

Privileged methodologies

Our values are that children's life chances are significantly improved by families being kept together wherever possible and that outcomes will be improved most when high quality social work practice takes place through active, timely evidence-based social care interventions, and effective management of risk. We look at children as part of a whole system.

We are committed to a core set of tools, models and theories ('privileged methods') that reinforce our values and strategic direction. These approaches will form the methodological backbone of our work with children, young people, their families and communities and enable our social workers to be the agents of change. Training in these methodologies will begin to be rolled out to new teams from March 2016.

Our six privileged methods are described below. We need to be mindful about social workers' and managers' capacity to undertake training in relation to all of these; therefore we are prioritising family and multi-systemic therapy and solution focused theory (brief therapy):

Family and multi-systemic therapy (MST) and practice

Purpose – keeping families together, young people in school and stable

We believe that children and young people's life chances are significantly improved when families are kept together. Through family and multi-systemic practice we will focus interventions on the system (community, family, school) around individuals and that individual's interactions with the system rather than solely focussing on the individual. There is a strong UK and international evidence base that multi-systemic therapy enables young people to remain in their homes, keep going to school and keep out of trouble¹.

Solution (Brief therapy)

Purpose – focus on solutions coproduced and tailored around the needs of each family

Solution-focussed therapy is directed towards developing and achieving children and young people's vision of solutions through a range of techniques and questions. It is future-focused, goal-directed, and focuses on solutions rather than on the problems that brought the child to the attention of children's services². Where individuals are able to develop a strong understanding of where they should be heading we know there is a stronger possibility of this happening³. This reflects our continued commitment to cooperative working and empowering the people with whom we work.

Attachment and resilience theory and assessment

Purpose – focus on relationships to improve a child's long-term outcomes and their ability to overcome negative events

Attachment and relationship-based practice [prev. ADAM] provides social workers with the skills to understand the complex needs of children and families, the relationship between types of attachment and child maltreatment, provides a means of assessment and a range of interventions to address them. We believe that social workers provide important attachments for children and these attachments provide security for a child that has long-lasting implications on their development, ability to learn, ability to regulate their emotions and form satisfying relationships⁴. Resilience theory shifts focus to the factors that make a difference for children facing adversity, providing them

¹ <http://www.mstuk.org/evidence-outcomes>

² <http://www.solutionfocused.net/>

³ http://www.brief.org.uk/view.php?item_id=108

⁴ <http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/Media/Education/attachment-and-the-implications-for-learning-and-behaviour.pdf>

with the tools to overcome negative events. Together these approaches will mean fewer children and young people are escalated through the system and will improve the identification of those at serious risk of harm.

Parenting Assessment Manual (PAMS)

Purpose – social workers undertake evidence based assessments of parenting

PAMS is a methodical and functional method of looking at parenting which incorporates evidence-based and multidimensional assessment tools. It can be used as a comprehensive assessment tool, with families with additional needs and as a tool to provide more objective assessments to family courts. Using PAMS will enable the effective management of risk, make parenting assessments more consistent, enable the identification of issues that can be worked on within the family unit and ensure that when decisions are made to remove children from their parents they are based on rigorous, objectively tested evidence.

Graded care profile

Purpose - social workers objectively assess care and identify neglect more effectively

The graded care profile is a tool that enables social workers to measure care and neglect across four domains: physical, safety, love and esteem. The profile identifies strengths, weaknesses and what needs to be changed and is therefore a practical tool for identifying the right support to improve the life of the child. It enables consistent and objective assessments to be made allowing social workers to manage their case loads more effectively, direct the right support to the families who need it most and protect children from neglect⁵.

Secure Base

Purpose – social workers effectively promote attachment and resilience in foster care

Secure base is a model of caregiving in fostering and adoption that is based on theories of attachment and resilience while also drawing on child placement research. It provides a valuable framework and a strengths-based approach for making sense of children's needs and behaviours and sets out the dimensions of caregiving that can support children to thrive and to fulfil their potential⁶. It is a positive, strengths based approach that focuses on the interaction between the caregiver and the child, but also considers how that relationship can enable the child to develop competence in the outside world and manage the complex relationships with birth family members⁷.

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In addition to our 6 privileged methods all social workers will have undertaken the following existent training modules:

- Achieving best evidence (the national protocol for interviewing children and vulnerable adults as part of a criminal investigation)
- Signs of Safety approach to child protection casework
- AIM interventions in relation to sexually harmful behaviour⁸.

⁵ <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/services-for-children-and-families/graded-care-profile/graded-care-profile-evidence-impact-and-evaluation/>

⁶ <http://corambaaf.org.uk/bookshop/Secure-Base-Model>

⁷ <http://www.uea.ac.uk/providingasecurebase/the-secure-base-model>

⁸ http://aimproject.org.uk/?page_id=141