The Narrative Model for Communicating with Children about challenging issues

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Facts and Figures re: NHSCT

- The Northern Trust is one of five Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland which became operational on 1 April 2007.

- Population of almost 436,000 people across a geographical area of 1,733 square miles making it the largest geographical trust in Northern Ireland.

- Currently responsibility for approximately 700 Looked After Children and 230 post adopted children in NHSCT catchment area.
Introductions to the TT-LAAC Team

- Multidisciplinary Team in NHSCT established in 2011.
- Integrated within Children’s Services Social Care.
- Seeking to improve the outcomes for LAAC through placement stability.
- Replaced multiple therapeutic referral pathways to ensure a coordinated approach.
Entry into the care system is a challenging experience for children and young people:

- They have to leave their home and family
- Sometimes children are placed separately from their siblings.
- Children are required to get to know new carers and others who live in the household.
• Making sense of new rules and routines of the household.

• Often unclear about the reasons for coming into care or whether they will be returning to their parents care.

• Not knowing what to say about it to: parents, siblings, carers, professionals, school and indeed friends.
How the Model evolved

- Psychological Perspectives for practice

- Repeated Findings from literature on social work practice (Munroe 2011, Our Life in Care 2013, Voypic’s third CASI survey)

- Themes from referrals to TT-LAAC- Requests and challenges

- The need for a model to aid folk support a child develop a narrative about their experience.
What we mean by a Narrative

- A Narrative is like a little ‘story’ or script
- A brief summary or outline of the child’s experiences
- In language that is appropriate to their stage of development
- Aids a child to understand and communicate about the experience
The Narrative Model has 7 core components

1. Caregiver Network
2. Use of Narratives
3. Delivering the Narrative to the child.
4. Responding to the child’s emotion.
5. Responding to the child’s questions.
6. Broadcasting the narrative to significant others.
7. Building on the narrative.
What people are saying about the model.

“This service assisted Children's Services delivering information to an eight year old child about issues in his family re sexual abuse. This was a useful service and provided resources in order to provide this work in an age appropriate manner” (SW)

“I was very satisfied with the whole process. I strongly recommend this service to all birth parents... should be available for all birth parents struggling for answers like I was” (Birth parent)

“A greater understanding of the children's experiences before coming into care. It answered the child's questions in a way that I was unable to.” (FC)
Satisfaction Survey

- Satisfaction Survey sent out February 2016

- Rationale for undertaking survey:
  - Better outcomes
  - What do social workers find most helpful
  - What components of the model in particular aid the communication process.
Survey Design

- All Social Workers involved in Narrative work through TT-LAAC invited to take part.
- Each Social Worker asked to complete a survey for each young person they have been involved in narrative work with.
- Survey emailed to Social Workers for ease of completion.
- Social Workers emailed completed surveys back to service for analysis.
- Responses entered into database on SPSS and preliminary analysis completed.
• The number of Questionnaires distributed- 54 Social Workers involved with 118 children.

• Sample size (N=18)

• Cases captured 47 children and young people

• Years of experience for Social workers ranged from 2 years post qualification to 23 years with a mean of 8 years.
Key Results

- 63% of cases the social worker involved agreed that it was difficult to talk to children about why they were in care- this did not appear to be influenced by number of years qualified or training level.

- All but two respondents were aware of the narrative model prior to completing the narrative piece of work.

- In 100% of cases, SW’s involved in narrative work felt that it was important for children to know why they are in care and all were satisfied overall with the model.
• In 35% of cases, SW’s had formal training in the Narrative Model prior to carrying out work.

• In 71% of cases it was felt that the work promoted placement stability.

• All social workers in all cases felt that the model had benefited the child and had also strengthened their confidence as practitioners.
Component specific results

- All components of the model were considered essential by 100% of respondents.
- The *Constructing the Narrative* component was considered to be the most helpful aspect to the social workers.
- The *Broadcasting the Narrative to Significant Others* component was considered the most challenging.
Knowledge and confidence in carrying out the component was highest in *Delivering the Narrative* and lowest in *Caregiver Network Meetings*.

SW felt most supported by TT-LAAC in *Responding to Emotion* and least in *Building upon the Narrative* (75-96% range).
Limitations of Survey

- Identification through email
- Small sample size \( (n=18) \) out of \( (n=54) \)
- Poor response rate

Survey Design

Missing data
Building upon the Model

- Development of Narrative Training DVD
- Experiences of Birth parents inclusion in using the Model.
- What are the children’s experience of the narrative model?
- Considering the challenges within Foster Care and Kinship Care.
Keeping it real

- Opportunity to listen to the experience of others- Narrative Model DVD.
Case Study Example
Re: Child A  DOB: (7)  Child B  DOB: (5)

Mr. Q  Miss P  Mr. T

Child A  Child B
Case example

Care Giver Network / Use of a Narrative
- Care Giver Network Meetings
- Developing a shared and agreed understanding of what the children required from their narrative
- The use of question books.
- Individual support sessions with birthmother, Foster Carer and father in prison.
- Constructing the narrative in collaboration.

Delivering the Narrative
- Agreed who needed to be present
- Planning re room, timing and emotional support to children and network during and post delivery.
- Delivery with dad in prison
Responding to the Child’s Emotion
How the children presented
Children voiced their relief that it wasn’t their fault
Freedom to ask questions
Less verbal and physical aggression
Post processing support - 2 week follow-up app offered to the network to discuss the narrative and any thoughts and direction of any support required

Responding to the child’s questions
A talking openly about Mr Q being in prison
Talking openly about families and paternity.
Asking about the future and if “mum would be able to look after them properly.
• Broadcasting the narrative to significant others.
  - We agreed in this case that the school did not require the full narrative but were involved in the process and kept updated throughout

**Building on the narrative.**
- Narratives around paternity
- Transitioning back home
Thank you – Questions?

We can provide a one day training to Social Workers, Carers and Professionals on the Narrative Model which has been very well received. For further on this please contact Ms Lynda McGill TT-LAAC Team Manager EMAIL: lyndamcgill@northerntrust.hscni.net or 02894424600
