

Welcome to November's Practice and Learning bulletin our 5th edition. I hope you are finding these useful to promote practice discussions in your teams/services.

The Practice focus for this month's bulletin is pre-birth assessments; our practice guidance is being reviewed to ensure there is a timely response.

I have also introduced a new article about getting to know each other and what we all do and there is an article about some of the work of our Prevention and Early Help service.

We learn a lot from research that shapes the services we offer and the ways we work with children, young people and their families. This month our learning from Research includes an article on contact/family time and the lived experience of Black and Asian minority ethnic children.

Traci Taylor – Principal Social Worker



Learning from complaints

It is really important that we continually learn how to improve or practice and we do this, not only through training, research and development but through other means such as learning from complaints, audit findings, serious case reviews, service user feedback etc. All of these are learning opportunities and the way we quality assure our work, recognises what we have done well but also areas where we have made mistakes or could improve our practice.

I will be incorporating learning from complaints that come through our department on a regular basis.

Children, young people and their families need to know that they have the right to complain and what will happen to that complaint. Our Complaints and Representations Policy is in Tri-x and details who can make use of our complaints procedure, what can be complained about and what happens to the complaint. For those of you who respond to complaints please take some time to think about any organisational learning which can be included in this section.

[Tri-x procedures and practice guidance](#)

FOCUS ON PRACTICE – PRE-BIRTH ASSESSMENTS

Babies can be particularly vulnerable to abuse; therefore, early assessment, intervention and support during the antenatal period has shown that this can help to minimise any potential risks of harm to the baby. All practitioners have a role in early identification of a pregnant mother who may need additional support and it is vital that there is good information sharing between agencies and professionals where there are safeguarding concerns.

Sadly, Serious Case Reviews (SCR's) involving babies highlight a high percentage of babies under 3 months of age were by their parent/s and that in those cases there were in the pre-birth assessment.

- no pre-birth assessment
- delay in the pre-birth assessment being undertaken
- an over-optimistic outcome of the pre-birth assessment
- a poor quality pre-birth assessment.

In Bradford we follow the guidance for all Professionals in the West Yorkshire Consortium Pre-birth Assessment Guidance which has been written from a multi-agency perspective and highlights the need for the pre-birth assessment to be holistic and a shared responsibility. The document can be found at:

West Yorkshire Consortium Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures

Additionally, we are updating our internal practice guidance for our practitioners so that everyone understands their role and the actions required to ensure that our most vulnerable babies are safeguarded. This document will be ready to use by mid-December 2020 and should be used in conjunction with the WYC pre-birth guidance. The document will be stored in Tri-x.

What do Serious Case Reviews tell us about pre-birth assessments?

What do we do about pre-birth assessments in Bradford?



Learning from Research



Contact/Family Time: between children in care or adopted and their families: Six key messages from research.

We are all aware of the importance of contact/family time and when we are involved in the planning for children one of the key issues for consideration is the level of contact to be offered, who to and how this can be facilitated. Nuffield Family Justice Observatory completed research into this complex area and have completed a briefing paper of their findings in September 2020 which can be accessed here for the full report:

[K:\Children's Department Shared Area\Workforce Development Training Folder\Research articles](#)

The report has points of reflection that could be used in a group supervision or team meeting for practice development.

The report highlighted 6 key messages about Contact/Family Time:

1. **Focus on the quality of the contact/family time** – make sure that it is safe and that it is a rewarding experience for the child.
2. **Listen to the views of the children and young people** - children, especially older children want to have a voice about who they do and don't see.
3. **Recognise the significance of siblings, grandparents, wider family and friends**- often overlooked as important to the child or young person and the focus in on parent/s
4. **Ensure that everyone involved are clear about the purpose of the contact/family time** – clarity has been linked to positive experiences of contact/family time even when the adults may not like each other.
5. **Ensure that contact plans are tailored to each child and regularly reviewed** – contact/family time should never be static and should be reviewed to ensure that it is still a positive, rewarding experience for the child/young person.
6. **Ensure skilled professional support is available** –skilled professional support is key to managing the challenges and facilitate good quality contact.



Learning from Research

Understanding the Lived Experience of Black and Minority Ethnic Children and Young People

This piece of research has been published by Research in Practice – the document asks a number of reflective questions to use in group discussions and training so please make use of these to reflect on your own practice and that of the service.

The briefing focuses on the issues that impact on the lived experiences of diverse groups of children and families in the child protection system as black and ethnic minority children are over-represented in children's social worker but have unique issues as a result of various marginalised identities.

Summary of key points

- as black and ethnic minority children have become more diverse as a group in the UK, the issues arising for them in child protection practice take more complex forms.
- emerging forms of abuse based on religious beliefs, underpinned by cultural traditions, are bringing new challenges concerning thresholds for interventions for child protection.
- there is evidence to show that black and ethnic minority families are disproportionately affected by poverty and therefore overrepresented in the child welfare system.
- black and ethnic minority children in families affected by factors caused by social inequalities like poverty, unemployment, and living in economically-disadvantaged neighbourhoods, are at the greatest risk of child welfare interventions.
- to capture the lived experiences of black and ethnic minority children, workers must be critically reflexive, understand the intersectionality of different forms of oppression, and be willing and able to engage in conversations that are emotionally-loaded and discomforting.
- workers have to strike a balance between sensitively navigating how to respectfully challenge parental attitudes and behaviours framed around culture whilst at the same time keep a focus on the rights of the child.
- a deficit-focused approach with black and ethnic minority families can undervalue the attributes, resources, and assets of the family, and thus be an obstacle in parental engagement.
- workers must be able to identify and examine their own racial biases to increase their overall awareness of how their beliefs might impact their work with different racial and ethnic groups.

The council offers training on equality and diversity: [E-learning Equality and Diversity](#)

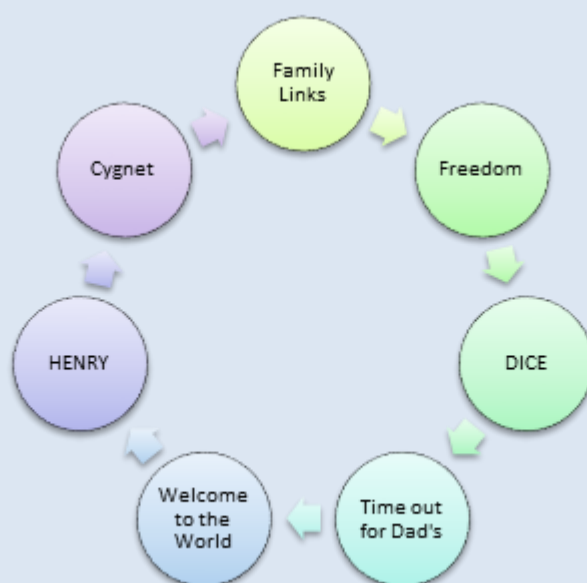
UNDERSTAND LIVED EXPERIENCES THROUGH TALKING TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT THEIR LIVES.

Getting to know you.....

We all work to make sure that our most vulnerable children and families are safeguarded and supported but we don't always know how each team or service does that. We should all know how each service fits into the jigsaw of the department and so I thought that by introducing a feature on some aspect of service delivery or role that we could develop a better understanding.

This month the feature is on the parenting groups that are offered within our Early Help Services. Eve Remington, who is the Practise Lead for District Wide Parenting has helpfully provided the information for this feature – thank you Eve.

Parenting courses offered:



The parenting workers within the family hubs deliver evidence based parenting programmes, ensure whole family working and team around the family approach. Our main programme is Family Links Nurturing Programme which focuses on self-awareness, positive discipline, self-esteem and the building the parent child relationship. The programmes range from Antenatal (Welcome to the World) to teenage years (Talking Teens) and some targeted themes such as Domestic Abuse (Freedom Programme), Autism (cygnet programme), including dads and male's carers (Time out for dad's programme). The impact of the programme varies from increasing self-awareness to enhance parenting skills, improved ability to keep their children safe emotionally and physically, the self-regulation and understanding children's behaviour and how to manage is positively. There are a number of ways to access this service which can include direct referral via family hubs for outside agencies, self-referral or referral via the Integrated Front Door. Many referrals are from social care and family support, health and schools.

There is a professionals guidance to the programmes and what they entail which will be sent with this bulletin for your information and perusal which gives more detail.



Training and Practice Development Opportunity

The Reducing Parental Conflict Project, sponsored by the Department of Work & Pensions, aims to increase awareness and provide support & training for practitioners.

There is strong evidence that conflict between parents – whether together or separated – can have a significant negative impact on children's mental health and long-term life-chances. Not all conflict is damaging, but where this is **frequent, intense and poorly resolved it can harm children's outcomes**.

Addressing couple conflict and the quality of parental relationships is a critical component of improving outcomes for children. Parenting interventions for families without addressing parental conflict are unlikely to be effective or improve outcomes for children.

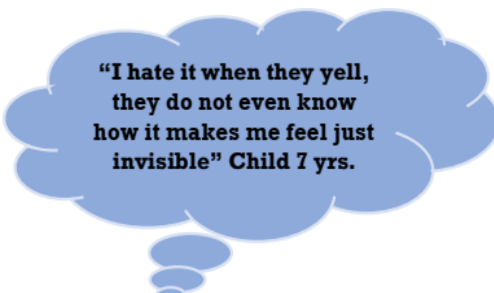
New Regional Website

WHY RELATIONSHIP MATTERS - Disagreements and arguments are completely normal but if they are becoming a problem then help is at hand. Relationship Matters is a new partnership between Bradford Council and 14 other Local Authorities across Yorkshire and Humber Region getting together to help families who may be having relationship difficulties. A new website was recently launched to offer families information, tips and help—and what better time as the coronavirus is leading to big changes in the way we live our everyday lives. Whether couples are together or separated, disagreements are completely normal. But evidence shows that frequent, intense and poorly resolved conflict can harm children's outcomes.

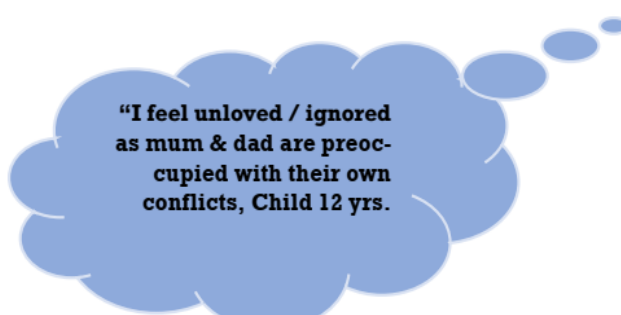
All relationships have tricky moments, it is how they're experienced and resolved that matters, especially at the moment for getting us through enforced self- isolation, lock down and social distancing. We are all spending longer periods of time with our loved ones and this is bound to bring about some added challenges.

Relationship Matters can help everyone recognise the signs such as:

- Arguing, rows, shouting all the time with each other about things like, money, parenting, housework etc...
- Worries about splitting up
- Sulking, silent treatment, slamming doors or walking away from each other
- Are they anxious or worried which gets in the way of managing everyday life?
- Are they not able to say sorry after an argument and move on?
- Are they using hurtful texts, emails or Facebook against each other?



"I hate it when they yell, they do not even know how it makes me feel just invisible" Child 7 yrs.



"I feel unloved / ignored as mum & dad are preoccupied with their own conflicts, Child 12 yrs.

The website provides tips, information and help to stay calm, work out what needs to happen and signpost in order to get some help. For more information go to <https://relationshipmatters.org.uk>

Visitors from Bradford are amongst the most frequent to the site, so please take a look and share with colleagues and families.

Sometimes it can be challenging to separate out between parental conflict and domestic abuse; if there are any concerns around controlling/coercive behaviour, violence or fear then families should seek advice from domestic violence services.

LATEST ADDITIONS TO TRI-X

Tri-x is being updated regularly with new practice guidance and policies. In November the following documents were added:

- Policy and guidance on S17 payments
- Children in Need living in “stable” situations.
- Child protection and Interim Supervision Order practice guidance
- Letter to accompany a negative viability assessment.
- Adoption documents.

Just a reminder that you can also access the West Yorkshire Safeguarding procedures via the Tri-x link – click into the WYS site; it is set up in a similar way and you can access;

- Policies and procedures
- Resources
- Safeguarding children partnership websites
- Working Together to Safeguard Children

Additionally, you can register for updates so you are alerted when new things are added.

[Tri-x procedures and practice guidance](#)





All the learning in this bulletin will be followed up by the practice supervisor in your team – it will be on your team meeting agenda to look at what we can do to make sure that the learning in this bulletin is embedded in the work that we do with children and families. Let us know how you get on!

CONTINUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

For those who need to complete a piece of CPD for re-registration with Social Work England please remember that you need to add at least 4 pieces a year so it would be good to get into the habit of doing this at least on a quarterly basis – the learning from these bulletins counts towards a piece of CPD.

Reducing Parental Conflict – e- learning training is available by contacting Adele Carr at Adele.carr@bradford.gov.uk who will send you a link to the training.

The NSPCC has released two podcasts on the Baby Steps perinatal educational programme, designed to help prepare people for becoming parents Listen to the podcasts: [Providing perinatal education during COVID-19 through Baby Steps](#)

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation has published a thematic review of the work of youth offending services in England and Wales during the coronavirus pandemic which can be read here: [A thematic review of the work of youth offending services during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

Next Month.....

Will include; the role of the Lead Practitioner; A focus on practice around Police Powers of Protection and The importance of assessing parent's ability to safely supervise contact.

Learning from Case Reviews; risk factors and learning for improved practice around culture and faith.



For Feedback or suggestions please contact Traci Taylor, PSW at -

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