

# Revisiting Risk in An Informed Way: The Right Child at the Right Time

An overview of the NSPCC Tools for  
Reunification.



# Structure of the session.

Overview of the framework

Why it is useful?

Evidence base and research

What the tool is.

How you get your social workers to deliver:

How you would monitor progress.

Exceptions and Alterations.

Links to other supports and services.



# **NSPCC Reunification**

## **An evidence-informed framework for return home practice.**

This is a framework for rehabilitation which  
Ofsted suggested in the last inspection.



For some children, returning home from care is the best possible outcome. But sadly, for many others, this can result in further abuse or neglect. Many children end up back in care and a significant number move back and forth between care and their family. Research suggests that almost half of children who return home to their parents are re-abused or neglected within two years, 30% are back in care within five years, and a third of children experience two or more failed reunifications.

How do we identify the situations where reunification will have a positive impact and select out the negatives?



But research also suggests some clear changes to policy and practice that would improve the lives of children returning home from care:

- \*improved assessments about whether or not the child should return home
- \*services and support for children and parents to tackle social problems
- \*improved planning and preparation for return; and monitoring post return.

This research is only valuable if we implement it into our practice.



# Why is this useful?

Group exercise - tell us why you think this might be useful to children, parents, workers, the organisation?



# Evidence Base and Research

In your teams there will be probably be children whose return home you would dread, because the home they come from doesn't feel safe.

In groups of 2 or 3, take 5 minutes to reflect on the fears that returning home raises for you. Share with your group these fears and how they might encourage risk aversion.

Looking at the evidence and research provided in the RIP tool, what messages about the value of returning home can you see?

# The NSPCC framework brings all the best advice and guidance into one concise document.

Making it a tool you can use with each of the relevant cases on your social workers caseloads.

This tool is for social workers to use in a multi-agency context and complements other plans and processes.

It is a structured tool aiding professional decisions around whether and how a child should return home.

This tool was tested for edge of care, pre-proceedings, section 20 and care order case work.

# Installing the plan in regular practice.

As Team Managers, you have critical influence over the service which our Children Looked After receive. The regularity of implementation of the tool will rely on you checking with your teams that they are routinely considering rehabilitation and using the techniques.

What are the obstacles to implementing the tools in practice? (In small groups)

What methods can we use to overcome these obstacles? (Full group)

How can we tell that the tool is being used well and it is making a difference?  
(Full Group)

# Cohorts to Consider

Teenagers who may become care leavers  
Young people who want to return home  
Young people whose placements are at risk of breakdown  
Placement with parents cases  
Section 20 placements  
Children on the edge of care  
Pre-proceedings  
Parents with earlier removals  
Children with placement disruptions.



# What is the framework?

It is a 5 stage intervention, with guidance around:

Stage 1 - Assessment of risk, protective factors and capacity to change.

Stage 2 - Risk classification and decision on potential for reunification

Stage 3 - Parental agreements, goal setting, supporting and continuing the assessment of parental capacity to change.

Stage 4 - Reclassification of risk, decision making and planning for reunification

Stage 5 - Return home

The framework gives guidance and tools, but can be supplemented with other resources.

# Breaking down the stages.

Stage 1 breaks into 5 tasks:

- 1 - Created a case history with an emphasis on analysis and a genogram.
- 2 - Encouraged the engagement of children and family in the project.
- 3 - Work with the family on an assessment.
- 4 - Identify a safe adult for the child to confide in.
- 5 - Write up the work in an assessment recommending a return home decision

# Stage 2

Stage 2 has four tasks:

- Risk categorisation
- Linked risk category to decision on plan to reunite.
- Decision shared with all parties
- Offer support where reunification is not possible



# Stage 3

## Voice of the child

Agree and formalise a written plan with the obligatory SMART plan.

Build relationships which support and encourage change

Build a team around the child with all the supports in place

Have a shared back-up plan

# Stage 4

Team manager and social worker reconsider the family in the light of the current assessment and regrade the risk category, always building on our evidence and interventions.

As it becomes real that they will live together does our support plan need to change?

All parties agree the transition or reunification plan.

Everyone should feel prepared for the move back home - always allowing for wobbly feelings.

# Stage 5: The Return Home

Phased and increasing contact plan, building up towards transfer of care and return home.

Manage the support package to ensure it delivers as per your plan, increasing it where required.

Keep an eye to ensure that you are tracking risk and progress.

Step down when you get to the stage that risk can be re-categorised.

# Exceptions and Alterations

Specific trigger points:

- CLA review
- Updated assessment
- Change of behaviour
- Missing episodes
- Approaching leaving care age

Could you use the tool in its entirety?

Could you bend it to suit different circumstances?

What needs to happen for every child?

What are the risks and benefits of either approach?

# Links to other supports and services.

Who do we need on side as professional supporters to make the reunification plan successful?

What supports do our families and professionals need?

What predictable barriers are we likely to encounter?

What guarantees and offers can we make?

What is a proportionate response to these difficulties?

# Conclusion

Children have a right to a family life.

Whilst we all know that there are many reasons when we have to accommodate, let's spend some important time now making it really clear for ourselves, why is it important that we return children home to their families whenever it is safe to do so?

Tell me one way in which you personally can encourage this practice in your teams. What will you do now?

# Practice Activities

Case studies

Theory integration discussion

Stumbling blocks exercise

Values discussion

Reflective supervision and reunification



# Case Studies

In pairs:

Identify families where rehabilitation has occurred.

How successful was this reunification?

How could you have used this framework to support the reunification?

How could you have enhanced the social worker's practice in this reunification?



# Theory Integration with Reunification

In groups:

Identify the 5 major theories and methods used by your social workers.

How could these theories and methods be used in conjunction with the framework?

Are there any clashes you'd need to resolve?

Which theories and methods would your social workers need more familiarity with in order to deliver this well?

# Stumbling Blocks

Reunification is hard and takes commitment from the children, family, social workers, managers, professionals and organisations.

What stumbling blocks would each of these groups present to reunification?

What are the emotions, values and themes which cause these obstacles to emerge?

What can we do to validate and address these concerns?

How do we strike the balance between acknowledging concerns and making our plans progress?

# Values discussion

Which values do you anticipate would be active when assessing for rehabilitation?

How emotional would you expect rehabilitation social work to feel for the social workers?

What conflicts are present for social workers when undertaking reuniting families?

Do you think that social worker values will correspond to those of the other professionals?

# Reflective Supervision and Reunification

Using your Kolb reflective cycle develop questions for reunification which would encourage your social workers to know more about their cases in supervision?

- Narrative questions
- Emotional questions
- Analytical questions
- Planning questions

What are your must answer questions when making decisions and plans for any family?