
To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board

On: 20 May 2021

Report by: Director of Children's Services

Heading: The National Joint Investigative Interviewing (JII) Project

1. Summary

- 1.1. The National Joint Investigative Interviewing (JII) Project was established to develop a new approach to the joint investigative interviewing of children in Scotland. A Joint Investigative Interview is undertaken by a Police Officer and a Social Worker when it is suspected that a child has been subject to some form of abuse.
- 1.2. The aims of the new approach are to improve the quality of experience of child victims and witnesses, minimise re-traumatisation, and improve the quality of evidence gathered during joint investigative interviews to prevent the need for these children to have to give evidence in person as part of court processes.
- 1.3. This new approach is called the Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM). The development of the SCIM for joint investigative interviewing forms part of the response to recommendations within the Evidence and Procedure Review, Scottish Court Service, 2015.
- 1.4. The Evidence and Procedure Review- Next Steps report, published early in 2016, set out the findings from further consideration undertaken by Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) in relation to obtaining best evidence from child and vulnerable witnesses. Following publication of this report, the Justice Board commissioned the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service to lead further work to develop the recommended systematic approach to capturing and presenting evidence in pre-recorded form.
- 1.5. Since 2017, Police Scotland and Social Work Scotland have been leading on work (alongside other agencies) to improve the quality and process for joint investigative interviews with children considering the recommendations of the Evidence and Procedure Review Joint Investigative Interviews Work Stream. Fundamental to that work has been the development of the SCIM.

- 1.6. The National (JII) Project Team was established to develop a new model of practice for Scotland and a pilot phase began in 2019, involving six local authorities and three police divisions. Two further pilot sites commenced in 2020/2021 involving another two local authorities. The first pilots are now live in practice with the two final pilot sites expected to go live later this year.
 - 1.7. Renfrewshire Council is participating in the North Strathclyde Pilot. The North Strathclyde Partnership is: four Local Authorities (East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, Renfrewshire), two Police Divisions (G Division for East Dunbartonshire and East Renfrewshire and K Division for Inverclyde and Renfrewshire), one Health Board (NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde), one SCRA Locality (North Strathclyde), four Sheriff Courts (Paisley, Glasgow, Dunbartonshire and Greenock).
 - 1.8. The charity Children 1st is our partner in this endeavour and together the aim is to provide a truly child centred trauma responsive approach. A fundamental principle of the partnership is for recovery that is trauma informed to be built into the process from the point of disclosure for children. Children 1st will provide recovery support to the child and their family.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Elected members are asked to:
 - a) Note Renfrewshire's involvement in the North Strathclyde Pilot
 - b) Note that a further report will be brought back to Board once the pilot has concluded to members on implications for policy and practice in Renfrewshire.
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3. Background

- 3.1. Joint Investigative Interviewing is an approach unique to Scotland, combining the knowledge and skills of police officers and social workers to enable children to recount abuse they may have experienced. These interviews typically take place when a Child Protection Investigation is being undertaken however, they can sometimes also be used when a child has witnessed a violent crime or another serious incident.
- 3.2. In March 2015 The Evidence and Procedure Review (2015) was published. The review concluded that "consideration is urgently given to the development of a new, structured scheme that treats child and vulnerable witnesses in an entirely different way, away from the court setting altogether." and "There must be sufficient investment in the quality of interviewing, questioning, and examination applying the highest international standards and requiring appropriate training and qualification"
- 3.3. Following on from the initial report, the Evidence and Procedure Review Next Steps Report (2016) was published. It emphasised the importance of ensuring that interviews of child witnesses are of a consistently high standard. The report stated that good practice existed across Scotland, however the view was held that different approaches were in place and that significant improvements could be made.

- 3.4. The Report recommended that pre-recorded evidence should be used at trial, removing any need for children and vulnerable adult witnesses to attend Court. The Next Steps Report commissioned the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service to lead further work and two work-streams were established;
- i) The pre-recording of further evidence
 - ii) The visual recording of Evidence in Chief – the Joint Investigative Interviews work-stream group.
- 3.5. The report recognised that approaches to who was trained, provision of refresher training and whether evaluations of interview practice were undertaken varied across the country and this needed to be addressed. The report made 33 recommendations to improve the quality of Joint Investigative Interviews. One of the recommendations was to ensure the training for interviewers reflects the highly specialist skills that are required for this task: The training programme for Joint Investigative Interviewers should be developed and extended to enable more in depth training of interviewers, recognising the *degree of specialist skill required to secure best evidence*.
- 3.6. This resulted in the development of the Scottish Child Interview Model. This new approach to joint investigative interviewing is aimed at providing a higher quality of forensic interview that ensures best evidence for court and for civil proceedings such as children's hearings and local child protection services. The ultimate outcome is to keep children safe and ensure that they have the right to justice. the new model for JII is a new model of practice, requiring system change. It is not solely the improved training of interviewers.
- 3.7. In developing this new approach, care has been taken to ensure that practice within the new model of JII is trauma informed. Interviewers are provided with the knowledge and skills to consider the impact of children's experiences upon their ability to participate in the interview and to actively plan for how the needs of each individual child will be met throughout the interview process. Critically, the new model has been purposefully designed to minimise re-traumatisation of children.
- 3.8. The first cohorts of Social Workers and Police Officers were trained in the Scottish Child Interview Model in late 2019 and early 2020. This is a modular based course, which requires participants to pass each module before they can move onto the next. The course has 5 modules and is much more in-depth than previous JII training, all aimed at improving the protection of vulnerable children.
- 3.9. In 2019, Renfrewshire Council worked in partnership with several local authority areas and Police Scotland to develop a bid to be a pilot area as part of the National JII project. The application was successful and the North Strathclyde Pilot was established and the partnership is as follows: Renfrewshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, two Police Divisions (G Division for East Dunbartonshire and East Renfrewshire and K Division for Inverclyde and Renfrewshire), one Health Board (NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde), one SCRA Locality (North Strathclyde), four Sheriff Courts (Paisley, Glasgow, Dunbartonshire and Greenock) and a third sector partner in national charity Children 1st.

- 3.10. The North Strathclyde Pilot consists of a specialist Joint Investigative Interview Cadre. Each Local Authority has seconded one Children and Families Social Worker to the Cadre and each Police Division has seconded 2 Public Protection officers. Children 1st provide post interview counselling for children and their families. The Police officers and Social Workers in the Cadre have been trained in the new Scottish Child Interview Model and are co-located in Osprey House, a Police office in Renfrewshire. The Cadre share responsibility for interviewing children from the 4 Local Authority areas instead of the Renfrewshire secondee interviewing Renfrewshire children only.
- 3.11. A Strategic Oversight Group chaired by Renfrewshire's Chief Social Work Officer oversees the progress of the pilot and has representatives from COSLA, SCRA, Scottish Government and all of the partners involved in the pilot. In addition, there is an operational group which monitors the day to day work of the Cadre.
- 3.12. It is hoped that by bringing together a specialist JII Cadre (Police & Social Work) and Children 1st, this will ensure;
- i) The JII cadre have advanced knowledge, skills and competencies and the required experience of forensic interviews that produce best quality evidence and ensure the protection of the child;
 - ii) This partnership develops a best practice model based on shared resources, learning and will provide risk sharing arrangements across authorities that ensure that the quality of the interventions are not compromised;
 - iii) We are consistent in improving the experiences for children and their families who are subject to Joint Investigative Interviews; and
 - iv) The fundamental principle of recovery, that is, trauma informed practice, is to be built into the process from the point of disclosure for children.
- 3.13. The progress of our pilot is being monitored closely by the National JII team and the learning will be used to inform the future direction of how children and vulnerable adult witnesses are delivered in the long term across Scotland.
- 3.14. Renfrewshire's involvement in the Pilot has been met from current resources. Contact has been established with the Scottish Government to discuss the ongoing funding to allow the continuation of the pilot in the longer term as additional resources will be required to make it sustainable.

Implications of this report

1. **Financial**
None.
2. **HR and Organisational Development**
None.
3. **Community/Council Planning**

Our Renfrewshire is thriving - *enter details/ delete if not appropriate*

Our Renfrewshire is well	- <i>enter details/ delete if not appropriate</i>
Our Renfrewshire is fair	- <i>enter details/ delete if not appropriate</i>
Our Renfrewshire is safe	- <i>enter details/ delete if not appropriate</i>
Reshaping our place, our economy and our future	- <i>enter details/ delete if not appropriate</i>
Building strong, safe and resilient communities	- <i>enter details/ delete if not appropriate</i>
Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunities for all	- <i>enter details/ delete if not appropriate</i>
Creating a sustainable Renfrewshire for all to enjoy	- <i>enter details/ delete if not appropriate</i>
Working together to improve outcomes	- <i>enter details/ delete if not appropriate</i>

4. Legal
None.

5. Property/Assets
None.

6. Information Technology
None.

7. Equality and Human Rights
The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations.

8. Health and Safety
None.

9. Procurement
None.

10. Risk
None.

11. Privacy Impact
None.

12. Cosla Policy Position
None.

13. Climate Risk
None.

Children's Services

MMcC/JT

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