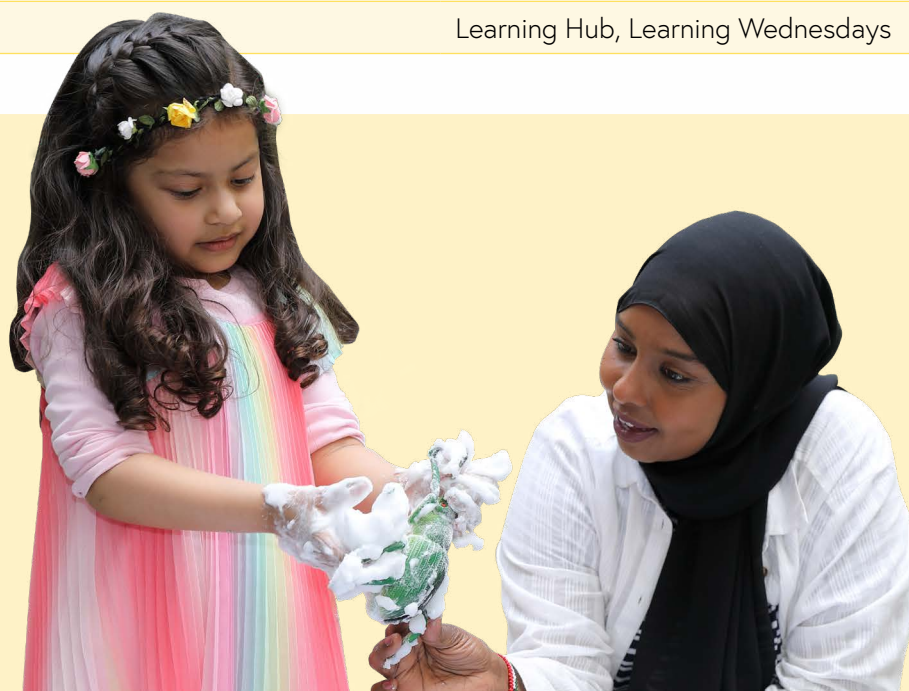
Introduction to restorative practice training

Learning Hub – introduction to Systemic Training

Learning Hub, Learning Wednesdays

Learning Hub, Learning Wednesdays

Learning Hub, Learning Wednesdays



Our Practice Standards

Practice Standard 4: Co-production - Enabling and engaging children and families to find their own solutions

Practice Expectations

We will:

- Develop a shared understanding with families of what needs to be achieved within agreed timescales.
- Involve children in creating plans that keep them safe, promote their well-being and help them achieve their aspirations.
- Ensure that families understand the changes we expect, the process we will follow, and how we will measure the impact of our interventions.
- Reinforce positive changes, and plans will be changed where impact is not evident.

Our approach

- Decision making is always best done closest to where those decisions are intended to impact, and by those who are impacted. Wherever we can draw on the strengths and solutions from within a family, plans are more likely to work.
- There is an important role for advocates in co-production, helping to rebalance power relationships. People who can support the family to be as fully involved in decision making and planning as possible. Advocates can make sure children's and families' voices are heard if they cannot fully articulate their views themselves.
- Good plans are developed together, involving children as meaningfully as possible and written in a way they understand; aiming for shared decisions, directed by the child as far as possible.
- Plans should be written in plain language, with clear outcomes, so that families know what is expected of them. A plan should clearly define what is expected, what impact it will have on the child and how the proposed intervention will achieve this.
- Children and families will be involved in reviewing plans, getting their view of what an effective review should look like and how progress can be measured.

Our Practice Standards

Outcomes

- Plans are jointly developed; families know what is expected and what the next steps will be.
- Impact and outcomes are measurable.
- Plans are jointly reviewed and evaluated in a timely manner to avoid drift and delay.
- Strengths and success of families are celebrated.

Useful Tools

Restorative Child Protection Conference
 Restorative Care Plan templates
 Harm outside the Home Mapping Tool
 Co-production
 Children's Independent Advocates

Resources

Introduction to restorative practice training
 Learning Hub, Learning Wednesday
 Learning Hub - Harm outside home training
 Learning Hub, Learning Wednesdays
 Learning Wednesdays



Our Practice Standards

Practice Standard 5: Collaboration - Working with children and families to achieve positive change, resolve conflict and repair harm

Practice Expectations

We will:

- Seek to understand risk within the wider context of the family and ensure appropriate safety plans are co-produced as a starting point.
- Intervene at the earliest opportunity, using the lowest level of intervention possible that can result in positive outcomes and prevention of cases escalating.
- Ensure that our interventions are proportionate, purposeful and informed by theory and research.
- Intervene in an ethical manner that draws on strengths within families and is respectful of cultural, norms and values. .

Our approach

- We understand that problems arise within the context of relationships and that solutions are usually found within the strengths and resources of families themselves.
- We want to challenge as well as support the children and families we work with, to have high expectations and offer support to achieve them, to work with not for, nor do to.
- We work to repair harm by building resilience, supporting the development of family independence, building on strengths and enabling them to find their own solutions, including taking responsibility for sustaining positive changes.
- We seek to promote protective factors, including caring and supportive relationships with at least one adult, belonging to a united group or community, engaging in activities that offer a sense of purpose, and developing skills to regulate emotions and behaviours that can be utilised in stressful circumstances.
- We recognise trauma can affect many behaviours, including parenting and the way relationships are built and maintained. By helping build trusting relationships, we help build resilience.

Our Practice Standards

Outcomes

- The child has had chances to express concerns, understand challenges, and has hope that the future will improve.
- Parents have had the chance to understand the impact of their behaviour on the child, and their physical and emotional wellbeing.
- Families understand why certain interventions have been chosen, and the evidence that underpins this choice.
- Intervention leads to improved relationships and meaningful and sustainable change.
- Families feel they have been worked with and not 'done to'.



Useful Tools

Social Discipline Window

Risk Assessment Tools (Domestic Violence, Neglect and Harm Outside the Home)

Safety Planning Templates

Restorative Problem-Solving Process (3 step approach)

Restorative Conferences

Affective Statements

Resources

Introduction to restorative practice training

Learning Hub – DV Repair, harm outside home and neglect training, Learning Wednesdays and practice guidance documents

Learning Hub - repair, harm outside home and neglect training, Learning Wednesdays

Introduction to restorative practice training, action learning set

Learning Hub - Advanced course

Introduction to restorative practice training, Action Learning Set



Our Practice Standards

Practice Standard 6: Checking back - Promoting accountability, quality assurance and a culture of learning

Practice Expectations

We will:

- Provide robust and responsive services to a high standard.
- Engage in effective quality assurance activity to strengthen our improvement activity and build a culture of learning.
- Identify and respond to new challenges, build on and replicate successes, and plan for future needs.
- Consistently and intentionally check back with children and families as well as professionals and ensure a considered response.

Our approach

- We use restorative audits as a learning tool for practitioners to identify ways to improve practice and help to deliver the best possible service to children and families.
- We have a culture of constructive feedback, giving it respectfully and actively seeking it out. We recognise power imbalances that can influence the success of feedback, both in practitioners' relationships with families or with their own managers.
- We are outcomes focussed, always keeping in mind what is different for children as a result of our intervention.
- We employ a strengths-based approach, encouraging improvement, learning and development. We consider what we do well and what we could do even better.
- We are analytical and use evidence to support judgements. Intelligent use of data supports our understanding of practice and enables us to attend to emerging themes or patterns at an early stage.
- We use learning from our feedback and data to drive improvement within the service.
- We are part of a collective system that continually challenges professional practice in order to promote the best outcomes for children and their families.

Our Practice Standards

Outcomes

- The quality and impact of our practice is effectively assessed and measured.
- Quality assurance activity robustly challenges in the context of a learning culture.
- New challenges, areas of development and themes arising are addressed on an ongoing basis.

Useful Tools

Children and family feedback

Practice Observations and Practice Week

Audits, Independent Reviewing Officer reviews, Quality Assurance (QA) processes

Appraisals and staff feedback

Learning and development offer

Lifelong Link

Tree of life

Resources

Feedback forms

Quality Assurance and Audit Guidance, Learning Wednesdays

Quality Assurance and Audit Guidance and Framework, Learning Wednesdays

Intranet

Learning Hub

Learning Hub, Learning Wednesdays

Learning Hub, Learning Wednesdays

Where can I find the Tools and Resources?

The Better Together tools and trainings mentioned in this document can be accessed through shared folders in individual service areas and through the Tower Hamlets **Learning Hub**. Practitioners can also access Direct Work Rucksacks and a wide range of additional toolkits via managers and Advanced Practitioners in their teams.

If you have any difficulty accessing these resources, contact the Principal Social Worker, or any member of the Social Work Academy socialworkacademyteam@towerhamlets.gov.uk

learning  hub