

Principal Social Worker's Practice and Learning Bulletin March 2022

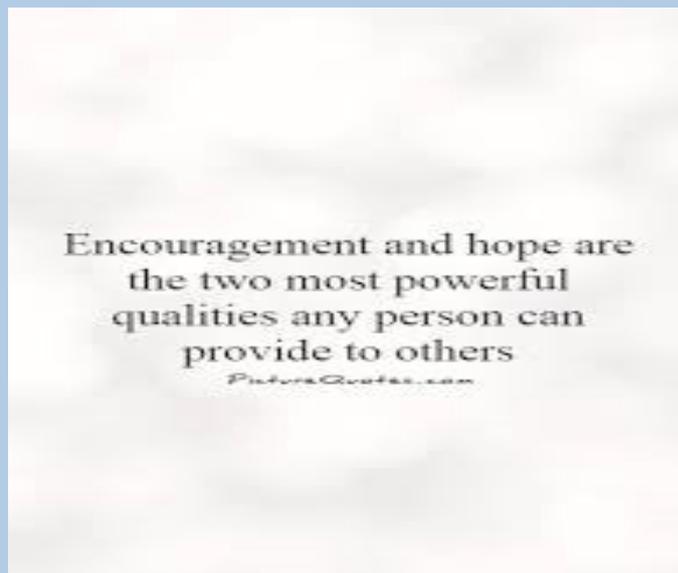


Welcome to March's edition of the bulletin

Hello everyone, in this month's bulletin I have started with an article about Neglect and Poverty, this is going to be our training focus in April and is timely given the financial difficulties that many people are experiencing day to day due to the increasing cost of living; the impact of the families that we work with will be catastrophic and we need to be aware of the impact of the increasing costs when we are completing our assessments and supporting people. We need to be very clear about whether this is neglect or poverty and take the appropriate steps to support families rather than escalating things.

Dates for this training are being added to Evolve now for you to book on.

As usual there is lots of training available - listed on the back page - book a date!



As always, please let me know if you want to see something in the bulletin or want to contribute.



Best wishes

Traci Taylor

Principal Social Worker/Service Manager



FOCUS

ON PRACTICE

Language that Cares

Our focus on our use of language has been well supported although we still have a lot of work to do to embed '**language that cares**'; I continue to receive suggestions for improving how we speak and write about people. The most recent suggestion was to stop using the phrase "**we don't want to set you up to fail**" when talking to parents/carers as this already promotes the idea that they may fail in what they have been asked to do.....instead it was suggested that we talk about supporting with any challenges. It is all about using supporting strength based language that helps to build up those relationships. The person who made this suggestion preferred to be anonymous; I want to say thank you for the suggestion and thank you for taking the time to contact me You know who you are.

If you can think of other examples please let me know as I am keen that we have a glossary of terms for us all to access.



The practice focus for April and May is Neglect and Poverty Aware practice. We will be offering this training face to face and there will be a number of sessions available which can be booked through Evolve.

This training will explore whether there is a relationship between poverty and neglect and what that looks like. The key message is that as practitioners working with families we all need to be aware of and practice with an awareness of poverty and neglect. Poverty is a stigma and we need to make sure that we do not further stigmatise people by setting unrealistic expectations of them in terms of money. An example of this would be criticising dirty clothes without first checking if the family have a washing machine, can afford to use it or have money to go to the laundrette.

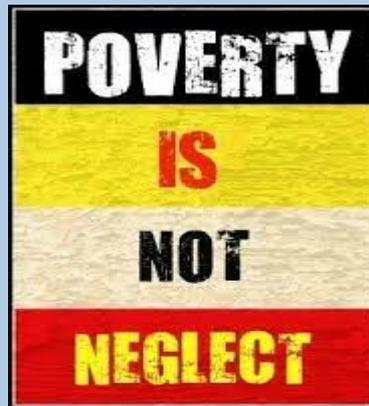
Question:

Do you consider whether the family is in poverty when assessing or working with families
Is your practice poverty aware?

Working with a family:

It is important to distinguish between:

- › inadequate parenting as a result of a lack of parenting skills and inappropriate expectations of children, versus
- › inadequate parenting because of social, environmental or parental risk factors (e.g. depression, substance use, homelessness, mental ill-health). Social covers poverty.



Poverty is a social experience of negative interactions with society. Social work can either confront or re-enforce these feelings of stigma, through language and ways of working. (Gupta, 2017)

If the constraints placed upon parents by poverty are not acknowledged or addressed, practice involvement may well be experienced as reinforcing feelings of powerlessness and stigma. (Hooper et al, 2007)

I have included the above quotes from academics as it highlights the importance of poverty aware practice. Think about what is happening in our own lives, the hike in energy costs, the cost of food and commodities etc. A question has already been asked as part of the DCS drop in sessions about whether the workforce is going to get an increase in petrol payments due to the petrol price increase. Think about how all this is affecting our families who a number are already at a severe disadvantage.

In our everyday work with families we are in a good position, and should be being proactive in our support of families to alleviate difficulties that may be impacting on their ability to parent their children. Swift practical support demonstrates that practitioners can be relied upon to take families' concerns seriously, and allow them to move on to exploring more entrenched difficulties.

- › Do we unthinkingly make demands on people that create financial pressure?
- › Do we give up on people who 'fail to engage' without considering underlying factors?
- › Might we advocate-stand up for their rights, e.g.:
 - challenge a landlord about their duties to make repairs
 - accompany someone to a benefits appeal hearing
 - negotiate better debt arrangements or terms with a loans company

Poverty awareness is essential, however, it is also really important to have a good understanding of neglect and the impact of neglect on children and not miss the opportunity to intervene; concerns about poverty should not be a reason to not recognise abuse through neglect.

Research does suggest that there is a strong association between family poverty and a child's chance of suffering child abuse or neglect. Therefore, it is important that when you make use of chronologies and/or history known to make an informed judgement. Cumulative harm is harm that has occurred over a period of time and means that there is an accumulation of events that has led to the harm rather than one event.

Raise your awareness by booking into the training offered.



An area of practice that we do need to improve on and develop a consistent understanding is that of **SAFETY PLANNING**; Our learning through our audit findings and from feedback from our child protection co-ordinators shows us that safety plans are not being used consistently and that a significant number of plans are ineffective due to the nature of how they have been understood and written; this is clearly a training issue which we will address and offer training to all practitioners who are directly involved with the writing of safety plans. It is important that we get this area of our practice right as this is the plan that we use in order to keep children safe from harm.



Safety planning can be used in a variety of situations, keeping children safe, keeping individuals safe from domestic abuse etc. In order to write an effective safety plan we need to understand what it is, how to use it to keep children safe and how to involve families in the production of the plan (co-production).

Safety Plan:

A safety plan is a plan that is put in place so that when a child is at risk of harm things are put in place to minimise the risk or to remove the risk entirely; it is a series of actions that is to be taken when the harm arises; it should involve the family including any extended family and friends

A safety plan is not:

A **contract of expectations**; this is not a tool that we use in Bradford and we are addressing this with the courts in Bradford so we are not asked to produce one.

A list of things that are irrelevant as a 'coverall'

Something that should be written without the input of the family.

Effective Safety Planning:

In urgent situations a safety plan is likely to be written by the professional to allow a child to stay with their carer, for example if a referral is made to the Emergency Duty Team, they may put a safety plan in place overnight or over the weekend.

For safety planning to be the most effective this is a dynamic process and has been described as a 'journey not a product'; the plan may develop over time as the situation improves or changes.

It is essential to involve the family in the development of the safety plan, if the family feel that they have been listened to, heard and valued they are more likely to be invested in the safety plan to keep their child/ren safe; this is the basis of our model of practice, the importance of building relationships.

At each stage of the safety planning the focus should be the immediate safety of the child and arrangements should be put in place for the short and medium term. For example,

Tonight, Alison, maternal grandmother, will move into the family home and will support with the care of the children while Tony moves to his parents home to allow the situation in the home to calm down.

1. Alison will be a regular visitor to the home, it has been agreed that if the children are worried about anything that they will give her a teddy bear and this will let her know that they need to talk to her about their worries.
2. Tony and Alice have decided that if either of them are feeling frustrated or angry that they will say that this is how they feel and where possible remove themselves from the house and go for a walk or visit a friend or a family member, Alison and Becky (Alice's sister) have said that they will come to the house to look after the children so either Tony or Alice have said that they will take responsibility to ring Alison or Becky.
3. If Tony decides to have a drink of alcohol while he is feeling frustrated or angry he will go and stay at his parents house. Tim and Janet (paternal grandparents) will ring Alice and let her know he has gone there. Tony and Alice have agreed not to contact each other if Tony has had a drink.

The above is an example of how a safety plan can be used; the list below is an example of what can be seen on a file but is not a safety plan.

- The children will go to school.
- Alice will not let Tony in the house if he has had a drink
- Alice will ring the police
- There is an ICPC next week

The safety planning process is designed to provide parents and families with the best possible opportunity to demonstrate that they are able to make and sustain the necessary changes (to keep their children safe).

Safety planning is not about trusting that parents, family members and safety network members will do what they say they will do. Trust can lead to naïve practice and to the children being left in dangerous situations. At all stages of the safety planning process, safety needs to be demonstrated. This means that while you can acknowledge the statements that people make about what they will do in the future, these statements only translate into safety once actions or behaviours have been demonstrated over sufficient time to enable everyone to be confident that these actions will be continued.

The monitoring process (regularly visiting and checking that people are doing what they say they will do) is critical as this clearly communicates to the family and the safety network that the changes in behaviour have to be demonstrated, as well as providing a mechanism to build confidence that the safety plan is actually working.

Working with extended family members and friends is an important part of the process; this can be achieved through family meetings or through more formal Family Group Conferences. What is vital is that the expectations of the safety plan are realistic and very clear for families including the consequences of not following the safety plan.





TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Managers training - Supervision Workshop- face to face City hall

5/04/22 AM half day

5/04/22 PM half day

Workshop 1 - Understanding and Recognising the Impact of Trauma - What is Trauma?

29/03/22- 10am to 12noon

30/03/22- 10am to 12noon

7/04/22- 10am to 12noon

26/04/22- 10am to 12noon

Trauma Workshop 2 – Trauma Informed Practice:

05/04/2022 – 9.30am

08/04/2022 – 9.30am

26/04/2022 – 1pm

Trauma Workshop 3 – Looking after ourselves:

12/04/2022 – 10am

21/04/2022 – 1pm

29/04/2022 – 10am

Understanding Impact:

05/04/2022 – 1pm

Practice Educator training

26th April day 1 student induction and the Practice Educator award.

28th April day 2 supervision and reflective practice.

4th May day 3 assessing values.

10th May day 4 assessment and PCFs.

12th May day 5 managing concerns and report writing

Working with Men:

22/04/2022 – 10am

26/04/2022 – 9.30am

Assessment Planning in Care Proceedings

Thursday 14th April 11.30 – 1pm

Tuesday 17th May – 1 – 2.30pm

Wed 15th June – 9am – 10.30am

Lead Professional training Module 2

Tues 12th April 10-11.30am

Weds 27th April 3.30 -5pm

Lead Professional training Module 3

Thurs 14th April 10-11.30am

Thurs 28th April 3.30-5pm

Motivational Interviewing

Weds 13th April 9am 11am

Poverty and Neglect awareness (face-to-face)

Weds 13th April 1.30-4.30

Tuesday 19th April 9.30am -12.30pm



WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY INFORMATION EVENT

Thursday 7th April 2022 10 am - 2 pm

Bradford City Events Suite.

Free Event

This is a drop in event for families living with Autism (no diagnosis required)

