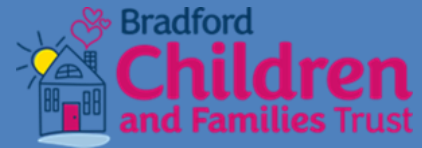


Principal Social Workers Practice and Learning Bulletin February 2024



Hello colleagues,

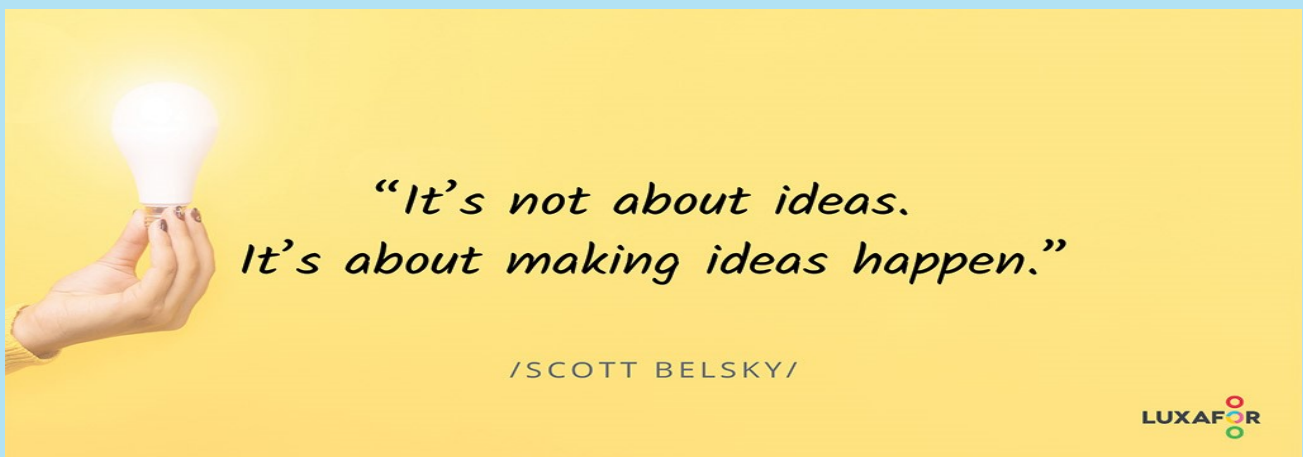
Welcome to February's edition of the Practice and Learning Bulletin; firstly, I just want to remind you all that the copies of these bulletins can be found in Tri-x. There are regular features such as learning from complaints and audits but there is also lots of relevant bite-size learning that you can use as a practice resource individually, or as a team.

In this edition I have shared some learning and development opportunities as well as a piece about the Voice of the Child as that has been our practice focus for February.

I have also included an article that revisits De-mystifying Analysis, as this continues to be an area of practice that is identified within our audits that we need to improve on. Analysis is not just for social workers but is important for anyone working with children, young people and families. Analysis is the 'So What?' question; we have gathered a lot of information but what does it all tell us?

As always, I hope that you find this edition useful; if you have any suggestions of articles you would like me to cover, or would like to write an article for the bulletin please let me know.

As you will have gathered, I love a good, inspirational quote.



Happy reading, best wishes Traci

VOICE OF THE CHILD



The above picture encapsulates what we mean by the 'Voice of the Child'. It means that we see our children, we listen to what they have to say, and that we know them.

We also refer to this as the 'Lived Experience of the child or young person'.

Everything that we do when we work with children, young people and their families needs to be child-focused; we should always be thinking **what does this mean for the child (impact)**. During the month of February, I have sent out bite-size learning to support you to capture the voice and the lived experience of children and young people you are working with; hopefully you will find this useful. I know some of you have had additional support from the WFD team and your practice supervisors so we should see evidence that children's voices are influencing our work more consistently.

One of the key things for us to remember is that the running records belong to the child/young person and not us; it is not our information but theirs; they can request to read their information when they are over 18 years of age. If we take that as a starting point it will refocus how we write about things. We already capture children/young people's voices in blue and bold on the file; where possible we should write that part to the child/young person, to capture the observations made of them and what they said. IRO's, CP chairs and others often write notes of the meeting to the child/young person.

How do we meaningfully capture the child's voice.

We talk to children, it really is as simple as that; even very young children and children where spoken word communication is difficult, can tell you a lot, through their interactions, through your observations of them, through play and that is why direct work is essential and should be undertaken with all children www.socialworktoolkit.com has a lot of resources you can use dependent on the piece of work you want to do; work around feelings, what makes you happy, sad, scared. If you had a wish what would you wish for? This work should be uploaded to the child's file as a reference when you are writing, assessments, planning interventions, and court assessments for example.

We can fall in to the trap of not discussing things with children that we think might upset them, such as domestic abuse in their home or the risks that people may pose to them; however, if children are experiencing these things then why would we not talk to them about it? This is about our own lack of confidence in this area. To support you, we have a bespoke Direct Work with Children and Young People workshop which is 'hands on' and helps you to work with resources and think about how you

VOICE OF THE CHILD...continued

can incorporate this in your work. We also have a 2 day workshop 'Child Development' which helps you to understand how children and young people develop and the impact on their development of negative experiences (this links to January's practice and learning bulletin when I did an article on A.C.E.S—Adverse, Childhood Experiences?). Attending practice development workshops gives you the opportunity to refresh things you know, pick up new ideas and share practice ideas with your colleagues.

If you ask the **SO WHAT?** question when you are writing about children/young people it will help you to focus your discussions with children; by capturing what children/young people tell you, you will have a better understanding of the impact on them and be able to evidence this in your assessment.

Children/young people can also be involved in writing their plan including safety plans; think about whether there is a child or young person that you are currently working with that you could try this with. If you need support with any resources please do not hesitate to contact me at Traci.taylor@bradfordcft.org.uk or Lindsay.Harmasch@bradfordcft.org.uk.



We learn about our practice in lots of ways, the most effective is directly from the people that we are working with. Do you know whether the children, young people and their families think that you have supported them and made a difference?

It is important that we recognise when we have done a good job and that compliments we get are shared. As an organisation the Trust tries to capture positive feedback and share this; please do share any positive feedback with Irina Arcas at Irina.Arcas@bradfordcft.gov.uk.

We also learn from the outcome of complaints. Stage 2 and 3 complaints result in learning actions being identified for the organisation and in some cases individuals. Here are the actions arising from recent Stage 2 and 3 outcomes.

Complaint 1: Adoption Processes

This is specifically around those who work with babies who need to be removed at birth or shortly after to have Early Permanence Plan (EPP), where, if the court outcome is permanence out of the family that the baby remains with the foster carer who will become their adopter; EPP means less disruption for babies, they have the opportunity to attach to their carer.

When placing children for adoption practitioners and team managers may be offered a number of

Learning from complaints...continued

PAR's which helps them to match the right adopter/s for the child. Key learning is that when potential adopters are not chosen there needs to be a record of this decision making which is recorded. Given we should not be recording this on the child's file you need to ensure that you are giving a good account of your decisions to the adoption agency. This is important as potential adopters have a right to know why they have not been put forward. Given this, your decision should be factual, constructive and would not cause offence.

Finally on this point, Team Managers need to be aware that where a social worker is off sick or extensive leave that there are alternative workers/arrangements made to reduce any delays for permanence for children.

Part 1a: In a separate complaint around adoption processes; when working with adoptive parents they need to be clearly informed about who is responsible for what; for example, that One Adoption are responsible for applying for the Adoption Support Funding and not the social worker.

Complaint 2: Out of Office Response.

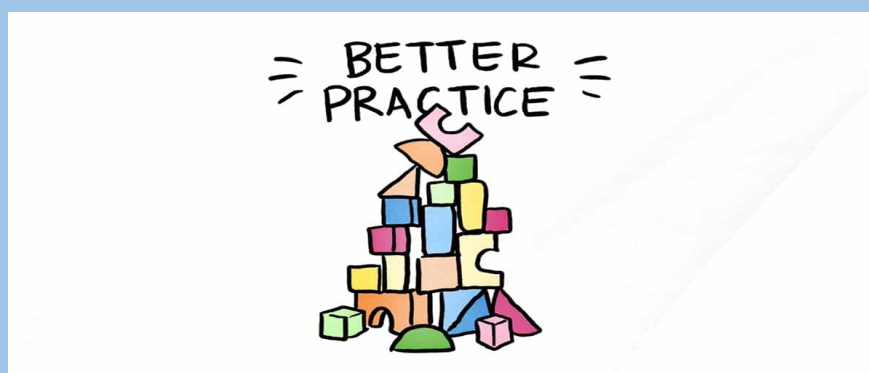
It is professional practice to ensure that we use our out of office automated response so that people we work with, whether this is a child, young person, family, professional or colleague know we are not in the office, when we are going to return and who they can contact in our absence. Please remember to do this; this includes a voice message on your phone.

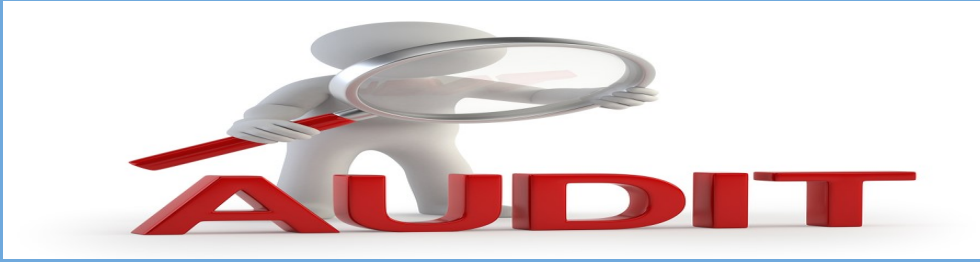
Complaint 3: Children's running records

It is important that our records on children's files are comprehensive and that meetings that have been held are recorded and then the minutes of the meeting signposted and that phone calls made are included. This means that if needed, you can go back to evidence action that you have taken.

Complaint 4: Managers sign off of Assessments

When assessments have been authorised; it is important that the person who has authorised it; usually the Team Manager, records that they have authorised the assessment within the running records. Where the assessment is in relation to a child or young person returning home from foster care or a residential placement this needs to be approved by a senior manager who should record the approval on the child/young persons file.





Key outcomes from our audit activity:

There is a wealth of information from our audit activity which, is being embedded across all services areas. Audits are key as a measurement of the quality of service that those who use our services get from us.

Positively, we are pulling together a good picture of how our interventions in the lives of our children, young people and families makes a difference (impact); but also helps us to focus activity where there are gaps in our practice knowledge.

The best feedback we can get is directly from children, young people and their parents or carers. In the CSC audit tool, the auditors make contact with children, where it is appropriate to do so , and also their parents / carers. The audit question asked is,

On a scale of 0—10 Can you talk to you Social Worker about how you feel, and do they listen to what you want to happen?

On a scale of 0—10 Are Social Care helping to make things better for you?

Parents are asked;

On a scale of 0—10 Do you feel that you are listened to and does the social worker understand your worries?

On a scale of 0-10 Do you think that things have got better since social care became involved?

We plan to incorporate this type of feedback in all of our audit activity, as this is the best feedback we can get.

Our audits tell us that we are making practice improvements in ensuring that children and young peoples voices are captured within our assessments and plans, we need to build on this so that this becomes a strength across all of our work.

One of the areas that we need to strengthen is the analysis of the information that we gather by asking the So What question; so what does all that information tell us about what is happening for or to the child and what is the impact of this on them?

The next article is Demystifying Analysis and gives some top tips to consider when writing this up at the end of assessments. I have repeated this as it remains an area that a number of people have told me that they lack confidence in.



Lets demystify Analysis

One of the consistent themes in our learning outcomes from audit is that we do not always get the best out of our analysis. So, at times what we see is a repeat of the content of the assessment; whereas, the purpose of an analysis is to understand what all the information we have gathered is telling us.

The Stages of Analysis

This article aims to demystify analysis and give some top tips for how to complete them. Analysis can be broken down into different sections, or stages and by following this process it will support you in your analytical thinking.

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

- Understanding the core issues - why are we involved with the family now?
- Explaining 'how', 'why', 'what'?
- Taking an inquisitive and critical approach to information - what does it mean?
- Cross-checking sources, self-critiquing, listening to service users' criticisms - professional curiosity
- Organising the information you have

Stage 2 - Interpreting the data: formal and informal reasoning

- Contextualising the data: law, ethics, practice - what informs the reason we are involved?
- Gut feeling - can tell you a lot
- Practitioner wisdom - using your own experience and knowledge
- 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 - what has been tried before? What has been successful in the past?
- Examining implications or consequences - thinking through what your actions mean for the child

Stage 4 - Presenting the analysis effectively

- Evidencing the above -
- Showing different voices and opinions - give a balanced viewpoint; child and family voice.
- Explaining or considering opposing viewpoints
- Carrying your readers and listeners with you
- Concluding and recommending a course of action

