



Protection

Child centred

Justice



Scottish Child Interview Model for Joint Investigative Interviewing – Emerging Learning

Case Study 1

Child Protection Concern

Sibling group of three, two of whom had disclosed to their father that their mother had physically assaulted them. An Interagency Referral Discussion took place and it was agreed that joint investigative interviews would be undertaken with all three children.

Planning

While planning for the joint investigative interviews, individual plans for the needs of each child were completed, as per the new model. It was identified that the eldest child had significant behavioural challenges and was awaiting assessment for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The potential implications of this, in terms of supporting the child to participate in interview, were carefully considered when developing this child's interview plan. Direct contact was made with the child's Outreach Worker who shared a tool used with the child to self-assess their emotional wellbeing.

Interview

All three children and their father attended the interview suite and were shown round. The recording equipment was explained.

Two of the children were happy with arrangements and proceeded to be interviewed that day.

The eldest child was preoccupied with a scheduled football club and indicated they were anxious about getting to the football club on time.

The father shared with the interviewers some additional strategies for relieving the child's anxiety that are used in school. This included careful explanations of specific instructions or

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questions that would be asked of the child – in advance of such instructions or questions being issued to the child.

For the eldest child, rather than pushing ahead with an interview that day, time was instead used to prepare them for being interviewed at a later date. They were invited to choose which seat they'd prefer, and the interviewers explained the kinds of questions that would be asked during the interview. They used examples from the rapport building and episodic memory training phases of the interview protocol in order to avoid referring to any evidentially significant information.

The child was reassured by these efforts and agreed to return to be interviewed two days later.

Continued Interview

In the new model for joint investigative interviewing, it is explicitly recognised and taken account of in planning, that children may need more than one opportunity to be able to tell their story. This is no longer referred to as a repeat interview, but rather a continued interview. A continued interview may apply in situations where a child begins an interview but is unable to progress beyond the rapport building stage or where the child's account is particularly complex. Continued interviews are a feature of the new model that has the purpose of moving at the child's pace rather than that of process and procedure.

This child returned to be interviewed as agreed. They immediately entered the interview suite and took the seat they'd previously chosen. Having met both interviewers two days previously, they were also given the choice of lead interviewer. The interviewers were able to ask the child to self-assess their emotional wellbeing using the tool the child was familiar with from their involvement with their Outreach Worker. This meant the child was able to indicate when they were emotionally ready to begin the interview.

A break in the interview is built into the new model as standard. Following the break, interviewers observed the child had removed their hood, settled more comfortably in the chair and continued to engage and participate well until the end of the interview. Due to information obtained as part of the planning process the child appeared relaxed throughout the interview and was content using one of the "fidget" toys within the room. This allowed the child to fully participate in the interview and for the interviewers to feel prepared and comfortable to continue the interview.

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Outcome

The effective application of the new model of joint investigative interviewing by these two interviewers meant that the needs of all three children were met.

Each interview took place according to the needs of the individual child.

Techniques were deliberately utilised to provide child centred support, based on skilful planning, which particularly helped the child with high levels of anxiety and behavioural challenges.

Safety, Choice, Collaboration, Trust and Empowerment are the key principles of trauma informed practice. This is woven through the training in the new model of joint investigative interviewing and elements of trauma informed practice are illustrated in the above description.

All three children made disclosures during their joint investigative interviews. All three disclosures contained sufficient detail to inform ongoing investigation of potential criminality and information to fully inform child protection planning.

All three children are currently safe in the care of their father.

Lanarkshire Child Interview Team

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