

**Principal Social Worker's  
Practice and Learning Bulletin  
January 2023**



**Hello everyone and a very Happy New Year.**

**This is the first of the bulletins for 2023; just a reminder that previous copies of the bulletins can be found in Tri-x if you want to use them for reference purposes. As there has been a frequent change of staff I do repeat some of the key themes identified.**

**In this edition I am introducing Restorative Practice; this is the practice approach that we are going to introducing across all of our services including our partner agencies.**

**Our Focus on Practice this month is analysis. I have covered this topic before but it is still an area that we need to strengthen.**

**As always we have learning from complaints and practice reviews and on the back page there is a list of the training and development events available to you.**

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



**Just a reminder that reading this bulletin can contribute to your CPD record which is especially vital for those of you who need to record your learning with Social Work England. Additionally, I hope that you are discussing the contents of this in your team meetings; this may generate interesting conversations about practice and learning.**



Best wishes

**Traci Taylor**

**Principal Social Worker/Service Manager**

# WHAT IS RESTORATIVE PRACTICE?

Restorative practice is an approach rather than a model. It can be described as a way of behaving and involves building and maintaining healthy relationships, resolving difficulties and repairing harm done to people and relationships. It encourages people to take responsibility for their actions, working with them rather than doing things to or for them.

Restorative practice fits well with our work in social care as it allows us to create a supportive and respectful environment for individuals to share their feelings and take responsibility for their actions by being encouraged and supported to problem solve and decide a plan to help them to move on. The idea is that there is a collaboration. An example of restorative practice we already use is Family Group Conferencing.

In collaboration with Leeds Relational Practice Centre we will be launching workshops for restorative practice starting in February starting with senior leaders as it is important that this approach is understood and used by all throughout our services and relates to the way we work with our children, young people and families but also how we respond and talk to each other and other professionals.

Restorative practice will require us to think about our behaviour, the language we use and our approach to each other. It will involve us looking at the language we use in our documents, how we conduct our meetings and other interactions with others and developing an 'always on' approach.

This visual representation shows the skill set used when practising restoratively



# What does this mean?

You will have come across the principles of Restorative Practice and are probably using the approach in a lot of areas of your work.

**Check in's:** If you have ever been in a meeting or training session where there has been a 'check in' such as "what was your favourite sweet as a child?" - that is a restorative approach. It is irrelevant what your favourite sweet was; the purpose was to give everyone a voice, lift the temperature of the room and start in a positive way. The theory behind this is that once you have spoken you are likely to speak again. When people are comfortable speaking they are more likely to take responsibility, share insights and generate solutions. Start practicing this in your team meetings/site meetings.

**Circles:** can be used in informal and formal meetings, we are probably used to sitting in circles for team meetings but holding formal meetings around table. However, a restorative approach would be to use circle without tables in all of our formal meetings. This is especially beneficial for our families as it removes the physical and psychological barriers between people. This will help our families to feel less intimidated and more able to contribute. So, eventually we will hold all of our meetings in this way which will be a change for us and for our partners.

**Relationship building:** restorative approaches are used in a number of authorities, schools and business across the world. In our work it is accepted as a highly effective way of achieving better outcomes for children, young people and their families. The focus on the importance of relationships is not new to us and previously we were using a relationship based practice model. Building trusting respectful relationships is the conduit for change; to be restorative we:

- prioritise building relationships and take the time to nurture these
- listen and respond calmly, empathically and without interruption or judgment to all sides of an issue
- inspire a sense of trust and safety (physical and psychological)
- encourage people to express their thoughts, feelings and needs appropriately
- appreciate the impact of people's thoughts, feelings, beliefs and unmet needs on their behaviours
- find solutions together that work for everyone involved





Our audits tell us that we are not consistent in the way that we analyse information in our assessments. This article aims to demystify analysis and give some top tips for how to complete them.

## **The Stages of Analysis**

### **Stage 1 - Making sense of information to self and others:**

- Understanding the core issues
- Explaining 'how', 'why', 'what'?
- Taking an inquisitive and critical approach to information
- Cross-checking sources, self-critiquing, listening to service users' criticisms
- Organising the data

### **Stage 2 - Interpreting the data: formal and informal reasoning**

- Contextualising the data: law, ethics, practice
- Gut feeling
- Practitioner wisdom
- Formal knowledge: national and local policies; theoretical and research knowledge, models of practice, analytic tools

### **Stage 3 - Planning and decision-making**

- (R)evaluating the information
- Clarifying the purpose of actions
- Situating actions on the 'evidence' – for example research evidence, the available information, previous actions

Examining implications or consequences

### **Stage 4 - Presenting the analysis effectively**

- Evidencing the above
- Showing different voices and opinions
- Explaining or considering opposing viewpoints
- Carrying your readers and listeners with you
- Concluding and recommending a course of action

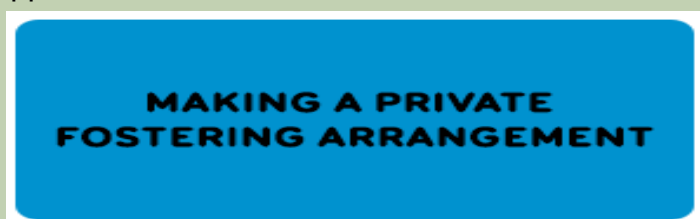


## What do you know about it?

### WHAT IS IT?

Private Fostering is when a child or young person under the age of 16 years old (18 if they have a disability) is looked after for 28 days or more by someone who isn't a close relative, guardian, or person with parental responsibility. Close relatives include parents, step-parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents. The law states that carers and parents must notify the Local Authority of any private fostering arrangement. They need to be sure that the child is safe, happy and healthy and offer support to you as a private foster carer when needed.

It is **not** private fostering if the arrangement was made by social care, or if the person looking after the child is an Approved foster carer



### Reasons a child may be privately fostered

A private fostering arrangement might happen for a many reasons. This might include:

- A teenager living with the family of a boyfriend, girlfriend or a school friend because of a family breakdown.
- A child living with a friend of their family because of a separation, divorce or arguments at home.
- A child needing to be cared for because a parent has a long-term illness and is unable to look after their child.
- A child being sent to this country by their parents who are living overseas.
- A child needing to be cared for because their parent(s) work away from home or work particularly long or unsociable hours.

### What does the law say about private foster care arrangements? You need to know this.

The law requires that Children's Social Care be told about a private foster care arrangement at least **6 weeks before** someone intends to privately foster a child or young person. However, if such an arrangement is made in an **emergency**, then **Children's Social Care should be informed within 48 hours** of you caring for a child or young person. **Not everyone is aware of this so if you become aware in your daily work that someone is caring for a child not related to them then you need to make them aware and make a referral.**

The reason Children's Social care need to know is that The Children's Act 1989, gives the local authority children's services a legal duty to safeguard the wellbeing of all children. The local authority also needs to be informed **within 48 hours** of the private fostering arrangement **changing or ending** and the name and address of the person who has taken over the care of the child or young person must be provided.

### What are our duties when we know of a private fostering arrangement?



- Trigger the private fostering arrangement **on LCS (there is a pathway to follow)** and give the PF pack to the PF carers.
- Visit the child and private foster carers within 5 working days
- Understand why the arrangement has been made and how long it is planned to last.
- See and speak to the child to understand their wishes and feelings and experiences, do they understand why they are there
- Have parents consented to the arrangement and exercising PR?
- Assess whether the carers can meet the needs of the child/young person.
- Assess if the accommodation is suitable.
- Undertake checks of the private foster carers and others that live or regularly visit the home.

### If approved as private foster carers following assessment:

- The child/young person needs to be visited at least every 4 weeks. The child should be seen alone.
- A review of the arrangement needs to be formally held at least once a year overseen and chaired by a Team Manager.

Our policy of private fostering and our practice guidance, including the process map can be found in Tri-x.

**getting**  
**it right**  
*for every child*



Our practice evolves from learning from what we do well but also when we have had a complaint.

Stage 2 complaints are completed independently and there is usually an action plan for practice development if it is considered that any part of the complaint can be upheld after investigation. This month we have learning from two Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints.

### **Stage 3 complaint**

**A father of children who were open to CSC took his complaint through all the stages of the process as he had not been involved in the child and family assessment relating to his children. The independent investigation upheld this part of his complaint and made the following recommendation:**

Learning Action:

1. Social Workers (but this relates to anyone completing family assessments) need to ensure that they are working in partnership with both parents. This point is covered in our assessment training and in other training events and is good practice. By not working with both parents the holistic picture for the child is not understood.

### **Stage 2 complaint**

**The complaint was in relation to a mother who had not been kept fully up to date with assessments completed including an exploitation risk assessment and that some information she was provided with and in the report for the CP meeting was incorrect; additionally she was not given information about CIN planning.**

Learning Action:

Team Managers need to ensure that new Social Workers receive regular supervision, direction and support especially when cases become more complex and this needs to be recorded onto the supervision records.

1. Team Manager's need to have better oversight of cases.
2. Team Managers/Social Workers need to ensure that the wishes and feelings/voice of the child is captured in the Criminal Exploitation Risk Assessment.
3. Team Managers/Social Workers need to ensure the views of the parent are captured in the CE RA where it is safe to do so.
4. Communication and consultation with Parents, Young People and Children needs to be improved.
5. Social Workers need to obtain consent from parents before completing a CE RA unless this will cause harm to the child.

The following is also learning from a Stage 2 complaint.



#### Learning Action:

1. Children's Social Care and Early Help should continue to improve the quality and detail of case note recording. We have practice guidance in Tri-x about case recording visits to children; running records are important and need to be completed in a timely manner.
2. When completing a Child & Family Assessment, Social Workers should avoid misleading terms. In this case, the Social Worker recommended that Early Help provide mediation. Mediation is specialist service and profession and the Early Help staff are not mediation trained nor is this part of the service's remit. An alternative could have been a recommendation that Early Help offer support to source mediation and in the meantime facilitate a conversation between the couple to try to reduce the conflict or address the issues.
3. When a manager is carrying out a stage 1 investigation and providing a response they should ensure that they take the full details of the terms of reference into consideration to ensure that they address the correct incident or matter that the complaint is about.
4. Early Help should work creatively to ensure that when a parent is a victim of domestic abuse that they are offered separate meetings so they do not have to see the other parent.

**Our learning about our practice comes from a number of sources, complaints, audits, dip samples, supervision, direct observations, feedback etc. But it is equally as important to learn from compliments from the people who use our services, our partners and our colleagues. We celebrate good practice in the Newsletter that comes from the Deputy Director, David Johnston.**

**Please send good news and things to celebrate to [Tracy.ryan@bradford.gov.uk](mailto:Tracy.ryan@bradford.gov.uk) but also please sent any compliments to the complaints team as they keep a record of these, which are reported and shared with senior managers.**







Here are some of the learning and development opportunities in February - book now.

8th February - Little Minds Matter: Infant Mental Health in Action ([Little Minds Matter training dates | Eventbrite](#))

8th February - The Early Help Assessment and SMART Planning

9th February - Chronologies

9th February - Courageous Conversations

9th February - Strategy Discussions and Section 47 Enquiries

9th February - LCS: CP (Child Protection) and CIN (Child in Need) Process training

15th February - NEW Direct Work with Children & Young People

15th February - Relationships Matter: One Plus One

15th February - Working with Men

16th February - LCS: CIC (Children in Care) Process training

17th February - Court Skills: Statement Writing

21st February - NEW Assessment Workshop Part 3: Pre-birth Assessment

21st February - The Team Around the Family and Measuring Impact

21st February - Special Guardianship Orders

22nd February - Mind of My Own

22nd February - Court Skills: Assessment in Care Proceedings

22nd February - Children's Social Work Matters: Child Sexual Abuse: what we know from trends in official data - CSA Centre (please book via the Children's Social Work Matters Website)

22nd February LGBT History Month Workshop see the flier for the link.

23rd February - NEW Direct Work with Children & Young People

23rd February - Engaging Families

24<sup>th</sup> February – Research in Practice: Intra Familial Sexual Abuse (3 x 90 minute sessions available)

27th February - Life Story Work

28th February - Trauma Workshop 3: Looking After Yourself

**All courses can be booked via Evolve unless otherwise stated.**

You can access lots of useful resources and development opportunities by setting up accounts with the links below.

**Research in Practice:** [www.researchinpractice.org.uk](http://www.researchinpractice.org.uk)

**Children's Social Work Matters:** [www.childrensocialworkmatters.org](http://www.childrensocialworkmatters.org)

Feedback is really important to us to make sure that we are getting things right. Please have your say about the training and development being offered via your evaluation forms as we are using this feedback to adapt our workshops.

**WE APPRECIATE  
YOUR FEEDBACK  
THANK YOU!**