GIRFEC story of impact for project or programme

Getting it right for Trauma Informed Contact & Care

Introduction

The Trauma Informed Contact and Care (TICC) initiative is a unique Police and Education early intervention safeguarding partnership which ensures a child's school/early childhood centre is notified prior to the start of a school day if there has been an incident of domestic abuse to which the child or young person has been exposed.

Between 2017 and 2019 Ayrshire Police Division worked collaboratively with partners across Ayrshire to improve understanding and response around the impact of trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's). A facet of this programme included the development of a short test of change using the principles of Operation Encompass which was being rolled out in England & Wales at the time.

This was evaluated in 2019 and across the partnership it was agreed that the methodology and principles were sound however it identified concerns with Police IT systems that were unable to identify within the timescales the information required that then resulted in an increased additional workload for those within this specialist department.

Work was carried out to identify a solution and a further test of change commenced in September 2021 using the same learning group of schools as used in the initial Operation Encompass test. As the methodology was different to Operation Encompass and the GIRFEC pathway was being followed the name was changed to Trauma Informed Contact and Care (TICC). In East Ayrshire the test of change was carried out in the Kilmarnock Academy Learning Group. Between September and December two Trauma Informed Contact and Care forms were received from the Police Hub and the schools were informed. During this timeframe the police received concerns for children in eight East Ayrshire schools that were not part of the test of change.

The Police Hub confirmed that they had the capacity and were in a position to send all TICC concerns to the named person services for Education across Ayrshire in the agreed timeframes.

Training was rolled out to all schools across Ayrshire from 1st March 2022. During February 2022 all parents and education staff in all schools were informed of this initiative and how it was being implemented.

There was a further evaluation of the process in June 2022, and rollout was completed to all nurseries and early childhood centres by January 2024.

The Context

Incidents of domestic abuse continue to increase in Scotland. Police Scotland recorded 65,251 incidents of domestic abuse in 2020/21, an increase of 4% compared to the previous year. This was the fifth year in a row this figure had shown an increase.

In 2020/21, the 31 to 35 years age group had the highest incident rate for both victims and accused. Just over nine-in-ten (91%) of all domestic abuse incidents occurred in a home or dwelling.

The known effects of domestic abuse on children and young people include that they may become anxious or depressed, have difficulty sleeping. They may have nightmares or flashbacks and complain of physical symptoms such as tummy aches.

They may start to wet their bed, show dysregulated behaviour and begin to struggle at school. They may become aggressive or internalise their distress and withdraw from other people. They may have a lowered sense of self-worth and older children may start to misuse alcohol or drugs. They may develop an eating disorder or self-harm in other ways.

The Solution/ Approach

Police and Education colleagues met to discuss the issue of domestic abuse and its impact on children and young people.

Leadership across the police and local authority had been working together to implement trauma informed practice and agreed that further work was required to support children and young people affected by domestic abuse.

A communication strategy was developed that included an update to the Strategic Planning Partnership and Elected Members as well as communication to staff in all schools and letters to all parents/carers. School websites and handbooks were updated with information on the initiative. These activities were completed in advance of the rollout.

Guidance and training were developed and rolled out to police and schools as part of the test of change and before full implementation.

The aim of Trauma Informed Contact and Care was to provide appropriate and proportionate support in school for children and young people who had been exposed to domestic abuse the evening before.

The child/young person's named person / child protection co-ordinator follows the GIRFEC pathway, considering their knowledge of the family and any additional information they have, taking account of the child/young person's views, and if appropriate talk to the child and/or parent/carer and offer support.

If required a wellbeing assessment is carried out using the national practice model and Team with the Family processes are followed to ensure the child has a plan to support their needs.

If significant concerns arise Child Protection Procedures are followed.

Result/ Outcome

TICC ensures that prior to the start of the next school day, the named person / child protection co-ordinator is informed that a child/young person has been exposed to a domestic incident in the last 24 hours. This allows the provision of immediate, early support depending on the wellbeing needs and wishes of the child/young person.

Children and young people would appear to welcome the opportunity to discuss incidents and the impact on them.

In some cases, parents/caregivers are reaching out to the school/ECC in advance of the concern being made to sight the school of the incident. This allows the school/ECC to also offer support and guidance to them.

Children and young people attending school/ECC after an incident showing signs of trauma and being dysregulated are met with a caring, supportive and understanding manner by all of those involved in their care.

Testimonials/Quotes

'Parent came to school at 8am and spoke to Head Teacher and highlighted issues at weekend and Police involvement. We spoke with the young person. Team Around the Child meeting to be arranged. Support in place for pupil'.

Lessons Learnt

There was confusion from some members of Education staff on the amount of information they expected to get in the TICC form. It could have been made clearer from the outset that this form is only intended to let staff know that the child/young person has been exposed to domestic abuse the evening before so that they can be supported if required when they come into their education setting the following day.

Children and young people who are experiencing domestic abuse at home will possibly arrive at school the following morning in a high state of anxiety about what they may have been exposed to (seen or heard) the night before. They may be exhausted through lack of sleep with heightened stress. A child/young person who is anxious and dysregulated is a child who may struggle to learn.

The detail around the incident is shared with social work and appropriate information shared with the school as per our agreed GIRFEC processes however this can take several days and TICC is an early intervention process.
This demonstrates Ayrshire's Police Division and Education Department's commitment to ensure we support the safeguarding and wellbeing of children and young people for a better outcome in life.

NEXT STEPS

Planning has started to rollout to the named person service in health for any children not in an early childhood centre. Implementation will commence later this year.