

**Protection****Child centred****Justice**

Scottish Child Interview Model for Joint Investigative Interviewing – Emerging Learning

Practical Operations 1

This document has been developed based on the learning emerging from initial implementation of this new model in Lanarkshire. It is designed to give some practical advice to support operationalisation of the new model in practice and has been primarily informed by feedback from the interviewers.

1. Information Sharing

One of the features of the new model is improved planning of interviews. Individualised information about the child is necessary for this and interviewers may need to make direct contact with professionals who know the child, such as teachers and social workers, when they are planning an interview.

The type of information being sought may include:

- Information about the child's communication needs
- Information about how any health need or condition may impact on the child's capacity to participate in an interview
- Information about a child's strengths and coping skills
- Information about the child's interests (to aid rapport building)

Professionals have information sharing protocols in place which may have the unintended consequence of creating barriers for interviewers seeking information about children (for example, some policies may advise staff not to return calls to a mobile number).

These challenges can be exacerbated in the new model as interviewers may be working across local authority boundaries.

It is therefore useful to alert front line staff across services about this change in practice and to direct them to prioritise returning calls to these interviewers given the time critical nature of interview planning.

This document is one of a series of papers developed and published as a way of sharing the emerging learning from the implementation of a new approach to joint investigative interviewing in Scotland.

TIP:

Develop a one page information sheet that provides details of the interviewers names and phone numbers. A photo could be included too. Share this with staff who may be contacted for information about a child. In this way, those who are being asked for information about a child can use the information sheet to check identity and phone numbers.

2. Planning

As indicated above, improved planning through gathering more individualised information about children is built into this new model. Give some consideration as to how best to support interviewers with this task from a practical perspective.

TIP:

Ensure there is sufficient physical space for two interviewers to sit together to complete planning paperwork. Provision of phonelines and useful numbers (for example, all local schools) is important.

3. Interview Suites

It can be useful to undertake a “walk through” of interview suites and venues routinely used for joint investigative interviews.

As well as equipment checks (camera leads, microphone leads, laptops, docking stations etc), it is important to review the suitability of the venue in terms of noise, interruptions and distractions.

The second interviewer, if present in the room, is required to utilise the laptop to bookmark the salient points. Therefore, the set-up of the room needs to facilitate this function.

There is a need to “dock” laptops overnight to ensure software is updated, ensure you facilitate this need.

Experience of implementing the new model is that interviews tend to last longer. Therefore, any accompanying adult may have a lengthy wait time. Consideration should be given to providing items to occupy the adult (such as reading material).

In addition, as there are interview breaks built into the new model, consider how and where children will spend these breaks.

TIP:

Use this checklist to review that you have in place:

- *Juice and snacks for children*
- *Refreshments for adults*
- *Something to occupy waiting adults*
- *Something to occupy waiting children*
- *Sensory toys for children being interviewed*
- *Fully operational interview equipment*
- *Venue with no distractions, no interruptions and no noise*
- *Ability of second interviewer to bookmark salient points*
- *Docking stations for laptops*

4. Ongoing Child Care and Protection Planning

In the new model, the joint investigative interview is recognised as a specialist task within an overarching child protection investigation. There will be a social worker and senior social worker responsible for the overarching child protection investigation, while the joint investigative interview itself will be undertaken by an interviewer trained in the new model.

Effective links between these parts of the child protection process are critical.

This includes practical solutions to sharing the recording of the outcome of an interview with the social work team who are overseeing the investigation. The solution will need to fit the needs of each of the local authorities linked to the interviewer cadre and be able to operate out of hours as some interviews will finish after office hours.

TIP:

Agree a common template to be used for recording the outcome of the interview and a system for sharing these notes with the respective social work information systems linked to the interviewer cadre.

5. Coordination

The effective coordination of joint investigative interviews is critical. This includes:

- Swift allocation of joint investigative interviewers, bearing in mind that the time required for effective planning means that a start and end point for the initial interview could span a few days and therefore interviewer availability over this period of time needs to be considered.
- Ensuring that the interviewer cadre have adequate opportunities to undertake joint investigative interviews and to take on the responsibility of lead interviewer. This is important for continuous professional development. A system to record how frequently interviewers are being deployed and whether they are the lead or second interviewer needs to be agreed.
- Managing the administrative workload around the interview such as post interview paperwork and data capture

TIP:

Establishment of a central coordination function to oversee and monitor the allocation of work is necessary.

Written by Jillian Ingram, on behalf of the National JII Team.