



Protection

Child centred

Justice



Scottish Child Interview Model for Joint Investigative Interviewing – Emerging Learning

Case Study 2

Child Protection Concern

The referral was regarding two children aged 11 and 9 years old who had been exposed to domestic abuse. Two very young children were also part of the household. Several traumatic events were outlined in the referral, including a number of physical assaults on the children by their father.

Mum had sought help by approaching the police and Women's Aid and sharing some details of these events. She also advised that the 11-year-old had been choked by his father with a plastic bag when he was around 5 years old.

The parents are from Poland. The children were born in Scotland and fluent in both English and Polish.

Planning

While planning for the joint investigative interviews, individual plans for the needs of each child were completed, as per the new model. This aspect of planning creates a structure where interviewers seek information about the child's strengths and resources, complex needs, cognitive factors, trauma and adversity, speech language and communication needs, context and motivation, and relationships. The purpose of gathering this information and developing a Plan for the Child's Needs is to consider how to tailor the interview to the individual needs of the child in a way that best supports their participation in the interview. Developing these plans affords interviewers with greater flexibility to adapt and respond to the needs of the child.

Neither child had any identified speech, language or communication needs and the professional view of those involved in the child protection investigation was that both children were willing and ready to speak to interviewers.

Interview

The joint investigative interview was scheduled as agreed. When the children arrived at the interview suite though, it was clear that the children were traumatised and unwilling to speak with interviewers. They were very quiet and withdrawn; they engaged in limited interaction and made little eye contact.

The interviewers responded to the presentation of the children by adapting their plans.

Rather than proceeding with the interview, the decision was made to use the time to begin to build a relationship with the children. Various games were played, and interviewers made efforts to engage the children in conversation. This had limited success and the children continued to present as highly anxious. Through these interactions though, the interviewers assessed that some of this anxiety could be attributed to the building itself. The interview suite is located in a police building and this was scaring the children. The decision was made to arrange a home visit the following week to continue relationship building.

Visiting the family home, the following week, mum spoke to the interviewers about the children and how she had explained the interview process to them. However, the children remained very introverted and hid in their room for most of the visit.

Given that the children continued to be highly anxious and reluctant to participate, it was agreed that it was not in their best interests to proceed with the interviews.

In collaboration with multi-agency partners, it was agreed that the locality social work team would continue to support the family and the JII team would leave a window of time for this support to unfold and would keep in contact with the locality social work team with a view to arranging a JII once the children were ready.

Three weeks later, the allocated social worker advised the JII team that the children had grown in confidence and that the eldest child had now expressed that he would like to participate in a joint investigative interview.

Through discussion about safe spaces for these children and considering their earlier response to being in a police building, it was agreed that the interview would take place in their school, an environment where the children felt comfortable.

At the outset of the interview, the child was initially hesitant. However, after effective rapport building, he was able to provide clear details of domestic abuse occurring in the home and about physical assault of children in the household.

Outcome

The Scottish Child Interview Model for joint investigative interviewing is purposefully designed to minimise re-traumatisation of children and to place the needs and rights of children at the heart of the experience.

With effective safety measures in place – these children were not having contact with their father during this period of time – staff were able to move at this child's pace and plan an interview for a time and a space that met his needs.

The children's mother was meaningfully involved in supporting her children to understand the interview process and their right to participate.

The careful planning undertaken by the interviewers in advance of the originally scheduled interview was quickly adapted, as interviewers responded in a dynamic way to the needs of the children.

Instead of offering these children just one opportunity to tell their story, the effective collaboration between the JII team and the locality social work team meant that a further opportunity to participate in a joint investigative interview was made at the right time for the eldest child.

His disclosures corroborated the information that police had already gleaned from their enquiry and formed a critical part of the overall investigation.

All children are currently safe in the care of their mother.

North Strathclyde Child Interview Team

Written by Jillian Ingram, on behalf of the National JII Team, in collaboration with North Strathclyde JII Partnership

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.