

Scottish Child Interview Model for Joint Investigative Interviewing – Emerging Learning

Joint Management – Learning from Glasgow JII Partnership

March 2023

Introduction

Glasgow JII Partnership is the fourth pilot site in the National JII Project. They went live in practice with the Scottish Child Interview Model in October 2021, after several months of preparatory work.

The initial team make-up is five social workers and five police officers, with a dedicated Detective Sergeant and Social Work Team Leader appointed to jointly manage the interview team. This joint management model has worked well to date and is offered as some emerging learning for other joint investigative interview partnerships who are still developing their management models as part of implementing the Scottish Child Interview Model.

The first part of the paper provides some contextual information within which the Glasgow JII Partnership is operating, and the remainder of the paper draws out emerging themes from the joint management model, finishing with key messages.

Demographics

Glasgow City is the largest local authority area in Scotland and has a population of 635,640, which accounts for 11.6% of the national population. There are 111,512 children aged 0-17 living within the local authority area.

Glasgow is also one of the most diverse populations in Scotland with 88.5% of Glasgow's population from a White background and 11.5% from a minority ethnic group and nearly all of Scotland's asylum seekers are living in Glasgow (97.3%).

In terms of Health and Social Care needs profile,

- Around 0.6% of Glasgow's population have a learning disability. Almost 2.1% have a learning difficulty.
- Around 6,500 people in Glasgow have a form of autism
- 22% of adolescents report emotional or mental illness.
- 2.5% of Glasgow children under 15 years are unpaid carers.

Glasgow City contains four in 10 of Scotland's (20%) most deprived areas. Over two-fifths of Glasgow's population live in these deprived areas.

Workforce

Social Work Services in Glasgow are delivered by Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), which is made up from staff from Glasgow City Council and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. Social Work Services are delivered by three localities (North East, North West and South), each with a Head of Children's Services. A central Child Protection Team provide support and guidance to the 3 localities, are involved in complex cases, and will monitor and review practice across the three areas.

The HSCP aims to support children, young people, and families through providing nurturing, strengths-based support. It is acknowledged that addressing poverty is key to achieving these aims and support to families to address the impacts of poverty is a priority for the HSCP. Public Protection is another strategic priority of Glasgow City HSCP, which aims to keep people, particularly the most vulnerable children, adults, and older people safe from harm, and to identify and appropriately manage risks to people and groups.

Glasgow is served by the Greater Glasgow Police Division ('G Division') of Police Scotland. The Public Protection Unit of G Division has a dedicated Child Abuse Investigation Unit overseen by the Detective Superintendent, Public Protection and Public Health. Through its Public Protection Unit, Police Scotland aims to thoroughly investigate all child protection concerns reported to the police. Police Scotland is also committed to working in partnership with other agencies, sharing information to protect children and providing support and intervention when required.

Local approach to implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model

In order to implement the Scottish Child Interviewing Model, Strategic and Operational Oversight Groups were formed, with representation from Glasgow City HSCP, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Police Scotland, the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration and National JII Team. It was decided that Glasgow would have a joint interviewing team staffed by equal numbers of police officers and social workers and that the team would be jointly managed by a Detective Sergeant from Police and a Social Work Team Leader. The strategic group is jointly chaired by a Head of Children's Services, HSCP and the Detective Superintendent, Public Protection and Public Health.

The Team Managers

From the outset of the new Child Interview Team being established, as part of implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model, two team managers were recruited: one from police and one from social work.

Ross McGregor is the Detective Sergeant and Anne McHendry is the Social Work Team Leader. Ross and Anne each have many years' experience in their respective professions, including significant management experience. Neither has managed a multidisciplinary team previously and they did not previously know each other. They were appointed to these new roles at broadly the same time.

This paper is based on their learning from their first year of implementation. At this stage, the interview team are not yet co-located (which is their plan) but expect to move to shared office space within the first half of their second year in operation.

To date, Ross has been based in Pollok Police Station where all police child interviewers are also based (though police are able to work in a mobile way with MiFi boxes and have the option of working in the same office space as the social work interviewers).

Anne is based in a social work building that also has workspace for the interviewers. There is a second social work building in another part of the city that also has available workspace for the interviewers. Having two social work buildings in different parts of the city can help interviewers manage their time by avoiding traffic and travel challenges.

Anne and the social work interviewers regularly spend time at Pollok Police Station. In terms of the interviewers' joint working practice, the available options at present are to undertake their planning and preparatory work at either of the two social work buildings, or Pollok Police Station. None of these spaces are used to conduct interviews. So, all interviewers work in flexible locations that enable shared workspaces.

Background Motivation

Rather than being directly moved into these posts, both Ross and Anne actively applied for these new roles as joint managers of the new child interview team.

Recruitment processes differ in each profession. Within both organisations, managers with relevant experience were advised of the forthcoming opportunity and invited to indicate interest.

At the time, Ross had a link with an existing Scottish Child Interview Model team as his police division is part of the North Strathclyde partnership. Given this link, and Ross's background experience, he was then approached directly by his supervisor to discuss the job and consider whether he would be a good fit.

Anne was part of a process where she submitted a note of interest and then participated in a matching discussion to assess her fit for the role.

"Friends I work with saw this job come up and told me it was made for me. They knew how passionate I was about child protection, how much I loved multiagency working and how excited I would be about contributing to transformative change in services for children. This job brings all of that together." Anne McHendry

As is common in this field of work, both had prior significant experience of joint working practice across police and social work in relation to protecting children and young people and prior existing strong multiagency working relationships. In addition, Anne had been part of large-scale child

sexual exploitation operations, which gave her additional opportunities for working closely with senior police staff.

For both Anne and Ross, their prior experience of working jointly across police and social work is very positive, and this appears to have been a key factor in their interest in these new roles and, in turn, an influence on the success of the joint management approach.

Both have several examples of previous learning they have gained from working with each other's profession, and each could recall occasions where they championed the role of the other profession within their own organisation.

Both had (and continue to hold) strong views on the value that the knowledge and skills of the other profession brings to joint working, and the opportunity to be part of a permanent, fulltime, joint police/social work team was very attractive to them.

"I'm confident in my professional identity as a police officer and the skills I bring to the table. But I'm just as confident that when we are working in child protection, no one agency holds all the answers. I have a long history of working closely with social work and this has always been a positive experience for me where we respect each other and don't feel the need to check up or second guess each other. It's about professional trust and respect." Ross McGregor

Recognition and trust

The previous joint working experiences of Anne and Ross, in which each had identified strengths in the other profession, was key to the explicit recognition each gave the other in relation to the expertise they held and reaching for and drawing upon this expertise helped establish the trust necessary to foster a good joint management working relationship.

Anne recognised the value that the more structured, forensic approach from police could contribute to the teams' responsibilities in investigative interviewing and recalled her learning from this approach in her previous experience:

"I previously worked closely with high-ranking police staff as part of Operation Dash and found that I learned a lot that improved my approach to complex investigations. I felt too that my own expertise was recognised by senior police and contributed to the success of the operation. I've had other similar experiences since then where being open to shared learning like this has really made a difference to what we've been able to jointly offer children."

Ross recognised the benefits of the more relationship-based, reflective approach from social work, which he felt complemented his own preferred ways of working:

"My own personal style is pretty open and person centred and I like the way that social work put that emphasis on relationships. That helps teams operate better. I'm naturally curious about what I can learn from others and thinking about what the best way is to proceed. I'm not precious about that because, at the end of the day, it's all about what makes the difference to children. If children are safer that's all that matters."

The trust that has been engendered in their working relationship, comes not only from their recognition of each other's knowledge and skills, and their sense that their respective expertise is recognised by the other, but also from their ability to see their own profession from the viewpoint of those outside it and to acknowledge potential barriers.

Both came from a starting point of accepting that their own organisation's way of doing things may not necessarily be the best way in any given set of circumstances, and of accepting that there can be inherent frustration in navigating another organisation's systems, processes, culture, and practice.

Working closely, they have gained increasing understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities and the rationale for decision-making, as well as insight into culture and practice in each other's organisations.

Issues routinely arise in every team. In this joint team, the response to all issues is jointly discussed and agreed. Many issues that arise are those that Anne and Ross have had experience in managing previously – in their single agency teams. They draw upon this experience to identify the options available to them in responding to issues in a joint team.

So, when an issue arises, Anne will tell Ross what the usual way of dealing with this would be in a social work team and Ross would share how this would look and feel from a police perspective. Similarly, Ross will tell Anne how the issue would usually be dealt with in a police team, and Anne would share how this would look and feel from a social work perspective. This allows them to consider how different management responses may impact on their team of mixed professionals and, together, agree which approach is the best to use in each circumstance - achieving the outcome sought without alienating or antagonizing one half of the team.

Thus, the management approach moves away from a "this is a social work/police issue, and this is how we will deal with it" to a recognition that the impact of their management response may feel differently to interviewers depending on their profession and that having two managers with different ways of doing things actually offers more options to the team as a whole.

Given the interviewers come from either a social work or a police background, having two managers, each of whom shares the professional background of half of the interviewers, means that the softer – cultural – differences between each profession are more easily taken into account in the operationalization of the team. This has been important in establishing the joint management model, but it's also been important in other ways in which the team operates.

Joint ownership and cultural difference

Ross and Anne each have certain responsibilities for their own staff, but they wanted to establish joint ownership across the team from the outset.

To do this, one of the important things that they needed to communicate was that all interviewers should view both Anne and Ross as the team manager. While certain responsibilities such as Human Resources matters would require to be dealt with within each of the organisational structures, Anne and Ross recognized that most of the business of managing this new team would

be around the joint working because of the nature of the teams' responsibilities. Therefore, a joint management message was important.

This was particularly important for the police side of the team. As an organization, Police Scotland is hierarchical and rank-sensitive in a way that is quite different to social work teams. Police officers are trained to respect and respond to senior ranking officers in a different way to how they are trained to work with those from different professions.

For Ross, it was important for him to communicate the message to his police interviewers that Anne should be treated in the same way that he was treated – that she had parity of authority. This needs to be done explicitly for police given their organizational structure.

For Anne, coming from a social work perspective, there were times she too needed to be explicit in her messages to the team, but more often the emphasis was on implicit messaging in how she managed the team:

“Ross and I share similar views about ways of working and respect for colleagues. This meant we could not only quite easily communicate these messages to the team, but we modelled them too as our shared values ran right through the way in which we worked together. This meant there was congruence between how we told the team we wanted to work together, and the way that we actually did work together.”

There were other ways in which the differences between the two professions could contribute to friction.

Culturally, social workers are trained to be professionally curious and to constructively challenge each other to support reflective practice and ensure other voices are heard. This degree of debate is not common when police officers are part of meetings with those of a higher rank.

For Ross and Anne, their vision of how they wanted shared ownership across the whole team meant that they needed to find ways of ensuring all interviewers felt equally heard. One of the things they worked on from the outset was team meetings. Again, there are different approaches to this in the different organisations.

It is usual for teams in local police divisions to hold morning briefings – picking up on where yesterday's work got to, what has happened overnight and plans for the day ahead. Initially, Ross continued a morning briefings approach with his new team of interviewers. However, because the nature of investigative interviewing using the Scottish Child Interview Model means that something started yesterday won't necessarily be concluded the next day, or, equally, that what is happening that day might be something that started 5 days previously, the morning briefings format didn't lend themselves to the pace and nature of the work.

Instead, Anne led the introduction of monthly team meetings, something that is common practice in social work teams.

The joint team meeting was an opportunity for Anne to model the kind of culture her and Ross wanted to create in the team. Everyone is encouraged and supported to be open and honest and issues that are raised are worked through collectively rather than being decided solely by management. This means that many of the operational aspects of the team, such as processes for

allocation of work, have been adjusted and shaped over time by the feedback from the interviewers. While Anne initially chaired and minuted the team meetings, now everyone in the team takes turns at this. It's another way that shared responsibility for the child interview team is demonstrated.

There was some resistance to team meetings initially – some team members expressed that they felt their time was better spent directly taking forward operational matters rather than talking about them. However, over time, the value of the team meeting has been abundantly demonstrated through the creation of collective ownership and now the whole team fully engage and participate in the team meetings.

Team meetings were especially critical because Glasgow is not co-located. It is part of their strategic plan to base all interviewers together in one office, in premises that include interview suites, but the work on this is still in development. So, having a regular protected time to bring all interviewers together was important both for wellbeing but also to oversee how the team was developing and what issues were emerging.

In addition to the team meetings being a place to collectively work through team issues, Ross notes the value of having a discrete place for interviewers to come and raise issues privately with their manager – something he hadn't anticipated.

Previously Ross was based alongside his staff and felt this worked well in terms of relationship building, oversight of work, picking up issues etc. But the separate office means he has retained this and now has had the unexpected advantage of staff coming to him to seek support and raise issues in a way that wouldn't work in a group environment:

"I was really surprised to notice how often the staff make a point of coming out of the shared workspace and into my office to talk to me. It has helped me get to know them really well and understand the different types of support and approach that each of them needs from a manager, as well as giving me more insight into how they contribute to the dynamic within the team."

This recognition that each of the interviewers brings a unique set of experience, values and beliefs is something Anne and Ross have discussed often.

Both Ross and Anne note that a not insignificant influence on how settled and happy the interviewers are, is their individual degree of comfort with the joint working arrangement. For some, the different culture and practice between police and social work (despite the shared Scottish Child Interview Model approach) is a constant rub.

Their key learning is that any preexisting tensions or issues between the two disciplines – whether as managers or as interviewers – will be exacerbated in this context of a joint child interview team.

"All of this work is joint work. That is part of the strength of the service we offer to children. But for some practitioners, coming together in a joint team feels very different to their previous experience of joint working. It can feel frustrating and irritating, and Ross and I help each of them work through this to help them see that difference is to be expected and embraced. This is not always easy." Anne McHendry

They recommend that other areas make sure recruitment to the roles includes an explicit focus on the joint working aspect and this is something they are building in much more strongly as they continue to extend their team.

While these tensions and frustration have been apparent on occasion, overall, the experience of jointly managing a joint team has been positive, as highlighted by Ross:

“We are not trying to turn police officers into social workers or social workers into police officers – we respect each interviewer’s professional background and are keen to protect professional identity. Plus, we find that in terms of values, approach and ways of working, all interviewers are coming from the same place in implementing this model and its very common that other professionals who encounter our team, can’t tell the difference in profession between police or social work interviewers.”

This concept of respecting each interviewer’s professional background, within a shared model of practice, is further illustrated by this example provided by Anne:

“Beyond interview teams, awareness of the Scottish Child Interview Model is still at quite early stages and sometimes those leading criminal investigations might not have had enough experience of the new approach to be fully confident in the interview protocol. This can lead to them trying to direct certain questions into the interview plan, but the structure of those questions doesn’t fit with the Scottish NICHD protocol so I can’t authorize this within the briefing. Instead, I work closely with the interviewers, especially the police interviewer in these types of instances. By sharing the question that has been requested, the police interviewer is able to quickly derive the information being sought and develop an alternative question format that fits within the Scottish NICHD protocol, and which will obtain the information sought.”

Ross agrees that awareness and understanding about the new model of practice is still growing:

“There can still be pockets of resistance as we make the transition to this new approach. For example, some still hold the view that it should be a police manager who provides the briefing in sexual offence cases. But police and social work briefing managers are both trained in the same way, and both have the skills to provide briefings in these cases, especially as the Senior Investigating Officer is closely involved and provides support to the briefing manager, whichever profession they are.”

Continuing to develop the team is a shared priority for Anne and Ross.

Anne provides structured supervision on a 4-weekly basis in line with social work policy. This is not something that is built into police policy. However, just as their joint experience over the past year has led to greater appreciation of the different things each organisation may have to offer, consideration is now being given to extending this to police interviewers in recognition that an “open door” policy will only ever capture some of the issues that interviewers are carrying, and a regular structured reflective opportunity fits well with this type of work.

“I have appreciated the support I’ve had within my own organisational structure to work is sometimes quite a new way for police, with social work colleagues. My manager recognises

and respects my professional judgement and I have been empowered to work with Anne on jointly developing our team in the ways that we decide are best.” Ross McGregor

Key messages for other areas:

- ✓ Purposeful recruitment of both a police supervisor and a social work manager from the outset helps introduce a joint management approach.
- ✓ Being able to take account of cultural differences across the two disciplines is as important as accounting for different systems, policies, and procedures.
- ✓ Dedicated management roles in respect of the child interview team provide good conditions for a joint management approach to foster as it takes time and skill to develop this.
- ✓ Shared space and time are as important as shared knowledge, skills and expertise. Co-located spaces are the optimum arrangement; where this is not feasible, regular planned time together is critical.
- ✓ Recruit those who actively wish to work in a joint team. Preexisting tensions between police and social work will be exacerbated in a joint team and can impact on staff morale and job satisfaction.
- ✓ Work to ensure there is no “defensiveness” when differences emerge – instead, expect and embrace differences as opportunities to learn and do things in a better way.
- ✓ Don’t make assumptions about the other discipline – trust in their professional expertise and agree that cooperation and collaboration will be a shared endeavor.

Next steps

The Glasgow Child Interview Team will shortly move to shared premises which will allow full co-location of interviewers and managers as well as the undertaking of interviews on site. This will help the continued implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model in Glasgow and support the successful joint management arrangement.

Anne and Ross were both unexpectedly absent from work at the same time for a number of weeks towards the end of their first year in operation. A contingency management arrangement was put in place by senior police and social work managers which was successful.

Part of this success is likely to have been the strong foundation for the team built jointly by Anne and Ross which ensured interviewers had clarity of expectations and efficient processes had been embedded.

Ross is due to retire shortly, and a new Detective Sergeant will join Anne in jointly managing the team. The work done to date by Anne and Ross will provide the new manager with a strong and positive legacy to build upon.

If you would like to follow up with Anne and the new Detective Sergeant, they can be contacted at:

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This document has been developed by Jillian Ingram on behalf of the National JII Team, in collaboration with Glasgow JII Partnership, March 2023