

WEST SUSSEX CHILDREN'S IMPROVEMENT BOARD

**Performance Report Against the Practice Improvement Plan
Improving Quality of Life Story Work**

**Jackie Wood – Assistant Director Corporate Parenting
23 September 2019**

Objective and Practice Improvement Plan Reference

7) Improve the quality and timeliness of life-story work.

Date of Improvement Board Meeting

30 September 2019

Lead Officer (Name and Job title)

Jackie Wood – Assistant Director Corporate Parenting

Improvement outcome to be achieved

Workers will have capacity to prioritise life story work at the right time for Children in care, helping them to understand and accept what happened to them, and why.

Our Looked after Children can expect good quality life stories that are meaningful to them facilitating a secure base to explore their past, present and future. This will enable them to integrate their past into the present, in order to help them move into the future.

Action Required and when due

7. Workforce trained and empowered to undertake quality life story work. Dec 2019

7.1. Outline in Procedures when and how life story work is to be undertaken and how this will be managed together with a toolkit to support. **Sept 2019**

7.2. Provide specific training to social workers, managers and foster carers in relation to life story work. **Oct-Nov 2019**

Performance against action required - To include any risks to delivery and mitigation taken

Outline in Procedures when and how life story work is to be undertaken and how this will be managed together with a toolkit to support. Sept 2019

In November 2017, draft life story work guidance and templates were devised with consultation across Children's Social Care, but they were never properly launched. This guidance and the related templates have been reviewed and where necessary amended by

life story leads across the service specific areas (Assessment & Intervention, Family Support & Protection, Adolescent Team, Children Looked After, Fostering and Adoption).

The guidance and templates are now agreed and will be launched and uploaded to Tri.x (Children's Social Care procedures) at the beginning of October 2019. While the Practice Improvement Plan completion date was September 2019 a slight delay was caused due new governance arrangements and the need for additional oversight to ensure changes meet the required improvement. The guidance and templates are timetabled to be presented to the newly formed Policy & Procedures Steering Group on 03/10/19 for sign off, with upload to Tri.x by 08/10/19.

Provide specific training to social workers, managers and foster carers in relation to life story work. Oct-Nov 2019

Life story work is covered in various pieces of training including 'Signs of Safety' (for social workers and managers), 'Secure Base' (for foster carers), and 'Transitions' (for foster carers).

Specific one day life story work training for social workers and managers is currently being tendered for. The tendering process closes on 04/10/19 and awarding of the bid will take place on 11/10/19. If awarded, the training should be able to commence in November 2019.

A specific training course for foster carers – 'An introduction to life story work' is currently being devised and will be available to foster carers by the second week of November 2019.

Following the launch of the guidance and templates, one hour briefing sessions will take place for social workers and managers in Assessment & Intervention, Family Support & Protection, Adolescents Team, Children Looked After, Fostering and Adoption. Furthermore this will also be added to the commissioned training so this can be fully embedded across the service.

Key Performance Indicators/measure of success against objective

44) Audit of quality of life story work - Dec 2019

Auditing on life story work was completed in August 2019 in the Children Looked After Service. The findings were as follows:

- Quality of the work is variable and it is difficult to locate on Mosaic.
- Delay and drift in life story work was identified. Acknowledgement of gaps in the information from birth parents but little evidence of further attempts made to rectify this.
- Life story books for adopted children are often completed by child & family workers due to capacity issues for social workers.
- There is not a lot of evidence of life story work being done with children prior to them becoming looked after. It does not appear to be seen as a dynamic process.
 - Life story work is not often incorporated into statutory visits.
- Life story work is not always referenced in Children Looked After Reviews and when it is referenced, there is little evidence of follow up and tracking.
- There is limited evidence of pictures from family contact on file. For some children contact has now ceased so this opportunity is lost.
- There is little reference on Mosaic to what foster carers are collating in terms of memory work for children.
 - There is less evidence of life story work for older children.

By 18/10/19, self-evaluation of life story work activity from specific service areas will have been completed. In addition, all children in the Children Looked After service will have had a self-audit completed to inform which children do/do not have life story work, developing actions with timelines for those that do not.

45) % of CLA audits that show children with Life Story work (including started)
Target: 70% Nov; 80% Jan 2020; 90% May 2020

We are on schedule for the audit as CLA is the current audit theme under the new framework and we will be able to identify if children have life story work. The Audit work will also be moderated to identify gaps and strengths in life story work.

Progress against Key Performance Indicators/measure of success

See above. The themes identified in the auditing activity regarding the quality of life story work in the Children Looked After service will inform improvements moving forward. This will be further updated by 19/10/19, when service specific areas will have completed a self-evaluation of life story work.

We will also have the audit data to be able to report on this measure as planned for November it is worth noting that as this is a big area of work to rectify across our whole cohort of CLA the first target is expecting 70% evidenced in the Audit cohort. Therefore although the KPI is high it is realistic against the proportion of audit.

However as we have not had a clear process or expectation to staff about who conducts this work it is expected this will remain poor. We are therefore considering solutions ahead of the audit so we can be prepared.