

National Joint Investigative Interviewing (JII) Project

Emerging Learning - Briefing Paper Three

December 2022

This briefing paper has been prepared by the National Joint Investigative Interviewing (JII) Team, in partnership with Dumfries and Galloway Scottish Child Interview Model Pilot.

The topic of this briefing paper is the emerging learning from Dumfries and Galloway in relation to implementing the new model of joint investigative interviewing in a rural area.

This is the third in a series of briefing papers; the first two covered emerging learning from the preparatory period and then the initial go live period for the first two pilot sites, Lanarkshire and North Strathclyde.

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.

Map of Dumfries and Galloway



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Introduction and basis of report

The National Joint Investigative Interviewing (JII) Team aims to capture emerging learning from the implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model for joint investigative interviewing as this new model of practice is introduced across the country.

Capturing emerging learning serves multiple purposes. It helps to raise awareness of the new model, empower and inform other areas in their active implementation work, deepens our collective understanding about this new model of practice and it assists in gathering information which helps us evaluate the Scottish Child Interview Model.

From the outset, a strong partnership developed between the National JII Team and the local implementation leads in Dumfries and Galloway which fostered a shared commitment to gathering the learning from implementation of this new model of practice in a rural context. The local implementation leads from police and social work consistently shared their evolving perspectives and learning with the national team.

The national implementation support leads have been welcome members of all the local working groups which lead and deliver on the vision for implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model in Dumfries and Galloway. This includes the Strategic Oversight Group, the Implementation Group, the Performance and Quality Group and a range of other task and finish groups set up to undertake specific pieces of work such as defining and refining a practice pathway, listening to the views of children and families, and reviewing the criteria for Interagency Referral Discussion (IRD) and joint investigative interviews.

Learning was gathering from observation, and participation, in all these groups.

In addition, there were some group reflective sessions that took place which contributed significantly to the learning included in this paper:

- Group reflective session with the interviewers a few months after being live in practice, facilitated by the National JII Team
- Group reflective session with the senior social workers and Detective Sergeants managing the new interviewers, a few months after being live in practice, facilitated by the National JII Team
- Three Education focus groups involving senior staff in local primary and secondary schools, facilitated by the Education Safeguarding Manager and attended by the National JII Team
- One Social Work focus group involving children and family social workers, facilitated by the Education Safeguarding Manager and the Localities Social Work Manager, and attended by the National JII Team

To complement the learning gathered via the arrangements set out above, additional activity was organised purposefully for this briefing paper:

- One to one sessions with several of the interviewers.
- One to one session with the local member of staff who coordinates the joint investigative interview processes for social work.

- One to one session with one of the Detective Sergeants.
- One to one sessions with the Locality Social Work Manager who is the local implementation lead, and chairs the Implementation Group,

Throughout this report, we have included several case illustrations of children and young people who have experienced a joint investigative interview in Dumfries and Galloway. These examples have been shared by professionals working with these children and young people. Their inclusion in this paper is designed to illustrate ways in which the Scottish Child Interview Model works in practice. Care has been taken to protect the identity of all children and young people and permission to use these examples was granted from the families.

It should be noted that this paper is based on the status of the Scottish Child Interview Model in Dumfries and Galloway at the end of their first year in practice. Year two will see continued developments, including training additional interviewers. These more recent developments have not been included in this paper.

Dumfries and Galloway Demographic and Children's Workforce Context

Dumfries and Galloway (approximate population 148,000) are the third largest region in Scotland, characterised by small settlements of 4,000 people or less spread across a large area. The population density is 60 people per square mile compared with the Scottish average of 168.

It is one of the most rural areas of mainland Scotland, after Argyll and Bute and the Highlands, with 21% of the population living in remote rural locations.

The largest town is Dumfries (population 33,300), followed by Stranraer (10,500) and Annan (8,900) and over a quarter of the population lives in an area considered to be remote (further than 30 minutes' drive away from a large town of population 10,000 or greater).

Children and young people (aged 0-17 years) make up around 17% of the general population – around 26,000.

The Dumfries and Galloway Children's Services Plan 2020-2023 identifies a range of challenges that impact on the effective delivery of children's services. These are:

Geography – Dumfries and Galloway have a specific issue around rurality. The population is widely scattered across small settlements with very few densely populated areas. The two largest towns are 75 miles apart and have different profiles. This affects both delivery of, and access to, services and can hinder the ability to deliver responsive and timely support to some of the more rural parts of Dumfries and Galloway.

Population - the population is declining and ageing, with fewer people of working age to support an increasing elderly population. Surveys of young people highlight a significant proportion intend to leave the area in future for work, study, or travel.

Workforce - there is an interconnectivity between geography and population and workforce planning. Over the years Dumfries and Galloway has faced significant challenges across all agencies and services, ranging from front line to senior managers, in recruiting and retaining staff. These problems have persisted and can be acute in key areas such as the west of Dumfries and Galloway.

Poverty – Dumfries and Galloway, as with many other areas across Scotland, has an increasing issue with the impact of poverty which is exacerbated by a low wage economy.

Digital and Management infrastructure - Dumfries and Galloway's digital infrastructure remains inconsistent and the interoperability remains poor as some systems do not speak to each other. The challenges that can result from poor interoperability are lack of consistency when identifying children and young people; lack of standards for sending, receiving, and managing information between systems; and difficulties with measurement, analysis, and improvement.

All these challenges are important contextual factors when considering the implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model in Dumfries and Galloway.

Social Work Structure

Social Work within Dumfries and Galloway sits within its own department within the council, led by the Chief Social Work Officer and a Senior Manager.

The operational structure of Children and Families Social Work in Dumfries & Galloway consists of two area teams, divided into East and West and 3 specialist teams which provide region wide support to families: Family Support Service (early intervention); Children with Disabilities and Youth Justice. Across these teams there are 41 Social Workers and a number of Family Support Workers. Two Locality Managers (Service Managers) are responsible for all of these services supported by two Team Managers and a number of Senior Social Workers who directly manage frontline staff.

Because of the rurality of the area, staff are based in and around 5 main locations across the region – Stranraer, Newton Stewart, Kirkcudbright, Dumfries, and Annan. Regardless, these arrangements still require significant travelling for all staff on a day to day basis.

Public Protection Unit Structure

The Public Protection Unit Structure for Dumfries and Galloway (V Division) is slightly unusual in that it doesn't include a dedicated Child Abuse Investigation Unit like most other police divisions.

Instead, it is made up of a Domestic Abuse Investigation Unit and a Divisional Rape Investigation Unit, with child abuse investigation work shared across both units. There is one Detective Sergeant for each of the two units, both of which are overseen by a Detective Inspector.

The Risk and Concern Hub holds responsibility for Interagency Referral Discussions. It is staffed by a different Detective Inspector and three Detective Sergeants. There are no operational police officers in the Risk and Concern Hub.

Recruitment to the Scottish Child Interview Model was from the Public Protection Unit, which has a total of 15 Detective Constables.

Wider Children's Services Context

There are key aspects to Children's Services in Dumfries and Galloway which have particular relevance in understanding the local context for implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model:

- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
- Signs of Safety
- Interagency Referral Discussion (IRD) process
- Existing arrangements for joint investigative interviewing

A Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was established in Dumfries and Galloway five years ago, with the aim of improving the multi-agency approach to protecting and safeguarding adults and children at risk of harm.

Before COVID-19, the MASH was based in the Police Headquarters at Cornwell Mount in Dumfries alongside the Risk and Concern Hub with staff from Police, Health and Social Work co-located there. With the advent of the global pandemic, MASH moved to a remote-working model (Police remained at Cornwell Mount) and all operations continued.

The MASH processes all child protection concerns.

Concerns originating from social work services, members of the public, or other organisations, including NHS and Education usually come to MASH via the Single Access Point (SAP) Team within Social Work which operates a screening process. Concerns originating from Police usually come to MASH via their own agency route, ie the Risk and Concern Hub.

Concerns are raised within MASH by the respective agency staff member: Police Sergeant; Public Protection Health Advisor or Senior Social Worker, after their own screening and review of their own agency information. Those concerns which are felt to meet the child protection threshold are progressed towards Interagency Referral Discussion via the completion of an Interagency Referral Discussion Notification Form (IRDNF). This serves as a request for an IRD and is the commencement of the IRD process in Dumfries and Galloway. It happens the same day as the concern is received.

The IRDNF is circulated to all IRD partners and collective discussion takes place to consider the referral, analyse risk and agree next steps. Partners not raising the request will check their own agency records only, to establish whether there is current or recent involvement which is relevant to decision making. The key decision at this stage is to

decide whether to progress to the next stage of IRD which requires fuller sourcing of agency information.

If the decision is not to proceed to IRD, the rationale for this is recorded on the IRDNF which is then uploaded to each agency's information system.

If the decision is to proceed to IRD, agreement is reached at IRDNF about the nature and degree of information sourcing that is required, including how information will be sourced and this takes place immediately so that the IRD can take place the same day the concern was received. Social Work source information from education on behalf of MASH.

All IRDs involve the three MASH Officers but there is flexibility to involve others where relevant, eg Consultant Paediatrician, Senior Investigating Officer, Youth Justice Manager.

Prior to the implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model, the local joint investigative interviewing rota was already managed centrally within MASH. Dumfries and Galloway had moved to a position, based on *Guidance on Joint Investigative Interviewing of Child Witnesses in Scotland, 2011*, where their local arrangements for joint investigative interviewing were developed and strengthened to include locally determined checks and balances. That is, a smaller group of trained staff were being more routinely deployed as interviewers, and social workers did not undertake interviews of any children on their allocated caseload. In addition, briefings of interviewers were not undertaken by Senior Social Workers overseeing that case – the rationale being that these developments helped to minimise assumptions and any unintentional bias.

These developments in joint investigative interviewing arrangements in Dumfries and Galloway helped to facilitate a smoother transition to some aspects of the Scottish Child Interview Model – in particular, the move to smaller numbers of staff trained and the likelihood that interviews would not be conducted by those who already know the child.

Another important contextual detail is that Dumfries and Galloway have been implementing Signs of Safety across their Children's Services.

Signs of Safety uses a strengths-based approach, ensuring risk is weighted with both strengths and safety aspects of parenting. This approach ensures a balanced risk assessment is evident, and that safety plans are individually tailored around the child and family's needs, with clear timeframes.

Dumfries and Galloway use Signs of Safety in all work with children and families. It's an appreciative enquiry approach, looking at strengths, which has supported a culture shift in social work practice.

Historically, Dumfries and Galloway have had relatively high numbers of children on the child protection register (In 2017/18 the local rate of registration per 1000 children was 8.1 compared with a national rate of 4.7). This trend has changed over the past four years with the local rate of registration now falling below the national average. This change in trend was expected with the implementation of Signs of Safety.

Locally, careful attention is being paid to ensuring all changes to processes and practices are well aligned and there are robust quality assurance processes in place.

Local approach to implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model

Dumfries and Galloway began to consider their readiness for implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model in 2020. Across the country, capacity for improvement projects was incredibly stretched at that time due to the impact of the global pandemic and the need for services to respond to that public health emergency.

Dumfries and Galloway had become increasingly dissatisfied with their current joint investigative interview arrangements, particularly within the wider context of their other improvement work like Signs of Safety. While they had been making improvements to their JII arrangements, as noted above, these were viewed as merely tweaking the current system, whereas Dumfries and Galloway had the appetite for whole system change.

“Over recent years, we have striven to ensure that we use data and evidence to inform our improvement plans. Our involvement in the Scottish Government’s Realigning Children’s Services programme, findings from The Promise and the Children’s Wellbeing surveys, engagement and consultation with children and young people, and from a range of evaluation activity have helped shape our current improvement priorities. Priority one in our current Children’s Services Plan is that children and young people are safe and free from harm. Central to work in this area is our whole system approach to building relationships with our families and partners which we have embedded through implementation of Signs of Safety. We recognised that the Scottish Child Interview Model fitted well with our planned direction of travel and the timing of implementation of this meant we could align several of our child protection strands of improvement activity with a clear focus on improving how children who have been traumatised experience our services.”

Stephen Morgan, Senior Manager, Children and Families Social Work

More focused discussions took place between Dumfries and Galloway and the National JII Team in the latter part of 2020/early part of 2021 following the decision that Dumfries and Galloway would become the third pilot site for implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model.

Based on consideration of data and evidence, the following arrangements were agreed:

- Three social workers and three police officers would be recruited to train as interviewers in the Scottish Child Interview Model.
- The interviewers would not be co-located. Instead, the social workers would remain within locality social work teams and the police officers would be based in both Dumfries and Stranraer (covering East and West).

- The management of joint investigative interviewing would sit across a group of (police and social work) managers rather than a dedicated manager(s).
- Given the geography, the workforce, and the JII demand, (around 120 JIIs per annum), the decision was made that all interviewers would have a blended role where joint investigative interviewing was the priority responsibility, but they would also hold other responsibilities.

Learning Themes

Interviewer role

In areas where interviewers are not co-located and/or are not undertaking interviews as a full-time role, they benefit when managers make increased efforts to protect dedicated time and space to bring interviewers together on a regular basis for peer support and team development.

From the outset, there was agreement that interviewers would continue to hold additional responsibilities as well as being joint investigative interviewers. Senior leaders in Dumfries and Galloway had considered the learning from the first pilot site, Lanarkshire, where a blended role like this was not successful. However, JII demand in Dumfries and Galloway is not proportionately as high as Lanarkshire and there was an expressed commitment from senior leaders that interviewers would be supported and protected to make JIIs their priority and that the other work that social workers would have responsibility for would be carefully managed.

Initially, all interviewers expressed great satisfaction with having blended roles where interviewing was their key responsibility but where they also undertook wider tasks. The police interviewers were keen to maintain their wider investigative skills and did not have an appetite to specialise further. The social work interviewers shared this view, and each gave examples of wider casework they continued to enjoy, including child protection investigations. The social workers also spoke of the value they experienced in their relationships with families and how this contributed to overall job satisfaction. While this type of relational practice experience is part of the role as interviewers, due to the time limited nature of interviewing work, other opportunities to build relationships with families they are supporting over longer periods of time are important to these staff. Interestingly, the social work interviewers also had a keen awareness of the stretched workforce across the local authority and shared the view that current vacancy rates would add to the challenge of creating dedicated interviewer roles.

As time has progressed and the team have experienced times where there have been significant challenges in scheduling interviews, there has been some reflection that dedicated interviewer roles could be the optimum arrangement to ensure joint investigative interview work progressed effectively, but that ***this would only be manageable with increased resources to ensure other work was undertaken equally effectively.*** Like

other areas, Dumfries and Galloway staff have described the tension in trying to ensure all children and families work is undertaken well, within very stretched resources.

Discussions about having dedicated interviewers have only happened in the periods where scheduling of interviews has been particularly challenging. The interviewers would prefer to maintain their blended roles. Dumfries and Galloway have therefore focused on improving the scheduling of interviews in the first instance, before making any substantive decision about structural changes which would have wider resource implications.

There is another aspect of the interviewer role within the context of the Scottish Child Interview Model that has been identified by the police interviewers in Dumfries and Galloway. This relates to the contact between the police interviewer and the family and is illustrated in the following example:

Alana is an 8-year-old child referred after her mother notified authorities that Alana had alleged abuse from her father. In her initial interview Alana made no disclosure. During the scheduled break, Alana opted to remain in the room with one of the interviewers rather than spend that time in the waiting area with mum. While this posed challenges for the interviewers (who use the break to review the interview plan and confer with a supervisor), the child's decision indicated that there may be some issues connected to mum – possibly Alana was feeling pressured by her mother. After being provided with further prompts in the interview, Alana made no further disclosures but did agree she would be happy to be interviewed again if required.

Managers overseeing the investigative strategy decided that no further interview would be required, and this decision was communicated to mum. Mum was not happy with this decision, and she insisted that Alana be interviewed again. This time, the interviewers went to see Alana in the school setting. The same interviewers were utilised, and Alana was provided support by a member of school staff of her choosing. Again, Alana made no disclosure. After the interview, the interviewers and school staff discussed the support available for Alana.

The police interviewer then spent additional time in the family home, supporting mum with understanding this outcome.

The police interviewer involved in this instance reflected that, previously, this case would have been immediately remitted to social work and uniformed police, with no further role for her. However, her knowledge of the Scottish Child Interview Model and of trauma-informed practice, meant she was skilled in helping the parent understand the impact of continued interviewing of this child and of how the mother could support the child in other ways.

This police interviewer has observed that implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model has strengthened multiagency working relationships and helped services work better together, keeping the family at the centre and ensuring that support is provided from whomever is best placed to do so, rather than according to strictly delineated professional roles.

Peer Support

The provision of support for interviewers in rural areas needs additional consideration because there are fewer opportunities for this to happen in an informal way.

Although all interviewers are, on balance, happy with blended roles, they have all noted some disadvantages with not being fully co-located. They had finished the interviewer training programme feeling very much like a joint team but, since then, have had little opportunity to come together as a group to benefit from peer support and sharing their experiences.

Because of the role that peer support can play in providing support to interviewers to promote their wellbeing, the lack of co-location can be a potential vulnerability.

One of the key factors that means co-location is not an optimum arrangement for Dumfries and Galloway – geography – is also the factor that can be a barrier in bringing the group of interviewers together regularly for, for example, team meetings, as happens in some other non-co-located sites.

As a means of maximising support, it is important to consider where interviewers may come together in the course of their work and how these opportunities may be developed to offer support. For instance, Dumfries and Galloway have a Category A interview suite in Dumfries Police Station, and this is used for most joint investigative interviews. Two of the social work interviewers are based in the East, so when they undertake interviews, they attend Dumfries Police Station for interview and then return to their office base. The third social worker who is based in the West will spend the whole day at Dumfries Police Station if she is undertaking an interview there as it doesn't make practical sense to travel a distance back to her own office base. This has the advantage that this social worker then has additional time with police colleagues and gains some sense of "team" that way. This is one example of how team support can be built into working arrangements in a rural context.

The social work interviewers and their managers meet together on a monthly basis which allows for a number of benefits such as group discussion about how implementation of the new approach is progressing, early identification of issues to be addressed, joint problem solving, and wellbeing support. Feedback from these meetings is used to inform discussions in the Implementation Group meetings, with regular direct participation in both from the social work interviewers and managers.

The combined group of police and social work interviewers in Dumfries and Galloway would benefit from regular, planned time together as a team, to share their learning, support each other and identify themes and issues for continued development and improvement. This will require additional managerial support to protect diary time and support team development.

Interviewers experience of the Scottish Child Interview Model

Interviewers in the Scottish Child Interview Model find their roles are rewarding, and that their learning is transferable to other aspects of their job.

The interviewers' primary source of learning is the children and young people they interview and from their contact with families. Sometimes the interviewers have experiences of children who either don't have a disclosure to make or just aren't ready to talk.

Like TJ, aged 7, who spent a long time in the rapport building stage of his interview giving lots of detail about his Minecraft play, his pet dog and his intricate artwork but wasn't able to share anything about the domestic abuse concerns that sat underneath the decision to interview him. He told the interviewers he loved talking to them and would like to come back another day.

And Serenna, aged 5, who talked excitedly to her family about her great day out at the police station, where she tried on a police hat and sat in a police car and about the nice ladies she met there. She too, had not shared any information about a concern but it was clear that should she be asked to come for interview at any later stage in her life, this experience had not been off putting in any sense.

Other times, interviewers can be taken by surprise by the degree of engagement and participation by children. Examples of this are provided by Bo and Carly:

Bo is 11 years old, and a child protection investigation commenced due to serious risks being presented to them during visits to one of their parents who has complex mental health issues. Information shared during the Interagency Referral Discussion, and during follow up planning discussions, highlighted that Bo was very protective of this parent and did not want these visits to stop.

The interviewers expected that Bo would not wish to share any detail of the concerns due to wishing to protect their parent, and contact with them. This potential resistance to disclosing information had been debated during the discussion about whether to interview Bo.

In fact, Bo engaged with the interview process immediately. Bo responded to each stage of the interview protocol and shared extremely graphic, highly detailed, distressing incidents that they had witnessed while in the care of this parent. Bo had no hesitation in speaking and conveyed a sense of relief at having the opportunity to talk about what they had experienced. Some of Bo's account showed that they were processing some of the information while sharing it with the interviewers.

Unexpectedly, Bo then began to make disclosures of concern about his other parent.

The Scottish Child Interview Model explicitly allows for situations such as this. The interviewers used one of the scheduled breaks to devise a Topic Identification Plan for these new and emerging concerns. In this way, the interview plan is adjusted in response to new information from a child, allowing appropriate questioning structure to be developed for the new topics of concern.

These scheduled breaks allow for the child to have some refreshments, get support from their accompanying adult, and just have some time out with the interview. They also provide time for the interviewers to confer about the interview plan and to link with their supervisor about the overarching investigative strategy. In situations like this, a key deliberation is whether to continue to interview the child about the new concerns or schedule another interview for another day. The best interests of the child are the primary consideration.

In total, Bo was in the interview suite for nearly three hours, an incredibly long time for a child. But the interviewers were led by Bo's needs throughout and they wished to continue talking (with regular breaks for comfort). In these circumstances, interviewers will listen to the child's wishes but will also use other information to assess whether continuing with the interview is best or whether it should be continued another day. The interviewers are skilled in supporting children to remain within their window of tolerance* and this guides the pace (and schedule) of interview.

*Window of tolerance refers to a state of emotional arousal within which the child is emotionally regulated, helping them to remember, make sense of and communicate what has happened to them.

Carly is a 14-year-old girl who was referred for a joint investigative interview following being inappropriately touched by a peer at school. Carly had previously experienced a joint investigative interview under the 5-day-trained model due to being touched inappropriately by an adult.

The lead interviewer for Carly was newly trained in the Scottish Child Interview Model and had reservations about how well the young person would engage with the rapport building and episodic memory training phases of the interview protocol given her age and stage of development. Because this young person had made a clear disclosure and was aware of the reason for interview, the interviewer thought she might be resistant to those initial phases of the interview protocol and would want to move immediately to the substantive phase.

As part of the planning for the interview, the lead interviewer spoke to Carly's mum to find out more about her needs and she also gave consideration to Carly's previous experience of joint investigative interviewing. A social work office was selected as an interview venue because it offered a degree of intimacy that felt appropriate. Prior to the interview commencing, the lead interviewer explained that there was a new approach to joint investigative interviewing which might look and feel quite different to Carly's previous experience.

Carly engaged very well with the phases of the interview protocol and, contrary to the interviewer's expectations, she responded well to the rapport building and episodic memory training phases.

After the interview, Carly offered the lead interviewer some feedback, comparing this experience favourably with her last experience. She said this this interview felt unique to her. She indicated that she felt her needs were being attended to and said she felt listened to. She told the interviewer that she knew there might not be follow up in the justice system but that wasn't too important to her. Carly said that the questions she had been asked helped her to remember details she had forgotten and that the process of telling her full account in that way helped her feel better.

The interviewer quotes below, outline some of the highlights of their experiences to date:

"The reward for me is knowing we are giving children the best experience. Our work is trauma-informed, making this a positive experience for all. This has made me a far better interviewer across the board; when I'm doing visually recorded interviews with adults, I'm much more aware of question structure and I can apply my learning to these interviews too."

Leanne Hamilton, Scottish Child Interview Model interviewer

"I like the new model because it is founded on relationship-based practice which is the most rewarding part of my job as a social worker. All the planning and preparation, the rapport building and spending time with the child – this all gives you a good sense of the child and means their experience of the interview is more positive. I also find I'm using some of my learning in other situations such as helping parents tell me about their difficult experiences."

Claire Eckberg, Scottish Child Interview Model interviewer

"I like that I can take time to plan things properly so that we can offer a meaningful experience to children and young people. We always leave our contact details and I've had a few girls emailing me afterwards just to let me know how they are and that things are better for them. This makes it all worthwhile."

Kirsty Cantlie, Scottish Child Interview Model interviewer

"The new approach to joint investigative interviewing fits well with the culture change here in Dumfries and Galloway as the new interview approach builds on strengths in the child/young person and is relationship-based, child centred, and trauma-informed. The child is central to both Signs of Safety and the Scottish Child Interview Model."

Claire Eckberg, Scottish Child Interview Model interviewer

A focus group for locality social workers was convened several months after being live in practice and this generated an interesting case example which illustrates the partnership working between the allocated social worker and the interviewers:

Dominic was 6 years old and accommodated in foster care.

The allocated social worker had a very good understanding of the Scottish Child Interview Model because her Senior is one of the newly trained interviewers.

The allocated social worker was involved in making the decision about where and when to interview the child, as well as agreeing who would be the best person to support the child.

It was agreed that the child would be interviewed in the Category A suite at Dumfries Police Station and that the social worker would attend with them given their established relationship.

The social worker was also fully involved in all aspects of planning the interview. Knowing the child well, she was able to give the interviewers a lot of detail about likes/dislikes as well as detail of communication needs and the impact of some developmental delay. Having undertaken the Three Houses previously with the child, the social worker was able to share the child's perspective and what had worked well with them previously.

All this information helped shape and inform the interview plan and the interviewers' approach to the child.

The allocated social worker helped to prepare the child for interview by telling them the interviewers names and describing what they looked like. This is one of the benefits of the relatively small workforce in Dumfries and Galloway: all interviewers are known to the locality social work teams.

On arrival at the interview venue, the interviewers came to greet the child and they paid attention to the soft toy they had brought with them – speaking directly to the teddy as they welcomed the child. The allocated social worker observed this was very successful in helping to start to build rapport and she commented that the interviewers' efforts to engage with the child were very evident and made a positive difference to the child's experience.

The child was very excited at being in the police station and a bit distracted having their social worker in another room as the support person. The child repeatedly asked to go and see their social worker and was interested in the different rooms in the police building. The child did engage in interview, though did not provide very much more detail than repeating the earlier disclosure.

This child subsequently made further disclosures and those supporting the child were able to use this first experience of a joint investigative interview to continue to make adaptations to support their participation in future interviews.

Manager role

Where the management of the Scottish Child Interview Model sits across a group of managers, effective co-ordination and communication are even more critical.

There is no dedicated JII manager in Dumfries and Galloway. Instead, a group of staff share responsibility for this:

- Two Detective Sergeants who are based in Dumfries Police Station
- Three Senior Social Workers who are based in locality teams and operate a rota system for JII

These arrangements are separate from the line management of the social work interviewers which continues to be situated in each locality team.

Line managers oversee all aspects of the social work interviewers work, with the rota-d Social Work JII Manager holding responsibility for decision-making and briefing/debriefing in respect of any interview. To support these arrangements, the monthly social work meetings referenced earlier in this paper, include a standing input from one of the Social Work JII Managers and these managers also have regular liaison with the interviewers' line manager to support ongoing attention to interviewers' wellbeing.

The Detective Sergeants in the Public Protection Unit oversee all the work of the police interviewers and therefore have a cohesive understanding of their work commitments at any point in time.

In addition, because police supervisors are effectively "on site" with (two of the three) police interviewers, they explicitly see the work of the interviewers in a way that managers who are not on site with interviewers cannot.

While there is a degree of understanding across the wider system that this new approach to joint investigative interviewing is different and may mean, amongst other things, that interviews take longer to plan and undertake, managers who don't "see" the new model in operation have less opportunity to really understand what this looks like and they, and their staff, may express a degree of frustration at the length of time interviews are taking and the impact this has on the overarching investigation.

This can be mitigated by good quality awareness raising of the Scottish Child Interview Model. In Dumfries and Galloway, the social work teams which have an interviewer in their staff group, have a high degree of understanding of the new model and are less likely to express frustration linked to the new approach. There is also an ongoing Communication Strategy where the interviewers are delivering inputs to the local teams to help them understand the new model of practice and how they can support this.

It is notable that the benefits of co-location as outlined above, can extend beyond those directly impacted. For instance, one of the police interviewers is based in Stranraer in the West and contacts the Detective Sergeants in the East for support. Although not co-located with the Detective Sergeants, this officer experiences a high level of day-to-day support from the Detective Sergeants who have a very keen understanding of the interviewer role

from their experience being co-located with the other police interviewers in the East. In addition, the Detective Sergeant travels out to the West monthly to meet directly with this interviewer to support her well-being.

This may provide some food for thought for areas where geography does not permit full co-location but where a degree of co-location may be possible.

While this arrangement of shared managerial oversight across a group of managers may have some complexities, it does mean that each manager has regular opportunities to be involved in briefings and debriefings. This means that, like the interviewers, managers are able to hone their briefing and debriefing skills through regular use in practice.

It is also worth noting here that the 5-day interview model continues to be utilised in Dumfries and Galloway, alongside the Scottish Child Interview Model. This is to be expected at this stage of implementation. When demand outstrips capacity, local managers will determine which model of interview will be used in each instance. The parallel use of both interview models also affords managers the opportunity to share learning from the Scottish Child Interview Model to support improvements within the 5-day interview model.

“When I’m deploying staff to undertake a joint investigative interview using the 5-day model, I’m able to use what I’ve learned as a manager within the Scottish Child Interview Model to support 5 day trained staff to deliver an improved interview. For example, I share effective interview prompts with them to help them structure their interview plan in a way that ensures the child is not led by the interviewers.”

Petrina Currie, Detective Sergeant, Dumfries and Galloway Public Protection Unit

Availability of staff

There are additional challenges in securing availability of staff to undertake joint investigative interview work where staff are not co-located, not undertaking interviews as a dedicated role and where management responsibility is shared across a group.

Following the decision at Interagency Referral Discussion that a joint investigative interview is required; a briefing manager and two interviewers need to be identified. As part of this early consideration, it will also be decided whether the Scottish Child Interview Model or the 5-day-trained model will be used.

The Detective Sergeant in the Public Protection Unit initiates processes to make these decisions, supported by the social work assistant (who is based in MASH) who coordinates the social work processes.

Dumfries and Galloway aim to ensure that briefings for joint investigative interviews are shared equally across Detective Sergeants and Senior Social Workers. There are two Detective Sergeants in the Public Protection Unit who are trained as managers in the Scottish Child Interview Model and available to provide briefings. There are three Senior

Social Workers trained to provide briefings and these three staff operate a rota system to coordinate their availability. Thus, the Detective Sergeant in the Public Protection Unit who is initiating processes, contacts the Senior Social Worker who is on the JII rota that day to agree the model of interview to be used and to identify a briefing manager.

Each of the three social work interviewers has slightly different availability. One is based in the duty team and has very good availability for interviews. One is based in a long-term children and family team and has fairly good availability for interviews. The third is a Senior Social Worker with limited availability for interviews. She protects one day in her diary each week and will take allocations of interviews that fit with these arrangements while the other two interviewers “take turns”.

Additionally, Dumfries and Galloway previously implemented a system designed to minimise any unintentional bias in interviewing practice. Allocated social workers and managers who are overseeing work with a family are not directly involved in interviewing or briefing with those children. In practice, this means that if the child to be interviewed is part of a family where the Senior Social Worker on the JII rota oversees that work, that manager will not be involved in briefing for that interview and instead one of the other Senior Social Workers, not designated to be on the JII rota that day, will be identified as briefing manager.

Within the Scottish Child Interview Model, the extended planning and preparation involved means that interviews may take a few days to organise (subject to the child’s safety and any forensic considerations) which can allow space for negotiation to identify the right manager and interviewer.

Therefore, from a social work perspective, identifying briefing managers and interviewers needs to take account of fairly complex arrangements including rotas, workload commitments and existing connections with families.

This has been one of the biggest challenges – and key learning points - in year one of implementing the Scottish Child Interview Model in Dumfries and Galloway. Moving into year two, learning to date will continue to be utilised to improve the availability of staff, plus additional staff will be trained as interviewers and managers.

The number of social workers identified to be trained as the initial team of child interviewers was based on data for interview demand and the need to ensure the team was small enough to ensure interviewers would have regular opportunity to use their skills in practice. Learning around additional contextual factors such as resilience in terms of sickness, other absence or turnover has been gained through the experience of implementing the new approach. Also of relevance is that Dumfries and Galloway introduced the Scottish Child Interview Model during a period where there were unprecedented staffing pressures due to the impact of the global pandemic.

While availability of staff has emerged as a learning theme for Dumfries and Galloway, their experience of the transition to the new model, in terms of partnership working benefits, is very positive:

“The transition from the previous joint investigative interviewing arrangements to Scottish Child Interview Model has had a positive impact on the partnership working relationship between Police and colleagues from Children and Families Social Work. Historically, when carrying out a joint investigative interview, Police would contact Social Work who would provide a worker for an interview and predominately the interview would be managed and conducted by Police Officers. With moving to Scottish Child Interview Model this has changed dramatically with the process now being very much a 50/50 share of responsibility between interviewers and managers from both agencies. This has allowed Social Work staff to interview children that have been victim of serious offending in an extremely confident manner where previously this would have defaulted to Police. This shared responsibility enables both agencies to manage Child Protection concerns resulting from the interview in a more joined up approach.”

Craig Nicolson, Detective Inspector, V Division Public Protection Unit

Coordinator role

The Scottish Child Interview Model demands a high degree of coordination, and where the management sits across a group rather than one or two individuals, a designated individual to support coordination is enormously valuable.

The coordination of joint investigative interviews in Dumfries and Galloway is significantly assisted by the social work assistant who sits within the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). (See “Wider Children’s Services Context” section for information about MASH)

This individual does not hold management responsibility for any of the JII work but has a singularly important role in ensuring the smooth operation of joint investigative interviewing processes in Dumfries and Galloway via their coordination of the social work staff, systems, and processes.

While the Detective Sergeants are “on-site” and have full oversight of the interviewers and all JII work, as set out above, the social work managers are organised differently and key to the effectiveness of this management model is coordination undertaken by someone in a central position.

All JII business functions of liaison, communication, allocation, overseeing paperwork and process are facilitated by the role of the social work assistant and the close working relationships between this individual and the JII managers and interviewers.

The working arrangements for the social work interviewers and social work managers essentially depend on the effective coordination undertaken by the social work assistant.

In addition to the professional responsibilities that sit with this post which lend themselves well to the role of coordinating joint investigative interview work, this individual was previously a police officer in the Family Protection Unit before moving to work in the local authority. This is significant because this depth of insight into police and social work

systems, processes, and culture, coupled with long-standing effective working relationships, greatly assist in the smooth operation of joint work undertaken by police and social work.

This is learning that is echoed by other practice sites implementing the Scottish Child Interview Model – arrangements where the systems, processes, and culture of the two disciplines (police and social work) can be taken into account in the management and coordination of the Scottish Child Interview Model are more likely to be effective over the medium to long term in supporting implementation of this new approach.

[JII criteria and decision-making](#)

The Interagency Referral Discussion process plays a critical role in the Scottish Child Interview Model and a flexible approach to developing both in parallel is helpful.

Like other areas, Dumfries and Galloway developed criteria for joint investigative interviews to assist in decision-making processes which would determine whether the Scottish Child Interview Model or the 5-day-model of joint investigative interviewing would be used if demand for JII outstripped the capacity of the newly trained interviewers. Once live in practice, this criterion was regularly revisited in the first six months and further developed based on learning.

One of the key improvements made during this time was that the decision to undertake a joint investigative interview could be made at IRDNF stage. As outlined earlier in this report, this is the stage before a full IRD in Dumfries and Galloway. This means that circumstances which may not meet the threshold for IRD – child witnesses with no additional vulnerabilities and where there are no child protection concerns – can still be considered for the Scottish Child Interview Model where that would meet their needs. This change allowed Dumfries and Galloway to retain a proportionate approach to information-sharing while facilitating joint decision-making.

[Education Services' experiences of the Scottish Child Interview Model](#)

The role of wider services in supporting children experiencing the joint investigative interviewing process is supported by early, and ongoing, awareness raising activity.

The Safeguarding Manager for Education Services was an integral part of planning the implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model. During the early stages of preparation, the view of the Safeguarding Manager was that the new model for joint investigative interviewing did not seem to be significantly different from existing practice and that the introduction of a new approach made sense within the wider context of continuous improvement. Awareness raising activity was undertaken to prepare schools for the introduction of the new model of practice – this consisted mainly of emails and written documents describing the new model and highlighting that Education staff would be expected to provide information to support planning for individual interviews.

After around six months of being live in practice, the Safeguarding Manager convened three focus groups of senior staff in secondary and primary schools in order to reflect on their experiences, and the learning from this activity shifted the thinking of the Safeguarding Manager in relation to the role of schools in this work and her role in supporting schools.

The following became apparent:

- Some schools responded that they had had no experience of being involved in the new JII model when data evidenced that they had been contacted during planning.
- Some schools were unclear about the difference in providing information for IRD and for JII.
- All schools had an appetite for learning more detail of the new approach and for considering their role more proactively.
- When school staff were given the opportunity to participate in these focus groups, they were better able to contextualise information about the new model and apply the information to their role.

“Schools are so closely involved in multiagency working to protect children, and have such regular contact with social services, that they may not appreciate the nuance of the differing processes involved in joint investigative interviewing. This means they might inadvertently miss opportunities to be more proactive, or to offer different kinds of support. We have learned that our early awareness raising with schools really needed to be continued on a regular basis so that we could help schools contextualise their later experiences building on that initial information they were given.”

Audrey Lowrie, Safeguarding Manager, Education Services, Dumfries and Galloway

The Safeguarding Manager reflected that education staff were aware of the wider improvement context for implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model: improving experiences and outcomes for child victims and witnesses. Therefore, education staff understood that implementing the new approach to joint investigative interviewing would contribute to the longer-term aim of reducing the likelihood that children would need to provide their primary testimony in court; that their interview would be of sufficient quality to be led as Evidence in Chief. However, this framing of the work may have inadvertently resulted in there being less focus on improvements in experiences and outcomes for children and young people in a more immediate or medium-term way, and in different contexts.

Education staff who participated in the focus groups had the space to think in a wider sense about their role and they identified ways they could strengthen the support to children and their families involved in the child protection system. They all had examples where their long-standing relationships with families – particularly in the small communities which are so prevalent in Dumfries and Galloway – meant that families may approach them for support in understanding formal processes, or to request information updates and stronger

interagency communications could assist in ensuring families receive the best support, whatever their point of access.

The focus groups also gave them the opportunity to hear a bit more detail of the model of practice – at a time when they could connect with it more meaningfully because they had had some practical experience of it.

Some education staff had experienced a sense of puzzlement at the information that interviewers sought from them: information about likes and dislikes, and information about special events that might have happened in school recently.

Interviewers use this information to plan the rapport building and episodic memory training phases of the interview protocol they use during joint investigative interviews. This degree of detail about the interview protocol is not widely known to those who have not been trained as Scottish Child Interview Model interviewers but, when shared during the focus groups, education staff then understood the specific context for providing the information which, in turn, helped them understand the value of their perspective and contribution to improving children's experiences and outcomes in the immediate future.

With their continuing involvement in the Scottish Child Interview Model, and reflection on their experience, Education Services in Dumfries and Galloway are giving consideration to information-sharing pathways. Until now, pastoral notes are the only part of the education information system which is routinely accessed during IRD and JII. However, a lot of important information such as Individualised Education Plans and past school reports are stored in the Wellbeing Application. The "softer" information about favourite subjects, strengths, likes and dislikes etc. which really personalise school reports would be helpful for interviewers as it would provide a greater sense of that individual child. Therefore, there is some local consideration underway about developing such access.

Many of the focus group participants shared their experiences of being involved in child protection investigations and joint investigative interviews. Potentially, in a rural area like Dumfries and Galloway, a greater proportion of the schools there may be smaller in size with a higher likelihood of the headteacher knowing all pupils individually and, indeed, where there may be closer associations in communities and neighbourhoods.

One primary headteacher gave a positive example of her involvement in a recent joint investigative interview undertaken using the Scottish Child Interview Model.

There had been a school assembly on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and a child who was new to the school came forward and made disclosures of non-recent abuse. During the child protection investigation, police contacted the school for more information about the child. On reflection, the headteacher now recognises this as preparation for planning the interview, which is additional contact beyond the IRD information sharing. Time was given for the headteacher and the class teacher to engage in a joint conference call with the interviewers and detailed information about the child was shared so that the interviewers could develop a bespoke interview plan. This headteacher has had previous experience of joint investigative interviewing processes and her feedback

was that she felt much more involved in the planning, better able to contribute to the planning, as well as feeling more informed overall about the new approach and the progress of the investigation. Afterwards, the child's mum told the school that the process of telling her story had helped the child move on.

Many of the participants in the Education focus groups had experiences of situations where the incident of concern had happened in a local community setting and managing the subsequent school community response was challenging. This highlighted that sometimes schools were finding out more information from a family than from a professional colleague – and this included circumstances where there was an ongoing investigation. This has helped to inform ongoing review of the joint investigative interview practice pathway in Dumfries and Galloway – ensuring that communication with education is actively considered at every stage so that, whenever families contact education staff, there is a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities and of what information can be shared with whom.

Role of health

The Public Protection Nurse Consultant and the Senior Public Protection Advisor for NHS Dumfries and Galloway have both been heavily involved in the implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model in Dumfries and Galloway.

Of key focus has been the gathering and collation of health data relating to the children who have experienced a joint investigative interview using the new model of practice.

Building on learning from the earlier pilot sites, NHS Dumfries and Galloway have created a Health Joint Investigative Interview Data Report which includes the following:

- Health actions prior to IRD
- Paediatric involvement at IRD
- Medical examination and type
- Health service involvement at time of IRD
- Health action following IRD

This data is providing a detailed picture of the health profile for children experiencing a joint investigative interview in Dumfries and Galloway.

The data highlights that for children already known to a health service, notification of IRD is shared by public protection advisers with the relevant health service which prompts a review of the chronology and plan of care. Where health advisers, or the IRD, identify an unmet wellbeing need for a school aged child, advisers will make a referral to the school nursing service. The data indicates that a proactive approach to identifying and addressing the health needs of children is in place.

This aligns with other aspects of the child protection approach by NHS Dumfries and Galloway. Every day, the Public Protection Advisers' phone the local hospitals Emergency departments (Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary and Galloway Community Hospital) as well as the paediatric ward to offer advice and support. This includes support with risk

assessment and decision making in respect of making referrals to social work. A weekly telephone call is also made to the Neonatal Unit. This contact helps keep the profile of child protection high, maintains relationships between clinical staff and the advisors and offers support for everyone to play their part in protecting children and young people.

"It is critical that data drives decision-making at every level. The implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model provided the opportunity for us to review the NHS data and to consider how we use this to improve the wellbeing and protection of children. Next, we are working on improving data cross referencing. There is no doubt that data continues to be challenging because systems can sometimes be set up to provide information that is easy to collect, rather than information that progresses our understanding of children's experiences and outcomes. One important factor here is the role that the National JII Team play in linking up local JII sites with each other to encourage peer support which I would firmly advocate. I would like to encourage any peers involved in implementing the Scottish Child Interview Model to make contact with my team so that we can support each other with this important work."

Dawn Rideout, Senior Public Protection Advisor, NHS Dumfries and Galloway

[Interviewing in a promoted post](#)

It is possible to continue to operate as a joint investigative interviewer within a promoted post if key conditions are provided to support this.

Dumfries and Galloway are able offer an additional learning point due to one of their social work interviewers operating within a Senior Social Worker role.

When social work staff were being recruited to the Scottish Child Interview Model, Sam Brown was pursuing a promoted post but wanted to retain direct contact with children and young people. Traditionally, it can be difficult to achieve this within promoted posts but, as joint investigative interviewing is a discrete specialist function undertaken on a planned basis, there was an opportunity to test this out in Dumfries and Galloway.

Sam completed the interviewer training programme and moved into the role of Senior Social Worker immediately. She protects one day per week in her diary for joint investigative interviewing and has found she is able to conduct interviews fairly regularly while in her senior post.

She offers the following reflections as to what is necessary for this to be successful:

- Firstly, a very high degree of personal motivation on the part of the individual to retain investigative interviewing practice responsibilities while holding management responsibilities. It is challenging to manage these competing priorities and will only work with a high degree of personal motivation and commitment.

- Secondly, clear communication with others about the desire to hold these joint responsibilities and about what will be necessary to support this choice.
- Thirdly, protecting the boundaries and the integrity of the joint investigative interview role. The Scottish Child Interview Model has a number of components which must be implemented for the model to be delivered with fidelity. This includes the planning and direct practice of the interview, plus structured evaluation of practice and access to continuous professional development opportunities. Individuals who wish to retain their interviewer role while holding other responsibilities (such as management responsibilities) need to be honest with themselves and those around them about what this requires.

Sam noted that she has had excellent support from her manager colleagues who step in to support her and assist in protecting her time for joint investigative interviewing. She reflects this transition has been easier because she has stayed within the same department and the wider team was involved in the transition to the Scottish Child Interview Model. If she had moved to a team with no wider understanding or experience of the Scottish Child Interview Model, it likely would not have been possible for her to successfully blend her management responsibilities with direct practice in joint investigative interviewing.

Sam can clearly articulate the efforts made to introduce this new model of practice in Dumfries and Galloway, and the difference this is making to children. She emphasises that the interviewer training programme must be viewed as long term commitment by those accessing it, as opposed to a career enhancing addition to a Curriculum Vitae. She also cautions that to ensure the continuing success, there can be no reduction in investment and all levels of the organisation need to make a sustained commitment:

“We’ve had to invest so much in this change, and it’s right to invest so much given what we want to aspire to for children and their families. But that investment needs continuing commitment from all involved to keep implementing this new approach in the coming months and years.”

Sam Brown, Scottish Child Interview Model interviewer and Senior Social Worker

Elise is 16 years old and has had an allocated social worker for several years. After a recent abusive experience, it was agreed that a joint investigative interview would be undertaken as part of a child protection investigation.

The allocated social worker is an interviewer trained in the Scottish Child Interview Model.

As outlined elsewhere in this paper, Dumfries and Galloway had previously introduced a policy that joint investigative interviews would not be undertaken by the allocated social worker as a way of minimising unintentional bias. So, the joint investigative interview was allocated to a different social worker (also trained in the Scottish Child Interview Model).

In addition to being responsible for undertaking the child protection investigation, the key role for the allocated social worker was to support the young person to understand what was happening and to participate in the interview.

The allocated social worker tailored their explanation of the interview process and practice in a trauma-informed and developmentally informed way. Recognising the impact of previous abuse and neglect, and Elise's previous experiences of the child protection system (including a previous joint investigative interview), the social worker was able to allay the high levels of anxiety felt by this young person by explaining the Scottish Child Interview Model in some depth. Detail of the stages of the interview protocol were shared with the young person. This is detail that isn't usually shared as part of preparatory processes – it's not usually required. But the allocated social worker recognised that a previously successful strategy to assist this young person in managing anxiety was to provide a high level of technical detail. The social worker was in a position to be able to provide a high level of detail to the young person to support them in preparing for interview because they were trained in the Scottish Child Interview Model.

This worked very well in this circumstance and, not only did this help Elise participate meaningfully in the interview, but there was also important learning here about ensuring other locality social workers have a high degree of knowledge about the Scottish Child Interview Model so they too can offer this additional degree of detail where it is in the best interests of the child or young person to do so.

Rurality

“The implementation for any new process or practice can be challenging but more so in a rural area where staff, managers and facilities can work in different areas, and this will involve travelling to fulfil a duty. Through close partnership working, the implementation team have managed to create an inclusive environment for all involved, made better use of more local facilities and identified the appropriate staff to carry out interviews giving consideration to competing demands in their respective roles. In Dumfries and Galloway, we have managed to shape the model for purpose through regular workshops and listening to the interviewers and managers. This has allowed us to learn, adapt and improve the provision of the process. Due to the improvements made so far with the provision of Scottish Child Interview Model we feel that we will continue to positively evolve the process through continued collaboration.”

Alison Penman Locality Social Work Manager Children and Families and Craig Nicolson Detective Inspector V Division Public Protection Unit

Learning from the experience of implementing the Scottish Child Interview Model in a rural context has been threaded throughout this paper. This section brings this together in a summarised way.

Location of interviewers

Where the rural nature of the area means that interviewers cannot be colocated, consideration must be given to additional measures that can be taken to support interviewers. This must involve regular protected time together plus effective managerial support.

Impact of travel on interviewers

Provision of a work car can assist interviewers in meeting the demands of working across challenging geography. Managerial flexibility with regard to where interviewers work from, can help mitigate the impact of travelling significant distances solely for the purpose of being at a particular office.

Impact of travel on families

Families living in rural areas will have established travel patterns and expectations of the services they access. When implementing the Scottish Child Interview Model, follow the evidence of what works well for the local communities.

Blended roles

Interviewers who have blended roles must be supported to be able to prioritise joint investigative interviewing and be assured that other work is being attended to. The specialist knowledge and skills of those trained in the Scottish Child Interview Model have applicability across other roles and tasks.

Scheduling

The co-ordination of joint investigative work in rural areas may involve additional challenges, such as securing the availability of relevant staff. Regardless of the management model in place locally, a designated person with responsibility for coordination is essential.

“We pay attention to the needs of the interviewers and the needs of the families. There is a lot to consider in a rural area like Dumfries and Galloway and it is important to know your communities well. For example, the West of our region is undoubtedly the most rural part, with more travel required both by the interviewers and children. Although families living here are already used to travelling to Newton Stewart or Stranraer for key services and facilities, we take this into account when planning interviews. It’s not as simple as measuring distances and thinking whether that distance is too great to be suitable as we also need to consider the needs of the child and their family. They may be reliant on fairly infrequent public transport in order to travel to the bigger towns. It’s about providing services that fit best with local needs and what our local community expects from us. Families rightly want the best service for their children and generally they appreciate that living in a rural area such as this may mean travelling for joint investigative interviews just as they would for health, leisure, and shopping facilities.”

Petrina Currie, Detective Sergeant, Public Protection Unit, Dumfries and Galloway.

Finn is 14 years old and witnessed a very serious crime. He has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder plus a range of other conditions, including a visual impairment.

Because of Finn's complex needs and the serious nature of the crime he witnessed; the decision was made locally to gather his evidence via the Scottish Child Interview Model.

Finn was very resistant to being interviewed. He was fearful of repercussions from the alleged perpetrator of the crime, and he didn't want to engage with any part of the investigation, or the support offered to him.

Due to these circumstances, the interviewers visited Finn and his mum at home. The interviewers were able to explain the interview process to Finn and his mum and listen to his fears directly. One of his key fears was being recorded on camera and the interviewers were able to assure him that his evidence could be audio recorded.

Finn's mum told the interviewers a lot of detail about his conditions and explained that he would struggle to engage in interview for longer than approximately ten minutes at a time.

The interviewers consulted with professional colleagues who had specialised knowledge about the conditions impacting on Finn. These colleagues did not know Finn personally, but their knowledge of his conditions helped equip the interviewers with the information they needed to adjust their interview plan to meet Finn's needs.

The interview plan created for Finn was able to meet his needs to the extent that he fully engaged in the interview and provided critical evidence for the ongoing investigation. He was supported to remain in his window of tolerance throughout – and this included him engaging for much lengthier periods of time than originally anticipated.

Finn's mum was not a witness in the case, so she was able to stay with him throughout, as a support. She fed back that she was very surprised at how long and how well Finn had been able to engage with the interview and she commented enthusiastically on the skills and abilities of both interviewers in providing highly valuable support before, during and after the interview.

Summarised learning points

- 1. Geography, workforce, and JII demand play key roles in determining the local approach to implementing SCIM and in a context such as Dumfries and Galloway, these factors are all coloured by the rural nature of the area.**
- 2. In areas where interviewers are not co-located and/or are not undertaking interviews as a full-time role, they benefit when managers make increased efforts to protect dedicated time and space to bring interviewers together on a regular basis for peer support and team development.**

3. The provision of support for interviewers in rural areas needs additional consideration because there are fewer opportunities for this to happen in an informal way.
4. Blending interviewer responsibilities with wider work can be successful if workload is carefully managed and there are sufficient resources for all work to be progressed to a high standard.
5. Interviewers in the Scottish Child Interview Model find their roles are rewarding, and that their learning is transferable to other aspects of their job.
6. Due to geography, interviewers may not travel to/from their own base when undertaking interviews but if they can share office space with JII peers on these days then they will benefit from a partial sense of “team”.
7. Where the management of the Scottish Child Interview Model sits across a group of managers, effective co-ordination and communication are even more critical.
8. There are additional challenges in securing availability of staff to undertake joint investigative interview work where staff are not co-located, not undertaking interviews as a dedicated role and where management responsibility is shared across a group.
9. The Scottish Child Interview Model demands a high degree of coordination, and where the management sits across a group rather than one or two individuals, a designated individual to support coordination is enormously valuable.
10. The Interagency Referral Discussion process plays a critical role in the Scottish Child Interview Model and a flexible approach to developing both in parallel is helpful.
11. The role of wider services in supporting children experiencing the joint investigative interviewing process is supported by early, and ongoing, awareness raising activity.
12. Health data is valuable in highlighting the health needs of those children experiencing a joint investigative interview in order to ensure systems are in place to address these.
13. The involvement of wider services in the implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model supports broader improvements across the child protection system.

- 14. It is possible to continue to operate as a joint investigative interviewer within a promoted post if key conditions are provided to support this.**
- 15. Arrangements where the systems, processes, and culture of the two disciplines (police and social work) can be taken into account in the management and coordination of the Scottish Child Interview Model are more likely to be effective over the medium to long term in supporting implementation of this new approach.**
- 16. Convening agency specific focus groups can provide a platform for additional improvements to be made once the model is live in practice, particularly for those not directly involved in interviewing.**

Gabriela is 15 years old and has Downs Syndrome. There was a child protection investigation following her disclosure that a member of her family had physically assaulted her.

During the IRD, the need for a joint investigative interview for Gabriela was discussed at length. The initial investigative strategy was to determine whether evidence might be available via another route – in order to avoid the need for a forensic interview with Gabriela. This investigative activity did not result in sufficient evidence being obtained so the IRD reconvened to discuss next steps, at which stage it was decided that Gabriela should be interviewed.

Some information about Gabriela's needs was obtained at IRD: she has learning difficulties, speech, language, and communication challenges and can be prone to aggressive outbursts when frustrated or distressed.

The interviewers spent a lot of time planning for Gabriela's needs. They consulted with her school, her speech and language therapist and the parent who was not part of the incident under investigation.

The school and the speech and language therapist provided the interviewers with more detailed information about her needs and, critically, shared tools that worked for her in other circumstances. Several tools were adapted for use in the interview – to facilitate Gabriela's participation, maintain her within her window of tolerance, support her emotional wellbeing, and provide a degree of consistency in support tools being used in different environments.

Gabriela's parent gave lots of information about her likes and dislikes and was very sceptical that Gabriela would engage with the interview process. They explained that Gabriela was typically non-communicative with anyone she did not know well and that, furthermore, she was exceptionally apprehensive about police involvement, associating police with "being bad".

Due to the complexity of Gabriela's needs, it was agreed that the interviewers would visit her at home to introduce themselves and reassure her about their roles. This visit was

successful in allaying Gabriela's anxieties, and she agreed to be interviewed. As a further support, it was agreed that Gabriela's classroom assistant would also be in the interview room while the interview was taking place.

One of Gabriela's main interests is food – cooking, baking, and enjoying meals. The interviewers used this information to plan the timing of Gabriela's interview – choosing a day where Gabriela was scheduled to have a cooking lesson at the end of a school day.

On the day of the interview, interviewers were able to use this interest to facilitate initial and ongoing rapport building, as well as end the interview on a positive note as Gabriela was very much looking forward to her cooking lesson.

The extensive planning undertaken by the interviewers meant they were very well prepared for interviewing Gabriela and their interview plan was successful in helping Gabriela to participate in the interview. She made a full and detailed disclosure, which was instrumental in bringing charges against the person who had assaulted her. They subsequently pled guilty to assault.

Gabriela's parent was very surprised at the success of the interview and gave credit to the interviewers for their careful planning and attention to Gabriela's needs. They were very appreciative that this supported Gabriela to give information key to her future safety.

For more information about implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model in Dumfries and Galloway, please contact:

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