



NOTTINGHAM CITY
Safeguarding
Children
PARTNERSHIP

Child Focused Practice

What do you need to know about child focused practice?

- The Nottingham City Children Safeguarding procedures, underpinned by Working Together 2018, make it clear that one of the core principles of effective safeguarding and support practice is a child centred approach which is focused on the needs and views of children.
- However, evidence shows that children are not being routinely fully included in safeguarding and support work. A key finding from national and local serious case reviews is that professionals did not always see or speak to the children enough; focused too much on the needs of the parents and overlooked the implications for the child.
- Without a child focussed practice the lived experience of the child will not be understood and the abuse and neglect they face will not be recognised and therefore not responded to effectively. The consequences of this could be long term emotional, physical, psychological and physiological harm to the child.

As practitioners, how can we respond effectively to parents and carers who do not use child-centred approaches?

- Think about what it feels like to be that child - what is their daily life like?
- Speak to the child on their own and record the exact words that the child used
- Do not rely on the parents or carers self-reporting
- When a child makes a disclosure this should be recognised as them seeking help. They may not know what this help should be or who it should be offered by, but nonetheless they are seeking help.
- Where a child is exhibiting challenging behaviour - consider that their behaviour may be
 - A reaction to harm, abuse or neglect
 - the manifestation of early trauma

- **help seeking** because they may not know how to verbalise what is happening to them
- Whilst process is important, and should be followed it is at least as important to keep the focus on the wellbeing of the child, and use processes as a framework to work within
- Use chronologies and genograms to provide clarity to all involved, about the extent, pattern and severity of concern and to make the child visible
- Remember the importance of talking to others involved with a child as this allows us to check our shared understanding and the nuances of a case. Active reflection whilst speaking to others and two-way conversation rather than just reading written information can lead to more effective understanding
- Where information about a child is incomplete, keep looking for further information so there is a clarity about the child's situation
- Interrogate what is said or reported about a child, and do not accept written statements or recorded incidents as being necessarily accurate, until you are clear about the child's situation
- Support children to understand what is happening, and why. Consult with children on matters that affect them
- Where a child has disclosed something, reassure the child that they did the right thing in doing so. If the assessment concludes that no further Child Protection activity is required, consider how this will be communicated to the child. They should be reassured that they were right to talk to someone and to do so again in future. Secondly, practitioners should consider how the parent/ child relationship can be restored and repaired. One method is through the Words and Pictures model
- If a child later retracts a disclosure, maintain professional curiosity about whether or not they have been influenced to do so and the implications of that
- If you suspect a child has been groomed to lie to professionals this should be considered to be a serious issue
- Be clear with families that changes need to be made for the child's wellbeing, and avoid using child protection processes as a threat.

Further reading...

- Research in Practice paper entitled *Voice of the Child* which can be accessed here - http://solihullscb.co.uk/media/upload/public_document/Research%20in%20Practice_Evidence%20Review%20of%20Voice%20of%20the%20child.pdf

- Devlin, J. (2012). Telling a child's story: creating a words and pictures story book to tell children why they are in care, Social Work Now, 49(1): 13-20.

Suggested activity

- In your team, pick a case and think about what is happening to that child over a 24 hour period and write down a time line of what they are doing or what is happening to them at each hour, including how it feels
Or
- Identify a recent case within your team and consider how the outcome of a section 47 investigation has been fed back to a child, and consider if any consequence and repair work is required to help the child make sense of what has happened.