**CHILD PROTECTION AUDIO RECORDING PILOT**

This is to brief you on the Digital Recording of Child Protections Conference pilot project which will take place in the Newcastle Area Childrens Services Office.

It will start on the 1st February and last for 4 months to include Initial and review conferences but exclude Dual process meetings -

**Why are we doing this?**

* Deliver restorative conferences and documents to underpin our practice model: this is the first step in that process – looking at the documents that come out of conference – language, format, what they achieve – we are still producing extremely lengthy minutes, feedback is that they are not useful to the parents or young people, want to concentrate on decisions and recommendations and the plan – what do they need to do, how, when
* Learn from Outstanding Local Authorities so we too become Outstanding –
* The corporate plan is to become a more digital authority, to look for ways that we can work in a more efficient manner utilising technology to our best advantage. During this COVID pandemic, our use of digital has accelerated and we have embraced MS Teams and we want to build on this functionality and opportunities that it gives us
* As part of the transformation programme, we envisage that there will be significantly more children subject to a Child Protection Plan and less within the Care system.

**Project Vision**

The vision of the project is for an outcome from the Conference that is fit for parents and gives them a clear plan.

**How will this be Delivered?**

It is proposed that through the pilot all conferences in Newcastle will be digitally recorded and not minuted.   The Chair will start and stop the recording via MS Teams. Post conference the Chair will then dictate the decisions and recommendation and their conference summary to a nominated minute taker. Both will be saved on to the child’s file, only the decisions and recommendations will be distributed as current practice. There will be no sharing of the digital recording with the parents or professionals.  It will be saved on the Childs file in line with current practice.

The Chair’s summary will reference the Worries, Positives and Changes discussed in the conference.

**Background and statutory guidance**

Working together 2018 states that Social Workers should ‘record Conference Decisions and recommendations and ensure action follows’ (p47).  With respect to the Review Conference the Working Together Document states that Social Workers should ‘record Conference outcomes’ (p50).   However, makes no reference to how the record should be made.  The Children Act 1989 makes no reference to how the Child Protection Conference should be recorded.

**Discussions/meetings with other Local Authorities and feedback**

As part of the scoping work, Trandeep has sought to discuss the digital recording  with Authorities that are assessed to be ‘outstanding’ by OFSTED. This included Westminster, Hampshire (who have been digitally recoding conferences for over 3 years), and Brighton and Hove.  All but Brighton and Hove have had OFSTED inspections whilst using digital recording of Child Protection conferences.   The feedback from both is that it was very well received.  Brighton and Hove commented that they were able to easily demonstrate the participation of children in Conferences through the digital record.

In addition all state that they have had no issue with Courts or partner agencies who were involved in the transitioning to Digital recording.  They add that due to the recording, professionals focused their conversations, this resulted in clearly evidenced decision making and ownership of those decisions.  Trandeep further raised the issue of Judges asking for the conference record.  Brighton and Hove state that they have only had one occasion where there was a request for the conference to be transcribed.  This was quite a difficult situation where the father of the children was a DV perpetrator, he did not attend the original conference. The Chair raised with the Court that the discussion in the Conference could put mother at further risk of violence, asking that the Judge consider listening to the recording.  The Judge agreed and on listening to this, it was decided that a transcript was not required, thanking the LA for the record outlining how helpful this was.

Trandeep has further asked the question what has happened if a record of the meeting is requested.  All state that the record is for the LA, however where a parents has requested a copy, they have asked that they make a ‘subject access request’, there has only been 2.  Where professionals request copies of the any records, they have continued to follow the same procedure as previous.

Trandeep further discussed  the issue of parental participation, as well as complaints.  Both state that complaints actually decreased, parents feedback was that ‘they felt that as the meeting was being recorded no one could deny that they said anything’.  In addition where there had been a complaint, the investigator has been easily able to listen to the record to ascertain what was said.

All worked with their respective Safeguarding Boards to ensure a smooth Transition for professionals

**Any Questions?**

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