**SAFE AND CURIOUS CONVERSATIONS: Safeguarding during social distancing. GUIDANCE**

We recognise that making telephone calls can often be difficult and challenging. Being prepared, staying focused, listening carefully and asking questions will support you to have conversations which may pose some difficulty.

Sometimes, the desire to help and fix can stop us from hearing the challenges which are faced, we may be led to offering solutions, which feel very sensible but to the other person do not work. Wherever possible use questions to help the family come up with their own solutions as these will more likely work for them in their current situation. This does not mean you cannot offer suggestions, guidance and support when and if appropriate.

**1**. **Preparation**

* Who am I calling and what is the purpose of the call?
* What information do I need to know / have available to help with this call?
* What is your opening gambit and question?
* What are my thoughts and feelings about making this call?

Self - reflection questions: Am I worried / concerned? What has my past experience been with this family? Do I feel ok about this one? Do I always feel on the back foot with this family?

Recognising your thoughts and feelings prior to the telephone conversation can help with staying focused and will enable you to listen more clearly.

**2. Ask curious questions to gain a good sense of who is in the home (see overleaf for further exploratory questions)**

Your aim here to have a conversation about the family's current situation, the composition of the house - what is your sense about what is happening? Can you get a good picture of the family unit?

* Is it a good time to talk / are they willing to talk?
* Who is about at the moment, where are people, who is in the room while we are speaking? (What is your sense of this?)
* Ask who is in the home, how many bedrooms - is there enough space for everyone?
* Are there any others who are isolating with them - are there any extra mouths to feed?!
* Are the children moving between homes e.g. separated parents? How is this going?
* What is the most difficult about the current situation?

By being curious about the current home situation you will be able to develop the conversation further into the strengths and difficulties the family are facing.

**3. Use "I" statements to share how you feel about the situation**

* I am concerned to hear….
* I am worried about…
* What I hear is really concerning me because….
* I am pleased to hear that you have…
* I am really worried about you because you sound….

**5. Draw the call to a close with clear ways forward (however small)**

* Summarise the strengths, positives and concerns
* Agree next steps
* Be open and honest about your next steps - do you need to share, who do you need to share with and why?
* Be thankful for their time and agree when you will be in touch next

**Group and 1 to 1 sessions can be arranged to enable professionals from across the children's workforce to feel more confident that the telephone interactions with families are effective in exploring the risks to children.**

 **Please contact** **sam.nesbit@portsmouthcc.gov.uk** **or call Sam Nesbit 07443661254**

**4. Show empathy and recognise difficult feelings**

* Summarise / recap what you have heard - I hear you saying x, y, z
* I can hear you feel really frustrated
* I sense that this is really hard because…
* I bet that is exhausting
* I can hear you are finding this really difficult
* Tell me about what happened when...
* Describe how you are helping the children to…..
* Can you explain how that felt when (X,Y,Z)
* What led up to that happening?
* Describe to me what your mornings / afternoons / evenings are looking like
* Where was (child) when that happened?
* What do you think about that now?
* How do you feel about…
* How are the others in the family feeling about…
* What are your finding the most difficult?
* What has been the worst thing about…
* What have you enjoyed doing?
* What are you missing the most about 'normal' living?
* What are the children missing the most?
* How are the children feeling about what is happening?
* What are you seeing as positive about the current situation?
* Is there anyone in the house you are worried about?
* Is anyone in the house worried about you?

Curious questions to understand the situation

* How is (X,Y,Z) affecting you?
* What is the impact of (X,Y,Z) on (child)?
* Is (child) worried about..?
* How are the others in the family affected?
* What is helping to ease the impact of (X,Y,Z)?
* What is the (child's name) thinking and feeling about X,Y,Z?
* What are you most worried about?
* Is there anything which is helping with…?

Impact questions to understand more about the effect of what is happening

* What would make things better?
* What has been helpful before when this happened?
* What needs to happen to put that right?
* What would make things better for you?
* What would make things easier for you?
* What do you want to happen next?
* What will you do next?
* What would be helpful in supporting you to..?
* What could others help with?
* What does (child) want to happen next?
* What support do you have from your friends and family?
* Is there anyone who can help with x,y,z?

Solution focused questions to find ways forward

This is not an exhaustive list of questions and there will be many questions you use which are effective. You will also have your own style in how you express empathy, clarify what you have heard and plan for next steps etc.

Please remember you do not need to have all the answers and the solutions will be more meaningful if the family come up with them themselves. However, having a list of support numbers and websites to hand can be useful to offer to the family.

You may face barriers to the questions you have asked, trust the sense that you get and with the information you gain be honest with the family about what you need to do next to support them.

For further help, support and guidance please contact sam.nesbit@portsmouthcc.gov.uk or call Sam Nesbit 07443661254