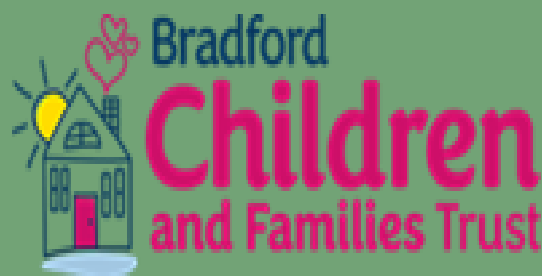


Principal Social Workers Practice and Learning Bulletin July 2023.

Traci Taylor



Hello everyone.

Well, so far it has been the usual British summer weather, but I hope you have all had chance to enjoy some down time with families and do things to look after yourself. It is so important to try to have a work life balance and if this is something you are struggling with then please discuss this with your line manager.

Here is the Practice and Learning Bulletin for July 2023; in this edition I am going back to an introduction to Restorative Practice which is the approach that we are embedding in Bradford Children and Families Trust. This approach is built around relationships and “doing with and not doing to” something that is not new to you but something we sometimes need a reminder about.

There is an article to demystify analysis, with top tips to analysing information.

I have also re-visited Private Fostering; it is important that we all know what a private fostering arrangement is so if we become aware that someone has been looking after someone who is not a relative that we can advise them of what they need to do next.

We develop our practice from learning through complaints and compliments so, as usual our learning from complaints is a feature and I have included our training opportunities for August and early September.

Remember that reading this bulletin contribute towards your continual professional development (CPD). For our social workers the window for recording your CPD with SWE opens in a few weeks, September—November 2023.

I thought this quote fitted in well.





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, you might hear this described as co-production, this just means working as equals to achieve something. An example of restorative practice we already use is Family Group Conferencing.

In collaboration with Andy Lloyd from Leeds Relational Practice Centre work has already begun to embed this approach in our everyday practice. The Service Manager group has completed several sessions on restorative practice and Andy will be working with other groups through the year.

It is important that a restorative 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. Andy will work closely with me and others to look at the everyday language we use, the language in our documents and how we respond to each other and to the people we work jointly with.

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. Andy is going to work closely with me and others to support us to become a restorative organisation. When you get the opportunity to attend any development sessions, please do embrace them.

This visual representation shows the skill set used when practising restoratively.



So, these are the skills we need to be a restorative practitioner, and these are the 5 Principles of Restorative Practice.



Relationships: We cannot underestimate the importance of relationship building and it is our responsibility, as professionals to build those relationships with children, young people and their families. We need to understand the barriers that people have to working with us, using a trauma informed approach and take steps to address those barriers. Therefore, we do not use phrases like 'failed to engage' in our recordings/reports.

Respect: Building relationships means that we show a respect for an individual, we work jointly with them, understanding the power imbalance and value their opinion, even if this is different to ours.

Responsibility: We have a professional responsibility for how we act, what we say and do; this means that we have an accountability.

Repair: The ethos behind restorative practice is repairing harm; you may be familiar with restorative justice which seeks to repair the harm done to victims of crime. Restorative practice in our work is repairing the harm that individuals and groups may have had through their experiences. This fits in with our trauma informed awareness; understanding that people have had unique experiences that shape how they have developed, think and behave.

Reintegration: This principal is around assisting others to be part of , and feel part of a community.



You are probably already working in a restorative way as you have chosen to work with people and make that difference; however, this approach really makes you think about all the ways that we can work with people so that they feel fully included in making plans for their family. Restorative practices also include the way we build relationships with colleagues and partners and one of our goals is to be working restoratively across all services and organisations, so we are all using the same language.

So, how are we embedding restorative practice?



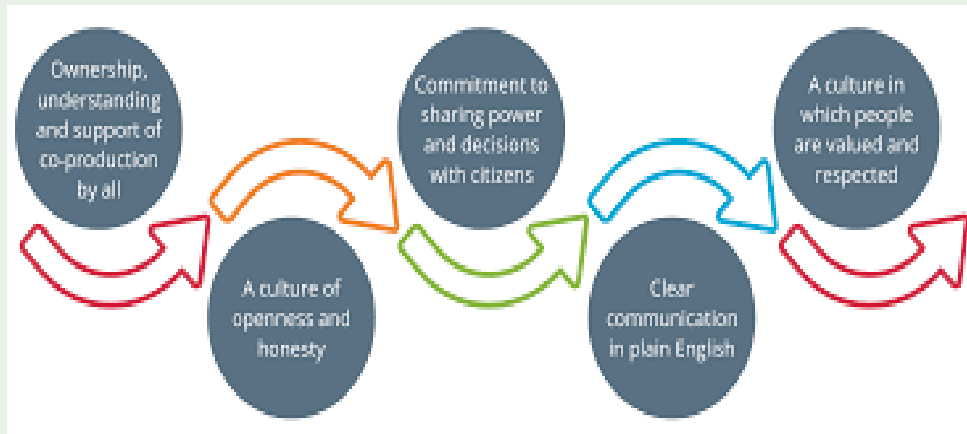
You may already be doing this without realising; one of the things that restorative practice promotes is that everyone has a voice that is listened to. You may have been in meetings or training where the chair/trainer has done a '**check in**', this can be anything, such as "what is your favourite sweet?" It is irrelevant what your favourite sweet is really; the purpose is 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 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 our meetings in this way which will be a change for us and for our partners.

Relationship building restorative approaches are used in several 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 in Bradford as we were previously using Signs of Safety, which is also based in relationships. Building trusting respectful relationships is the conduit for change; to be restorative we will embed:

- prioritising building relationships with others 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. (Trauma informed)
- find solutions together that work for everyone involved.
- introduce restorative practice into our policies, training, the language we use and our forms so that we eliminate negative language and focus on strengths.
- be better at co-production with our children, young people and families so that they feel included, empowered and have a voice, and choice.

Signing up to Co-Production



Co –production in our work means working together with those individuals and groups who may use our services/support whether through choice or statutory means. It is a restorative approach to working with people who may have had little opportunity to have their voice heard or may feel like they have no power and no say in what is happening to them. By using co-production it shows a commitment to working in a way that empowers others, supports them to share their views and thoughts and their expertise; but to work it needs to be meaningful and genuine across the whole of the organisation by;

- ♦ defining those who access care and support as people with skills.
- ♦ breaking down the barriers between people who draw on care and support and professionals.
- ♦ building on people's existing capabilities.
- ♦ including reciprocity (where people get something back for putting something in) and mutuality (people working together to achieve shared objectives)
- ♦ working with peer and personal support networks alongside professional networks
- ♦ facilitating services by helping organisations to become agents for change rather than just being service providers.





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 'how', 'why', 'what'?
- Taking an inquisitive and critical approach to information (be curious)
- Cross-checking sources, self-critiquing, listening to service users' criticisms.
- Organising the data (the information gathered)

Stage 2 - Interpreting the data: formal and informal reasoning.

- Contextualising the data: law, ethics, practice (what does it tell you?)
- Gut feeling (listen to this but tie this in with the evidence you have).
- Practitioner wisdom (your own personal expertise through knowledge and experience)
- 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 (Looking again and what you know and what it means).
- Clarifying the purpose of actions (what do you want to achieve?)
- 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 (balancing the information)
- Carrying your readers and listeners with you (show your workings out)
- Concluding and recommending a course of action

PRIVATE FOSTERING ARRANGEMENTS



WHAT IS A PRIVATE FOSTERING ARRANGEMENT?

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 is not a close relative, guardian, or person with parental responsibility. Close relatives include parents, stepparents, aunts, uncles and grandparents. The law states that carers and parents must notify the Local Authority of any private fostering arrangement. The local authority has a duty to ensure that the child is safe, happy and healthy and offer support to the 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.

MAKING A PRIVATE FOSTERING ARRANGEMENT

Reasons a child may be privately fostered.

A private fostering arrangement might happen for many reasons, which may 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.**

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 living there.
- Check that parents/guardians 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.



COMPLAINT

Our practice evolves from learning from what we do well but also when we have had a complaint. Although we want to avoid complaints when we get them we need to see them as an opportunity to review our practice if there is anything we need to change or improve.

There is complaint training for managers on Evolve which is mandatory to complete and this talks through what the stages are. Stage 1 is conducted by the Team Manager but our Stage 2 and 3 complaints are completed independently; they decide on the evidence if the complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. When a complaint has been upheld there is an action to address this which helps us to understand what part of our practice needs to be improved and developed and helps us to develop our training and development plan. This month we have learning from two Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints.

Stage 3 complaint:

This complaint has arisen due to the dissatisfaction of how Bradford CSC have supported a carer who has an SGO for an 8 year old relative. This complaint has gone through Stage 1 and 2 and not resolved for the carer who is seeking more support as the child has additional needs.

Practice Learning Action:

1. The Trust will consider the learning from this complaint as part of on-going work to develop Special Guardianship Order (SGO) support arrangements and the SGO policy. As part of our ongoing work the SGO support arrangements are being considered and you will be made aware of any updates.

You can access the current practice guidance in Tri-x.

Stage 2 complaint

This complaint was made by foster carers around the lack of communication from the child's social worker around family time.

Practice Learning Actions:

1. Communication between professionals requires improvement and they should work together to prevent miscommunication. Information sharing is important and features in most serious case reviews.
2. Information provided by social workers to Foster Carers about family time should be consistent and advice should be provided to staff about family time arrangements for Looked After Children; consideration as to whether this be 6 times per year or what is, considered to be, in the best interest of the child?
3. Dates and times for Family Time should be recorded and communicated in writing. There should be a record of this is LCS.

Stage 2 complaint:

This complaint was made about the lack of response from CSC following a self referral for support from a young person's Aunt who was looking after her niece following a family disagreement which left the young person not being able to return home. The Aunt thought this would be short term solution but when she realised she had the full time care she sought support. CSC deemed this to be a family arrangement so did not take action initially, taking 5 months to start to support this family. The Stage 1 complaint was not responded to in timescales; the TM felt that the situation had been informally resolved but there was no record of this and the Aunt did not feel this was the case.

Practice Learning Actions:

When a team manager has a discussion with a complainant and views the complaint as resolved informally, that the complainant is asked if they agree with this. This should be noted specifically on the case notes and the Corporate Complaints Team informed to enable the complaint process to be stopped and the case closed

CSC should ensure that the quality of case note recording continues to improve. All social workers should be reminded that their case note recordings should be complete and include all contact with parents/ carers that takes place. If deemed appropriate additional training should be provided.



Training and Development Opportunities for August and part of September.

August:

- 8th August – LCS: CP (Child Protection) and CIN (Child in Need) Process training
- 8th August – Relationships Matter Toolkit training
- 15th August – Relationships Matter: One Plus One training.
- 17th August – South Asian Heritage month celebration event
- 22nd August – LCS: CIC (Children in Care) Process training
- 22nd August - Relationships Matter: One Plus One training.
- 23rd August - Relationships Matter Toolkit training
- 23rd and 24th August – SEN and Social Care: Social Care Advice for EHCPs
- 24th August – Engaging Families
- 31st August – Motivational Interviewing

September:

5th September – Inductions for Children’s Services New Starters

5th September – One Adoption Child Permanence Report workshop (must be booked via Eventbrite)

5th September - LCS: Back to Basics

5th September – ASYE Assessor training: Day 1 The Role of the Assessor

5th September - Relationships Matter Toolkit training

5th September – Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control Module 1: Recognising Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control

6th September – Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control Module 2: Responding to Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control

6th September – Mind of my own

6th September – ASYE Assessor training: Day 2 Reflective Practice and Supervision

6th September – Assessment, Analysis and Planning

7th September – Understanding Risk and Safety Planning

8th September – Direct Work with Children and Young People.



For qualified social workers that need to be registered with social work England (SWE) you will need to upload two pieces of continual professional development between September and November.

You will shortly be reminded by Social Work England that you need to register for your social work practice to continue; as part of your registration you will need to evidence your continual professional development.

One piece of evidence will be your personal reflection on a CPD event, this could be something you have read around practice, a webinar, face to face training, a team meeting if practice was highlighted.

Your second piece of evidence will be a peer reflection; so you could plan with a colleague to discuss a new piece of practice, the national care review for example or an article in community care. You can then use this reflective discussion for your evidence.

If anyone is struggling with this, please email me at Traci.taylor@bradfordcft.org.uk and I can talk you through the process. I will put on a face to face session nearer the time for people to drop in to also.

Thank you for taking the time to read this bulletin; if you have any suggestions for content, or would like to write an article then please let me know as all contributions are gratefully received.

Best Wishes

Traci