

Bradford Webinar

Sharmeen Ziauddin:

Good afternoon, and welcome to the Community Care webinar called *Learn How to Use Relationship-based Practice*. This webinar is in collaboration with Bradford Children and Families Trust. Thank you to everyone who's joined today. We're delighted that over 600 of you have registered for today's webinar.

My name's Sharmeen Ziauddin. I'm the assistant careers editor here at Community Care. So joining us for today's webinar are Traci Taylor, who is a principal social worker at Bradford Children and Families Trust. She's been in this role for almost five years but has worked in Children's Services in Bradford since the age of nineteen. She's also the service manager for the Workforce Learning and Quality Assurance Service.

And joining her is Andy Lloyd, who's the Strengthening Families Supporting Children practice lead. He's also a qualified social worker who's had a long and varied career. Twelve years ago he took up the post of head of children's workforce development and change. Andy works closely with Bradford Children and Families Trust as an independent consultant.

Social work is based on relationships, and today's webinar will delve a bit deeper into how relational-based practice can be embedded into how you support children, adults and families. You'll have the opportunity to ask questions, so if you would like to ask Andy or Traci anything related to what they say then please feel free to put it in the Q&A box at the bottom of the screen. The questions will be selected and I'll ask our speakers when they've finished their talks. If you want to ask a question anonymously then just add 'anon' at the end of it and I won't read your name out.

If you're having any technical difficulties then try closing any application windows that may be open and make sure the volume is up. If your screen freezes then try refreshing the page. If that fails then exit the page and come back. To enlarge the screen, hover over the bottom left-hand corner where you can access the volume control as well as a small square, which will make this window full-screen. This presentation will be available on Community Care on the website later on in the week in case you want to rewatch or share it with colleagues; you'll be able to do that.

So back to relationships. Andy, it's over to you, if you're ready to start.
[0:02:25.6]

Andy Lloyd:

Thanks very much indeed and good afternoon everybody. It's nice to be here. Thank you for spending your lunchtime with us. I hope you've got at least a cup of tea and maybe even a cheese sandwich.

What I'm going to do for a little while now is just to explore the importance of relationships in social work and the importance of relationships as we're working with children and their families.

Working under the subtitle of *It's all about relationships*. And when wasn't social work about relationships? But it's good to be reminded of that, and reminded of the centrality of that relationship, the interpersonal relationship between you as a social worker and the families, the children, the adults that you're working with. So hopefully we can move through this and do as Sharmeen's just said, do ask any questions in the chat and Traci and I will be delighted to come back to those later.

Just as a starting point, we wanted just to explore the values that we work with within Bradford under the INSPIRE banner. Again, this is a fairly straightforward slide. I'm not going to take a great deal of time looking at it. But just to remind ourselves again that social work is a value-led profession, and for all of you, hopefully all of you managed to get your re-registration documents in and you've all had the email hopefully back saying that you've been re-registered. I got mine very happily on Friday morning saying that I'll be registered for the next twelve months. But part of that was that you signed up to the values set out by Social Work England. And it's really important that we never lose sight of the fact that social work is a value-led profession.

So we work with these various sections. Integrity, being open and honest. Nurturing. We'll never give up on children and young people. And it's just worth reminding, isn't it, that the concept of...there's got to be somebody who's crazy about the child, each child, they'll never give up on the children that we're working with, on the children and young people that we're working with. Creating a place of safety and a safe environment for children and young people to work. But being proud of the work that we do and the people that we serve. It's good to be proud of what we do. It's good to be proud that we're a social worker. I'm a social worker of quite longstanding and I'm very proud of my career, I'm very proud of being a social worker. And although it's a really hard job – it's a really tough one that requires lots of skill and integrity and all the rest of it – actually I'm really proud of being a social worker, and I think it's good to be proud in our career. We're also proud of the people that we serve, the communities that we serve who need us to work with them to support them as they improve the quality of their life and the quality of lives of their children. Inclusiveness – really, really important. West Yorkshire, Bradford is a very, very diverse, culturally diverse population, and that's a very, very important part of our overall working values. We'll celebrate and embrace difference. And again that's just something that is a core social work value and should be a core social work value, but it's important to remind ourselves of that. We'll act with respect, we'll act with kindness. We don't talk probably enough about kindness as a concept. I'm personally a great fan of it. I think that there's great merit in reminding ourselves to be kind – kind to ourselves, kind to our colleagues and kind to the families, the children, the adults that we work with, and that we'll aspire to excellence throughout our ambitions. And why wouldn't we? Why wouldn't we say we really want to be ambitious, but we really want to seek excellence and seek the best we possibly can, the best outcomes for children and families. Because ultimately, whatever else we're involved with in this work, whatever else we're doing in this work, the only game in town really

is: are we improving the lives of children and their families? Can we aspire to excellence in that way?

So the INSPIRE tag is a nice little way of remembering that, but Integrity, Nurture, Safety, Pride, Inclusive, Respectful, Excellence are those concepts that drive our values.

Okay. And there we have a bold ambition based on those clear values that we want all children in Bradford to be safe and able to realise their full potential. We really want them to be people that really aspire but also realise their full potential, whatever that full potential might be, whatever we mean in terms of potential. We want to be there working alongside folk to ensure that children and young people realise that potential. Okay.

Now, we work in a complex system, and there's no point pretending otherwise. Irrespective of what your employer is, who your employer is, unless you are, I guess, you work for yourself, but for most of us we work in a complex system. We work in a system which has lots and lots of moving parts. Local authorities have lots of moving parts with lots and lots of different places to whom and where we have to be accountable. So there'll be systems throughout the organisation that we work for. And that's really important. There's no point in pretending that we don't have a complex system to work in. There's no point, that we can pretend that we just work in isolation. And of course, it's not just internally if you work in a local authority, for instance. It's not just the internal directorate system. It's the wider council system, it's the politicians, it's the partners from health, from the police, from education, from the third sector, from the faith sector. All of those people – I'm sure I'm missed out a sector; forgive me – but all of those people are all working together to ensure that we achieve our ambition that I just talked about, that children and young people should realise their full potential.

So we work in a complex system. If you work for the third sector, similarly. If you work in the private sector, similarly they're a big, complex system that we work in.

And I want just to look at this slide for a moment and explore that. We start with our agreed values, and I make no apology for reiterating the importance of values in our work. And we need to be talking about our values. We need to talk in our teams, with our colleagues, and with the people that we work about our values. Do we know why we do the work we do? Do you know why you do the work you do? What is it that drives you in that work? What is it that interests you in that work? What is it that makes you get up in the morning? Where I am it's rainy, it's a bit snowy, it's very cold outside today. What makes us get up and go into work and do the complex work we do? It's the values that drive us. It's the values that lead us. It's the values that motivate us. So everything starts with values.

And what I want to argue now is that we then get into the idea of restorative and relational working, and we start with learning. And so what you're doing today, what you're doing in this webinar for the next 50 minutes or so, is learning, is taking our profession seriously and our CPD seriously, and understanding that we have to constantly be

in a learning setting. So we need to learn and we want to learn and talk about today restorative and relational learning. What does that mean? What does it look like? How do we adapt it to our work?

But once we've learnt about it, if we've just got it in our head and it's interesting and we're fascinated by it and we've read some stuff and we don't do anything about it, then that's not going to help. That's not going to change the lives of children and families, coming back to that core value, ensuring that young people realise their potential.

So we move onto practice. We do it. We work with families. We work relationally and restoratively with families and we commit to doing that. We also work restoratively and relationally with our colleagues and with our partner agencies. So this isn't just something that is linear around a social worker and a family or a young person. This is right the way through everything that we do. Which is why I talk about restorative relational practice not as a model but as a way of being, a place where we do with all the time, we work with all the time. And I'll come back to that concept of *with* in a moment.

But this isn't something that you can put on and take off like your coat. You are either going to be working restoratively and relationally, you can describe yourself in that way, or you're not. You can't sort of half do it. And that's a really important part of what I want to say today.

So we get into the practice. And the concept as we go through the slides are very straightforward. The practice takes a long time to work on and get right. So I suppose that the important thing there is begin. Begin to do it. If you get it wrong, just acknowledge you've gone wrong and do it again. Don't give up on it. It's just one of those things that we have to work with, and we have to work with in a generous and forgiving way. But let's make sure that we carry on with it.

And once we've done that we can start thinking about the systems, start thinking about our forms, start thinking about the way that we write to people, the way that we write our notes on a visit, where we write our notes on a visit, the way that we think about the whole of the system which is the complex world that we live in. Making sure that that is restorative and relational is really very important. So we need to think about our words, our language, our posters, our letters, our forms. Are they all being changed into a restorative and relational language and setting?

If we do all that, my argument is that we get the best outcomes for children and families because we're moving from understanding and learning and restorative and relational working right the way through practice into systems, and we've revolutionised the complex system that we're in. Now that sounds terribly wonderful and it is. But it takes a lot of hard work, it takes a lot of commitment, it takes a lot of deliberate, intentional behaviour, and that's something that we need to buy into. Not because it makes me feel better but because it's the best outcomes for children and families, and we go back to our values again. And so that's the little...and if those cogs move they'll just show a bit of a dynamic which is around the fact that we're a machine, we're a complex system that we need to get right. Okay.

Now, had we been in a room and had there not been a number of hundred of us on the call today we would have had a check-in. And a check-in is a very simple way of making sure that we include everybody. It's a fundamental part of working relationally and restoratively. Check-ins and circles are important.

So I would never chair a meeting without having a check-in. I haven't done this one because, as I say, we've got too many people, but were we in a room we'd have gone off into groups and done this.

So maybe the check-in would be, 'What's your favourite sort of holiday? Do you like to go on a beach holiday, a mountain holiday or a city holiday?' Now, I'll just leave that and you can answer that to yourself at the moment because it's begun to snow again where I am. I think I'd like to be somewhere sunny, so probably a beach holiday. But it doesn't really matter. You have a think about that as I carry on talking.

But the check-in has a purpose. And the biggest purpose of a check-in is twofold. One is (it says up there) everyone has a voice. Everyone has heard their voice out loud in the room. And that's really important, particularly where you have a power dynamic. And understanding power dynamics is very basic social work theory, isn't it? But understanding that there is a power dynamic in our meetings, there is a power dynamic in the room, is important to recognise and do something about. Because if we don't ensure that everybody in the room feels able to speak and feels able to contribute, then we won't get the best out of that meeting. Even if it's a meeting of professionals. I mean, maybe even especially if it's a meeting of professionals.

So we might have some student social workers on the line. Congratulations, by the way. You're training to join the best profession that there is. We might have some ASYEs on the line. Congratulations, you've joined the best profession there is and you're in your early career years. You might have people online who have been social workers for decades, whatever it is. But whenever you're in a meeting, we will have a power dynamic. You might have a head of service, a service manager, a team manager and then somebody who is early in their career, maybe an ASYE social worker.

Now, it's probable that the ASYE social worker in some contexts will know more about the family than anybody else. But if we are not mindful of the power dynamic, that person may not feel able to speak out loud as easily as the person who has been around for a long time and maybe holds a senior position in the organisation.

Now, you might be thinking to yourself, 'Well I'll speak at any meeting,' and that's great. But what my experience is, and what experience of those of us that work in this way is, that we need to make sure that everybody in the room has heard their voice out loud and therefore feel confident to contribute to the overall conversation, especially again if we have families, if this is a conference, if this is a meeting, if this is a gathering where there are families, where there are young people in the room. We really, really need to hear their voice – their authentic voice, not a sort of voice that is being spoken

out of fear or anxiety, but an authentic voice that speaks and is able to say what they really think. And one of the ways we can help with that is to use check-ins and sit in a circle.

Just on the right-hand side of the slide there's a couple of other things there. Use of talking pieces. If it's a meeting where lots of people might want to talk at once, perhaps talk over each other, you could have a talking piece. It doesn't matter – it can be a pen, it can be a toy, it can be a stress ball, it can be whatever it wants to be. If you're holding the talking piece you can talk; if you're not holding the talking piece you have to be quiet. So that's quite straightforward.

I just changed the slide at the wrong point there. Eye contact. If you sit in a circle, eye contact is easier. Getting rid of tables is a really, really good way of making sure that there is a good level of eye contact. We're not all hiding behind a computer screen. Okay.

And there's a lovely little glitch on my slide there. I do apologise for it. I don't mean you need to be mindful of 'power relations hips', but I mean 'relationships' there. So power relationships, and I've talked about that. Be mindful of power relationships.

So, really, really important concept with restorative relational practice is the use of circles.

And then we move into this. You may well have seen this or something similar to it. It's sometimes called the 'social discipline window', but I like to refer to it as the 'four ways of being'. The four ways of being – to, with, not or for.

Very straightforwardly, up and down you have challenge. Sometimes that's changed for expectation, but it's certainly that idea of...I will leave it at challenge for the moment. And then along the bottom we have support. And there are four quadrants there, four boxes, and I'll just do something very simply about each of them.

If you are working in a very high-challenge, low-support environment, it's really hard...it's a really hard place to be. Now, things get done when you're working in a high-challenge, low-support environment, but they don't get done necessarily very well. And people feel quite unhappy in their work. People feel that maybe they're being shouted at a bit too much or spoken badly a bit too much. Or spoken to in a way which doesn't maximise their efficiency and their ability to do the job.

Telling somebody to do something but not helping them understand how to is not always a terrifically helpful way of doing it. I'm not very good at DIY. I'm not really permitted to use power drills because I cause more damage than I do any good. But if somebody said to me, just threw some wood at me and a drill and said, 'Put a shelf up,' I would put a shelf up because I would be scared not to. There's an expectation, a challenge there, 'Put a shelf up, I want it up by five o'clock,' so I'd go and put a shelf up. But if no one shows me how to, if no one supports me and encourages me in that work, then probably the shelf will be no good. It will certainly be wonky and it might even fall down.

Now that's a silly example but it's an example which tries to illustrate that idea of the high-challenge, low-support environment we would refer to as working in the 'to' box and can end up with the work being done but not to a great standard.

Now, let me be really clear that there are times where we need to work in the 'to' box and we need to get things done really quickly. But afterwards we need to talk about why did we move into the 'to' box there and what were the outcomes of all that.

Now, if you go down to the bottom right-hand corner we have a lot of support but no challenge. If I'm honest, this is where I default to. I tend to be a person who will say, 'If you can't do it, don't worry. Leave it with me and I'll have a go at it later.' Now, the difficulty with that is twofold. One is if you are a manager who manages in the 'for' box, you will be exhausted. You will come into work this morning exhausted because you'll have been doing your own work all weekend and in the evenings because during the day you do everybody else's work. Now, that's not a great place to be and that's something that you need to talk about with your supervisor, your manager, and try to rectify that.

But actually, if I'm being managed by somebody who is in the 'for' box, that means that I never really develop my career. If I was to say, 'I don't feel terribly confident and comfortable about going into court,' so every time there's a case which is within the court systems, whether that be in the criminal or the civil courts, somebody else says, 'Oh don't worry, I'll do it,' I will never move past that inability to work in a legislative setting, which is part of what we do as social workers.

So the challenge has to be there. The support has to be there as well, but there has to be some challenge. So working in the 'for' box can be really deskilling, it can be really stultifying and actually people either become lazy or they move on and do something in a different team because they want to develop their career.

If we live in the 'not' box you're neither supportive nor challenging. Now, there can be a time where you just hold your piece, but it's a fairly rare event to be working in the 'not' box.

And so I come to the 'with' box, working with, and I've already emphasised that word, that notion of working with. Working with is a high-challenge, high-support environment. It's a place where the support is in place for you to do an outstanding job. The support is in place and the tools are in place for you to do a really good piece of work with a child, with their family, with whoever. The challenge is, 'Go and do an outstanding piece of work.' The expectation is that you will do a really good piece of work.

So you have been equipped, you've been supported, you've been encouraged, you might have had some training, you might have had some one-to-one stuff, you might have talked through it with a colleague in supervision or whatever. But the challenge is, 'Go and do it. Go and do it, and go and do it well.'

And when we're working with families, it's a similar thing. We can't just shout at families and say, 'Be better at this. Stop doing it like that,' without there being support. Nor can we say, 'Don't worry that you're struggling with that. I'll do it all for you. I'll come at half past six tomorrow morning and make sure the kids are up and breakfasted and out for school with their uniform and their sports bag packed.' That's not social work.

Working with is that element and that mixture of high support and high challenge. The expectations are high that the children in your area are living to the best that they can, are achieving the best that they can. So the challenge is there but the support is that we will work with you and we will signpost you or encourage you or help you think through how you're going to do that.

Maybe there's lots of questions about that. Do bung them in the chat and we'll talk about them later.

Okay. So, we now move into my final slide before my colleague, Traci, comes online to talk about what she wants to discuss.

What I want to suggest here is that if we want to work in the 'with' box - so just going back to this slide for a moment - and if we want to work in that top right-hand section, work in the 'with' box, we need, in my judgement, three things. We need values, we need courage, and we need permissions. And if you get a mixture of all those, and if you get that mixture right, what you have is that neat coming together of working in the 'with' box.

Now, I've talked a lot about values and I don't make any particular apologies for that because they're so, so important. It's really important that you can sit down over a cup of tea and tell your colleagues why you do the work you do. Nobody really continues in the career in social work just because they can't think of anything else to do. It's too hard. It's too challenging, it's too complex to do that. So something drives you to do the work that you do. Something drives you to be the person that you are. Something drives you to work as a family support worker, as an early years officer, as a social worker, as a youth justice officer. Whatever it is. Something drives you into this work. And they're your values. Know what they are, and they help you just clarify things.

What about courage? We need courage in a number of different ways, and we don't talk about professional fear, in my judgement, as much as we should do. Certainly in my career I've come across some quite scary people. And it's important to acknowledge that sometimes we feel fearful, we feel anxious about the work that we're doing or the visit that we're going on or the conversation we have to have. That doesn't mean that we have to not do those things; we have to. But we have to do them knowing that we have the system support behind us. And just again to go back to this slide, we have the support in place as well as the challenge. The challenge might be, 'Go and visit that family.' The support is whatever it is that the team are going to put around you and wrap around you to ensure that you feel able to do that and working in the 'with' box.

But courage also, and courageous social work is a whole new webinar, so we won't be doing that today, but the whole idea of courageous social work, of thinking courageously about how we work with children and families, thinking courageously about how we do that visit, how we have that conversation, even how we do that court report or whatever it is, or the meeting, the conference that we need to be part of.

But courage as well is about how we communicate with each other. We mustn't pretend that we don't have to have courageous conversations with our managers, with peers across...in other parts of the system. So we need to talk much more about courageous working in the children and families arena. And that's something that is well worth having a conversation about in your teams or with your colleagues, just to have a thinking about, 'What does courage mean in your setting?'

And then finally we think about permissions. Think about, 'What are you permitted to do? What are you allowed to do without having to refer back to your manager for permission?' Now, we are in days of, almost all of us, I would suggest – I was going to say all of us; maybe there are some exceptions – where money is tight. Money is tight and budgets are being cut and it's not easy to find that way of getting through the system. But what if you need to take a child out for a cup of tea? Do you need to go back to base to check that or do you have permission to spend £3.50 on a couple of cups of tea? Now, that's a silly example in one sense but this is just an illustration of what permissions do you have. What permissions do you have to work with a family in a particular way, do things which are courageous? How many permissions do you know you have, and is that explicit? And again, having that conversation about permissions is something which really allows us to get into the value-driven and value-led work that I've been proposing that we should be moving into and being part of in our career with children and families.

Now, if you have values and courage but no permissions, we know what we should do. We're brave enough to do it but we're not allowed to. What will happen? We'll go somewhere else. We'll go and get a job where we are allowed to do it.

If we have values and permissions but no courage, we know what we should do, we're allowed to do it but we just don't feel brave enough to. Those are conversations for supervision. There's a conversation for, 'Let's sit and talk this one through. What will help you get to a place where you can do it?'

Most dangerously, in my judgement, is if you have courage and permissions but no values. You're brave enough to do it, you're allowed to do it, but the reasons you're doing it aren't clear. The reasons that you're doing it aren't sound because your values aren't sound. And in that place we can get into really dangerous work and poor work, and work which doesn't do the best for children and families that we're working with.

Okay. So, just once more let me show you that. What we're aiming to do here in a 'working with' environment, working relationally and

restoratively is being as far as we can into that top right-hand corner, that dark blue box, the high-challenge, high-support environment. If we do that and we remember values, permissions and courage, then we can be best placed to work relationally and restoratively.

Now, I'm going to finish now. I'm going to hand you on to Traci, and I'll be back at the end with Traci to have a think about any questions that have come through. Thanks very much indeed for listening.
[0:35:37.0]

Traci Taylor:

Apologies. My slides seem to be playing up slightly. So, thank you very much, Andy. It's always really inspirational when I hear Andy speak. I've been really lucky enough to hear Andy a number of times talk about relationship-based practice, restorative practice and what that means. Andy's doing a lot of work in Bradford currently. And when I first started to think about this, I thought, 'Actually, this is really easy, isn't it? Social work's all about relationships. It's what we've been trained for.' And so you'd think that actually it's second nature. But Andy's right. This takes a lot of really hard work. We have to really think through our whole processes at work, what that looks like for families.

So in my role of principal social worker I've been doing a lot of work around our practice and what does this mean, and I just want to talk about some of that and how it looks in Bradford.

So obviously we're on the start of a journey. And it is a whole-service approach. And again, I'm going to touch on things that Andy has already spoken about, but what I am going to do is put some context to it in terms of how we are addressing that in Bradford.

So in terms of the whole-service approach, it means that absolutely everybody across the whole department, no matter what role everybody is in, everyone needs to understand about how relationships work. So Andy has already done quite a lot of work with the management structure, the leaders, and it's about our ability to disseminate that information, but not just disseminate information but to become that person who is very relational and very restorative. So that's in terms of how managers interact with other people within the organisation. And one of the things that Andy is going to do, and showing that commitment for the organisation, is that everybody in the department will have the opportunity to do some sessional work with Andy around, 'What does that actually mean? And what does that mean in practice with each other?'

So when looking at that, it's about how leaders interact with other people and with each other. It's about how we talk to each other and involve each other as colleagues. And then that is how we respond to our families and to our children. And they're our focus, aren't they? But obviously we all come into work and want to do a hard job well, but also be in an environment where we feel safe, where we feel valued, where we feel that we're able to make suggestions, where if we make any mistakes that we are able to learn from that rather than it being very punitive. And how we want to model how we are is so that that's the experience that our families and children get also.

So coming down to the next section, it's about that shared vision, so we all understand exactly what we're being asked to do. So in terms of the whole-system approach, I sit in the head of service group meeting every week and we have adopted, as Andy said, the circles. So we don't have tables. Real change for us. We used to sit in there with laptops. But actually, they're quite a barrier, you know, they're barrier-forming. So we sit in circles, we do a check-in. And what I've noticed over the past few months is those relationships within that management meeting have really strengthened. So obviously we've a lot of business to get through but there are ways that you can talk about that and we've really changed that focus. And actually, it feels that we achieve more out of those meetings.

And I think that there is a little bit around about, 'Well actually, if you slow things down and you're doing relationship and restorative, how does business get done?' And it's in terms of those words that we use. So we're trying to change how we discuss families and children, how we discuss what we do with each other. But I have been really interested in how those relationships have developed. And what we've started to do more recently is think about, 'What is it like to be a child or family in Bradford receiving support services from ourselves? What does that feel like?' And we've looked at that at different levels. And for example, last week we looked at, 'What's it like to be a child or a family that are experiencing our child protection process?' And actually, what we agreed was that it's punitive, it's a process, and that there's no relationship. Or it's a struggle to see how relationship and restorative practice fits into that. And we really unpicked that and had a look at how our processes can actually drive our practice. And it's very quick to fall into that. Because we, as a profession – and I agree with Andy it's the best profession ever – but as a profession we're really highly monitored, aren't we? And rightly so. We should be accountable for the things that we do. But actually, what that has done is it's pushed us into a way where if we're not careful and we don't put the brakes on, that very, very quickly process can drive how we work with families. So for example, a child and a family come through early help. Does work in the timescale that we think it should work. So then we go into child-in-need. Again, the family hasn't done what we expected them to do. And you can see how that then quickly moves into child protection etc. etc.

So what we have looked at is how we slow that process down, and that started with ourselves, that we slow our thinking down and that we have started to look at, 'Well, how do we stop our practice being very process-driven?' One of the things that I've been doing with other people is to really look at our language. And as a trust, we've started to go back through the journey of doing the simple things really, really well for our children and families. And as part of that, I send information out, little bite-sized learning, every week on a specific topic. And my first topic for last month was case recording. And that really made me think about the work that I'd been doing with Andy, and the language that we use. And when did we start referring to children as 'cases'? And it's something we all do. It's part of our everyday language. But one of the things that I've been really keen, along with other people in the organisation (I'm certainly not going to take the glory for that) is that we're looking at how we really embed

that change of language. So I've changed practice guidance so that we don't refer to 'care recording', we refer to 'children's recording'. 'Case summaries', 'children's summaries'. And really changing the focus of the language that we've got. Because what I was reflecting on following the discussion with the leaders last week about how our processes can really drive things was, our use of language really alienates children and families, that we have dehumanised in some way because of the words and the language that were used.

So thinking about the social disciplines window that Andy has shown, we do things to people because that's how our processes lead us. So we really have to think about how we pull that back and work with families in a different way. And the use of language is really, really important in that because I think we have...every profession has its own jargon, and we'll often say...certainly when I was training or when I've been a practice educator it's about not using jargon. But we do, because it's language that we understand. But it's not a language that our families understand.

So some of the examples in Bradford about what we're trying to do to work with families, thinking about that box again, about working with families, is that we don't use our acronyms and our jargon, and we think very carefully about how we explain things to families. So for an example, if you're going out to visit a family we often say, 'Right, my job is to do an assessment to work out what you need.' Well, do families know what assessment is? What does that actually mean? So it's about sitting down and really thinking about how we come across and how we talk to families, and how we explain exactly what we're going to do. I think sometimes we forget it's an absolute privilege to be a social worker, to go into people's houses and work with people. And we sometimes need – all of us, no matter how long we've been doing this – need reminding of that.

So it's about going into people's houses being really open, transparent, respectful. And seeing families as the experts in their own lives. And we do have a very difficult job because we have to balance up risks to children and make sure that children are safe. But we can do that in a really respectful, open and transparent way. And whether there are risks in a family or not, and whether it's more around support, the family is still the expert and we should be asking, 'What can we do to help you? What support do you need from us?' and opening the conversation that way. It's for us to build a trusting relationship or an open relationship. I think sometimes we put the onus on families to work with us. So we can often see – and I'm sure this resonates – I've certainly written it as a social worker in the past so I'm not saying that I've never done this, saying, 'Failed to engage' or 'failed to protect'. And actually, one of the things that we're really clear about in Bradford is that we don't use those phrases. Yes, they might slip through every so often but it's just a gentle reminder, we don't use 'failed to engage'. It's not for the family to engage with us. If families don't feel that they can work with us, we need to think about what is that barrier, what is that challenge, and how do we break that down and think about ourselves as the resource to do that.

And that comes back to the next step, which is about that language that cares. And I've already touched on some of that. So in Bradford

what that looks like in practice is that we're reviewing all of our documentation. It's not going to happen overnight because actually, when we've started to look through our processes, our documentation, there is lots of language in there that's not family-friendly or child-friendly. But we're making a start, and that's what's the most important thing, that we've recognised it and that we're taking steps to do something about it.

Now, some of our forms – and I don't know if everybody on this call will work in Liquid Logic but that's what we use in Bradford – and so some of those forms are going to take time to change, but there's other things that are easy for us to change, like our own practice guidance. And that's something that we're working through to make sure that we're referring to 'children' not 'cases', that we're making sure that we have removed things that are victim-blaming, already have a negative connotation. And that's where the restorative part comes to mind, repairing that harm. Because we've already got language that's quite harmful.

And all that coming together really refocuses our attention on the child being central through the language that we use. So as I say, children are not cases, or we are trying not to refer to 'siblings' in reports but saying 'brothers and sisters'. We are not putting 'mother and father', we're putting people by name. All those things make sure that we're working in a very human way and that the child is central in our thinking.

And I think one of the things that me and Andy wanted to get across today is absolutely don't underestimate the power of relationships. Relationships are what effect change with families. Families are more likely to make the changes that they and we identify together if they feel trusted, supported, if they have a voice, if they feel listened to, rather than us being really punitive and having a stick and saying, 'If you don't do this we are going to do that.' That's not an effective way to make lasting change. So don't underestimate the power of relationships.

I really liked this quote: "Relationships are like a plant. They need effort and attention to grow and flourish." And I just wanted you to take that away, that this is not going to be a change overnight but this is something that needs working on, it needs that effort and attention. So please just remember that.

And that is the end of my presentation. Thank you ever so much for listening. And now we're moving into questions. [0:50:55.4]

Sharmeen Ziauddin:

Thank you, Traci. Traci, oh, there you are. You disappeared for a minute. There you are, Andy. We can see you. Very small in the corner there. So thank you, both of you. Traci, there were lots of practical tips in there, especially the one about jargon. That's such a big issue or, you know, thing that lots of people come across. Difficult to not use jargon. And Andy, I really liked what you said about relational and restorative practice not being a practice model but actually part of your being, a way of being. So that's a really nice thing that I think I'll take away.

So we've got a few questions. I will start with Alan Wood, who's asking, 'Do you know if relationship-based practice is integrated into social work qualification training? It's essential that the new wave of qualified social workers have this embedded into training and practice.' Do you want to respond to that? Andy or Traci? [0:52:02.0]

Andy Lloyd:

Traci? Or...you take it first, Traci.

Traci Taylor:

Yeah, so what I would say is I couldn't confidently say that it's embedded in all social work training, but I would hope to say that it was or it's starting to be. Because as I say, when we think about social work we think about relationships. What I would want to see is that that's not just a word that's used in training but there's actual practical discussions about how that looks. Certainly in Bradford we do some work with the university and the college so that they understand what our working ethos is. And Andy's quite closely linked with the university now so we'd want Andy to be involved in that. Because what we want to do is have people who are trained and understand how we want to work in Bradford so that when they're students it's not a new concept to them. [0:53:02.2]

Andy Lloyd:

And I would say very similar – thanks, Alan, for the question – I absolutely agree with you. It needs to be in social work training. We need to be dynamic and active in asking curriculum to change and curriculum developers to change it because I think this is so important and so fundamental. It's such a part of social work training. So whatever people can do to get involved with their own local universities, their own local HEIs and say, 'Can you do...can you cover restorative relational practice?' There are lots of people out there that could help them. [0:53:37.2]

Sharmeen Ziauddin:

Thank you. Laura Bennet is asking if you could speak a little bit about how we help people have a voice who might feel unable to speak out themselves due to their anxiety, past experiences in meetings, previous experiences with social workers etc. [0:53:54.1]

Traci Taylor:

Do you want me to start, Andy?

Andy Lloyd:

Go on, Traci.

Traci Taylor:

You want me to start. So I think that starts from people's experience of when the social worker or family support worker or whoever knocks on the door. I think people feel more able to talk in meetings if they feel that their voice has been heard in that relationship with the social worker or whoever is visiting the home. So I think there is a lot of work that we can do beforehand.

But I also think meetings are very difficult for families and it's our responsibility to help people have that confidence through preparation of, 'This is what you can expect at a meeting.' But also we are still advocates. So we might have some very difficult messages to give in meetings but it's about how we deliver that. And certainly in Bradford we are starting to look at, 'How do we hold our meetings? How does that chairperson ensure that everybody has a voice?' And also in making sure that we talk about the strengths as well as the challenges and the difficulties. One of the discussions that we had this week when we were looking at people's experiences of child

protection is how awful it must be to sit in a room and listen to everybody say what an awful parent you are or the things that you've done wrong. Now I'm not saying that every meeting is like that. But you know, they can be like that. And it's the chairperson's responsibility to chair it in a way that makes sure that everyone's got a voice. We've got to acknowledge it's really difficult for families and we've got a duty to make sure that that's as smooth a process as possible and identify strengths as well as challenges, is what I'd say. [0:55:52.1]

Andy Lloyd:

And very briefly, I think it's all about building relationships, be that a basic social work skill. Go in and build a relationship first before you start asking questions and taking details.

And the other thing very, very quickly – mind your language. We talk about minutes, we talk about being the chair, we talk about convening. What does that mean? You know, I've had many, many parents challenge me in my career, 'What are you talking about, minutes? What does a minute mean? We've got the minutes of a meeting.' I don't sit down in my family home around the Sunday table and say, 'Right, the minutes of our last Sunday lunch was this.' We don't do minutes. So let's make sure that our language is really clear and people understand what we're saying. [0:56:38.7]

Sharmeen Ziauddin:

I think we've come to the end now. We have other questions. I'm afraid because of time we can't go over them but I'll just read a few comments out while we've got, a minute left. 'Maintenance of relationships is key. We all have to work on ensuring we are aware of our power and that held by others.' That's very true. I think what we'll do, Andy and Traci, we'll send you those questions and you'll be able to get back to the people who asked them. So thank you for that.

Unfortunately that's all we have time for, and apologies to everyone whose questions we didn't get to answer. As I said, we'll pass those on to Andy and Traci.

Thank you to both of you for giving up your lunchtime to join us and give us those words of wisdom and all that advice and, yeah, just so much experience between the pair of you in social work. So thank you for that. And thank you to everybody who has attended. We will be putting this webinar on communitycare.co.uk later on in the week, so look out for that.

And I think that is all for now. Thanks again everybody. Enjoy your day and hope you get to get some lunch soon! Lunchtime's not quite over. Thank you again. That's all from us.