

# Life Story Work

Potential Equality Fairness  
Health Opportunity Fun Confidence  
Relationships Home Happiness Trust  
Family Consistency Recognition Belonging Honesty  
Loyalty Love Commitment Hope Stability  
Care Lancashire Dreams  
Goals Together Permanence Service  
Ambition

# Reviewing Life Story Work



- Improving our understanding and delivery of Life Story work (and direct work) is a significant area of development across Lancashire, and across our services
- We haven't always got this right for our children and young people – we know this because they tell us this themselves, because our audits, self assessments tell us, Ofsted tells us, and, in particular, we can see the impact on our children and young people
- This is a significant problem because we need to get it right – we want to improve services and outcomes for our children and young people, and we want to get to 'good' and 'outstanding' with Ofsted
- We know that 'outstanding' authorities (Telford & Wrekin and Sunderland) approach direct work and Life Story work very differently – they weave it through all aspects of their practice and involvement with children and young people; it is built from relationships and is evident throughout recordings
- The impact on our children and young people of us 'not getting this right' is huge, and can be life long. When our children don't fully understand what has happened to them their whole identity can become confused and this can affect all areas of their lives; relationships, attachments, housing, education, health & well-being
- We need to start thinking differently about our approach to Life Story work, and our values, ethos and culture around this

# What is Life Story Work?



- Mapping out of the life journey of a child or young person, including significant events, relationships and achievements
- Link between past, present and future – understanding our past helps us to understand ourselves, and helps to develop a strong sense of identity
- For our Looked After children, Life Story Work is how we help them to process and make sense of their lives, families and decisions made
- Life Story Work can help a child to answer questions such as:
  - Who am I?
  - How did I get here?
  - Who are my networks of support?
  - Where am I going?
  - Identify strengths to help achieve future goals

# Core Elements of Life Story Work



- There are three core elements to Life Story Work:
- The creation of a 'story' or 'book' that has important information about family, relationships, achievements, events, memories, and facts about why the child became Looked After and what decisions were made
- Gathering significant or treasured objects and mementos
- On-going, regular, consistent direct work or conversations, sharing information about family, homes, changes, decision making, and future planning
- Life Story Work should be flexible, creative and bespoke to each individual child. Different information is needed at different times, this will evolve as the child grows and develops

# Revised Policy & Procedure



- The revised policy sets out how Life Story work should be approached for all, when it should be started, what should be included
- It emphasises the importance of building relationships with the child, carers, and family. Relationship based work is core to our social work values and to our strength based model, so the language of this policy reflects an ethos and culture of building relationships based upon empathy, respect, honesty and authenticity
- The language stresses the significance of Life Story work for our children and young people, and why this is important to them; helping Social Workers to find meaning in their work
- The focus is on the *process* rather than the *product* – meaningful conversations, purposeful and collaborative direct work, rather than focussing solely on completing the Life Story book
- The policy is clear that Life Story work is not a ‘one off’ event to be ‘ticked off’ but an ongoing process of trauma informed social work practice, aligning with our vision for Life Story work to be more natural and weaved through all areas of practice, as it is in ‘outstanding’ authorities
- There is an expectation that Life Story work will be evidenced in the identity section of the C&F assessment (or contained within the workbook), the child’s understanding of why they are looked after will be included in the case summary, visits will show that direct work is being completed regularly, and the care plan will clearly detail the plan for each child regarding their Life Story work and Life Story book

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# Question Time!



- Thinking about what Life Story Work means and the core elements, consider the following questions in your breakout rooms:
- **Q1:What do you think a non-Looked After child in a ‘typical’ home might need to understand their life story?**
- **Q2:What do you think our Looked After children and Care Experienced young people need to understand their life story?**
- As part of implementing the revised policy I am planning a launch event that aims to inspire and motivate the workforce; **what are your views and ideas for how we can achieve this?**
- You will have 10 minutes for the first question and 15 minutes for the second question and to discuss the launch event