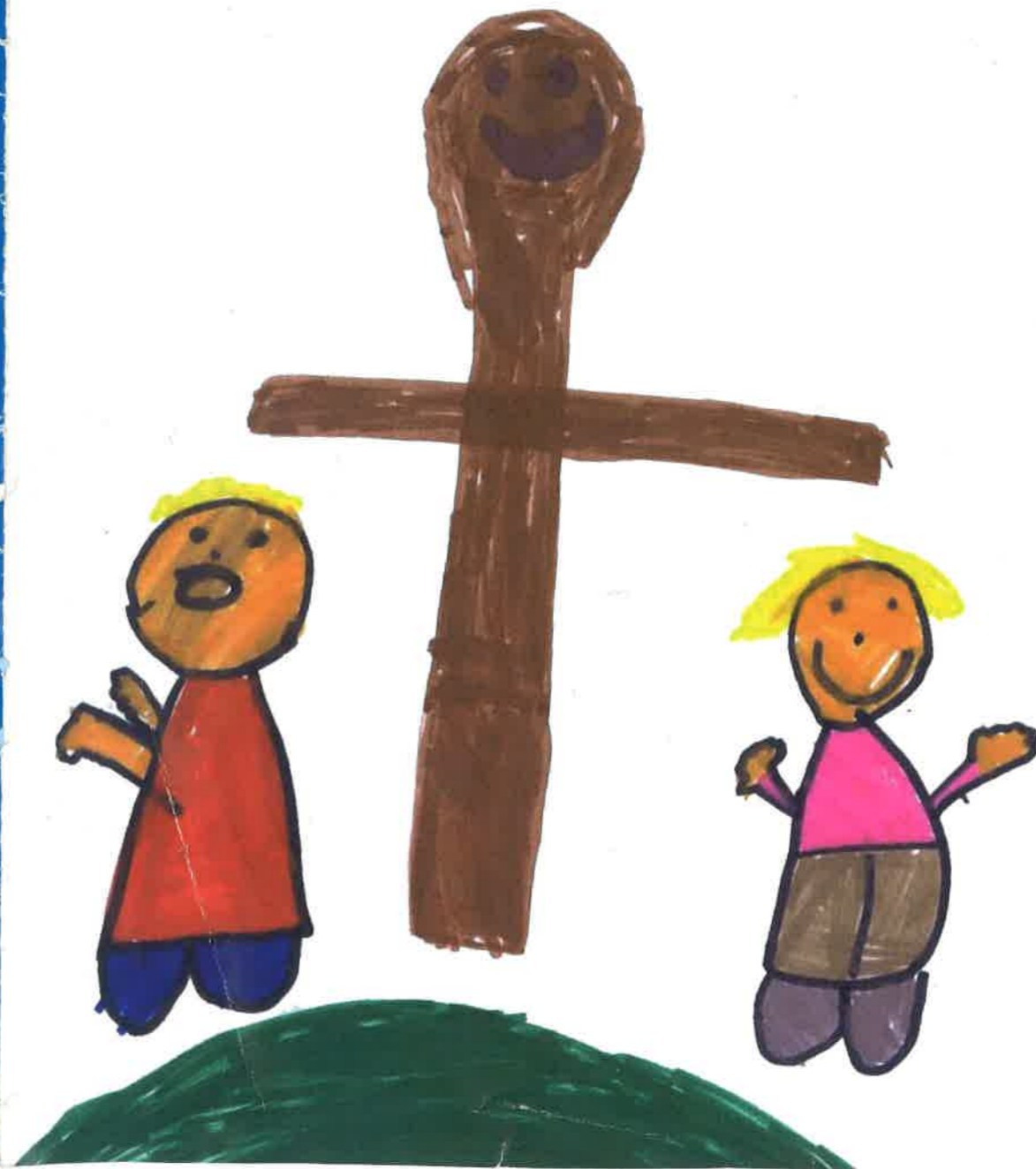


Creative Communication

with children and young people in
Gateshead



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Introduction

Creative communications with children and young people

This booklet shows examples of creative communications between children and young people in Gateshead, UK, and social workers Laura Brennan and Sue Robson.

Creative communications tools were used to help children who had been subjected to physical, emotional or sexual abuse; had suffered because of domestic violence or neglect, or had parents who were addicted to substances and/or alcohol.

The tools were used to aid understanding of how the children and young people felt about their situations and to help them make sense of what had happened to them.

Several different methods, including The Safety House, The Three Houses and Words and Pictures were used; additionally the workers adapted and personalised the tools to link with the interests of the individual children. For example, in one case the worker substituted a football pitch in the place of the Three Houses and in another, she used space ships and planets.

If you have any questions about the contents of this booklet or would like further information then please don't hesitate to contact Gateshead Council - you can contact Laura and Sue by email on laurabrennan@gateshead.gov.uk or suerobson@gateshead.gov.uk

Tools used and referred to in this booklet:

Three Houses was developed in New Zealand by Nikki Weld and Maggie Greening

The Safety House was developed in Australia by Sonja Parker

Words and Pictures was developed by English family therapists Susie Essex, John Gumbleton and Colin Luger

Further details on all of these tools can be found on The Signs of Safety website at www.signsofsafety.net

Please note: all names have been changed throughout this booklet but the actual words of the children have been used.

Affected by Emotional Abuse - Case Scenario (Craig & Martin)

This case came into our service because a health worker reported concerns about mam's deteriorating mental health saying that she was shouting at the children, smacking them, and no longer wanted to play with them.

During and following a meeting attended by workers from several agencies and by Carol (mam), the professionals expressed concerns about mam's mental health and the impact of this on her children. She had presented as very agitated and angry and said she wasn't going to work with services any more.

Martin

House of good things

I like playing with toys at dad's house.
I have lots of toys to play with.
I like it when mam makes veggies for me, I love my veggies.
I like it when dad makes me nice things to eat at his house.
I like playing with my brother on the computer.



House of worries

I worry that dad won't have batteries for my toys
I'm scared of dad, shhh no, it's not dad it's mam, don't tell her she'll put a spell on me, shhh! she's a witch, don't tell her.



House of wishes

We would have a big family holiday-mam, dad, Timmy, me and Craig would all go to the beach and love each other.
I wish I could live at my dad's house, I'm happy there and can play with my toys and no one shouts at me so I'm not scared.



Affected by Emotional Abuse - Case Scenario (Craig & Martin)

Carol's children Martin (five), Craig (seven), and Timmy (two) all appeared frightened of Carol. When the health visitor and family support workers visited the home, Timmy was always in the play pen and there were no toys in the home.

The social worker (Sue) decided to complete the Three Houses with Martin and Craig in order to see what sense they were making of life at home and what if anything, they wanted to happen

Craig

House of worries

I was not happy at my mam's house because she shouted at me a lot.
Mam locked all of my toys away and I didn't get all of my Christmas presents they were put in mam's wardrobe.



House of good things

I don't get shouted at when I am with dad.
I like living with daddy because I get lots of hugs.
When I'm with daddy I can play with my toys.



House of wishes

My wish has come true, I'm living with my daddy and brothers.
I wish we had a big house so we had our own room and didn't have to share our beds.



Affected by Emotional Abuse - Case Scenario (Amy)

Amy's teacher contacted Children's Services because Amy (aged six) had told her she was frightened when she went to her dad's house because 'chucky doll' (from a horror film) was there.

Amy's mam and dad were separated and Amy and her sister Haley (aged four) stayed with dad every weekend.

The social worker (Sue) spoke to Amy, Haley and their mam and dad and everyone agreed to use the Safety House tool with the girls to show them how parents and Aunty Rachel would work together to make sure the children would be safe when they visited dad in the future.



Affected by Emotional Abuse - Case Scenario (Sean)

Sean's behaviour at home was becoming unmanageable. He was not following instructions, pushing boundaries and had lit a fire in his home.

Sean and his sibling Marie were adopted; his mam was worried that this may be the reason for his disruptive behaviour.

Sean's mam was not sure if Sean was worried about something at school or at home, she said she had tried to talk to him but he wouldn't say anything.

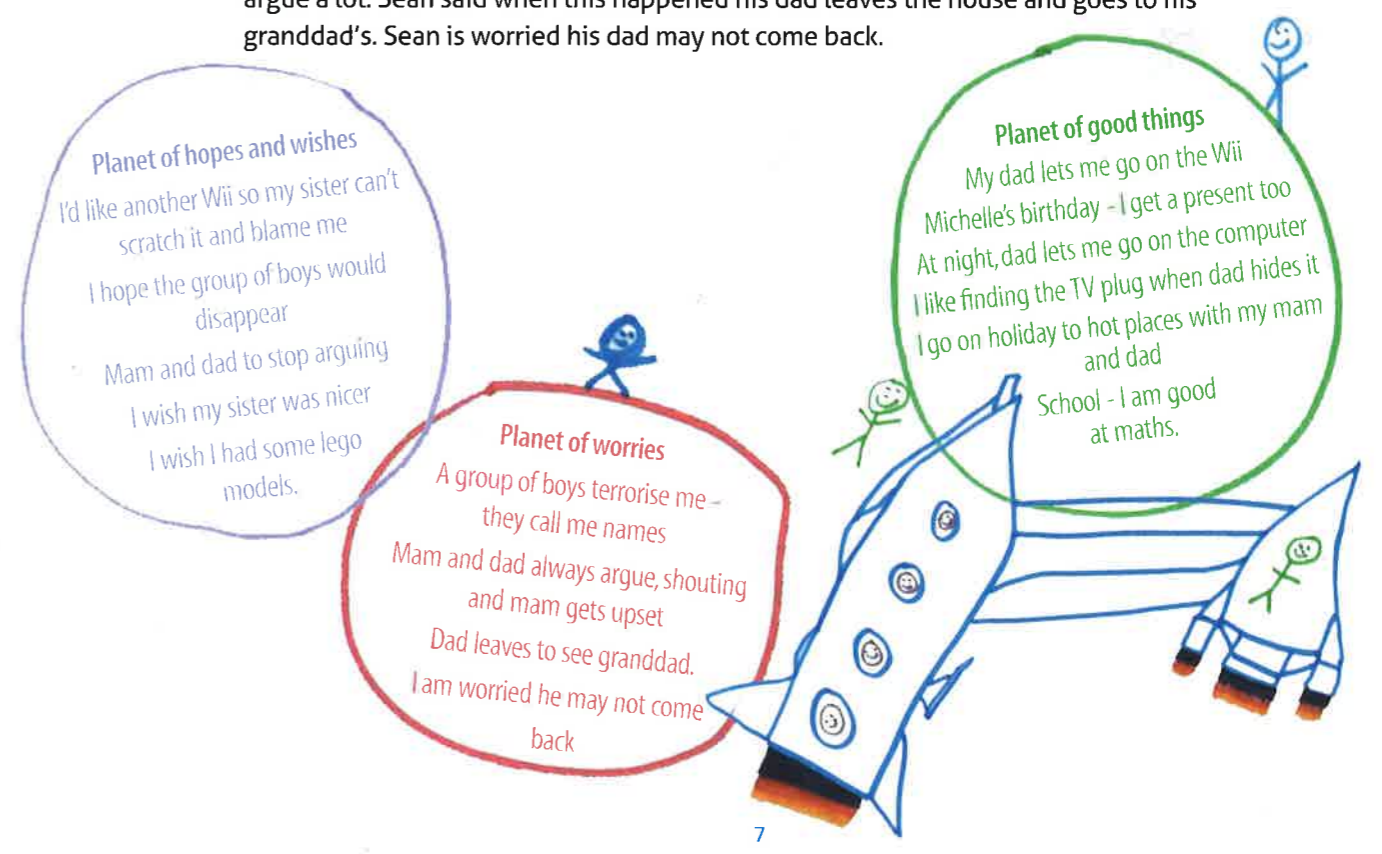
The social worker (Laura) met with Sean's mam and dad who told her that Sean had a keen interest in space. Laura therefore adapted the 'Three Houses' to the 'Three Planets'.

Sean drew a picture of a rocket and chose to include friends who he would want to take on an adventure with him. He drew one boy floating in 'mid air', this person was a boy who he described as 'terrorising' him. Sean also drew another boy in 'mid air' but then decided to join him onto his rocket with a smaller one, remembering this friend had been kind to him when he was stung by a wasp.

Sean was then able to talk about the planet of good things, planet of worries and his planet of hopes and wishes.

Sean drew his mam standing on top of the planet of good things and said this was because he liked it when she took him swimming.

Sean drew his dad on top of the planet of worries, he explained his mam and dad argue a lot. Sean said when this happened his dad leaves the house and goes to his granddad's. Sean is worried his dad may not come back.



Affected by Neglect - Case Scenario (Lewis)

Lewis is the youngest child of eight and the only one still living at home with his mam, all of his siblings having left home pretty much as soon as they were able to do so.

Police contacted Children's Services as Lewis (eight) had been left home alone on a Sunday afternoon at approx 2pm when his mam went out to the pub. His mam returned at 4.30 am and Lewis was not at home.

Lewis's mam called police to help find him. Lewis had been looking around at his mam's friends' houses and stayed at one with an unknown adult.

The social worker (Laura) visited Lewis at his sister's with Jane and Julie (police) and talked to him about what had happened. Lewis's mam was arrested for neglecting Lewis.

Lewis then went to stay with foster carers while the best option for him was assessed.

Laura used Words and Pictures to explain to Lewis about what had happened. Lewis's mam and the social worker devised the words using language that was familiar to him.

This was then shared with Lewis and he completed the pictures.

1. Mam was worried because she went to her friend's house, she was drinking and when she came home, at 4:30am, Lewis was gone. She called the police to help find Lewis.



2. Lewis was worried because his mam went out and was away too long. Lewis had talked to her on the phone and then went out to look for her because the phone went off. Lewis could not find his mam so went to Jan's (his mam's friend) and stayed there with a woman he did not know until Jan came back. Jan told Lewis his mam had gone nightclubbing.



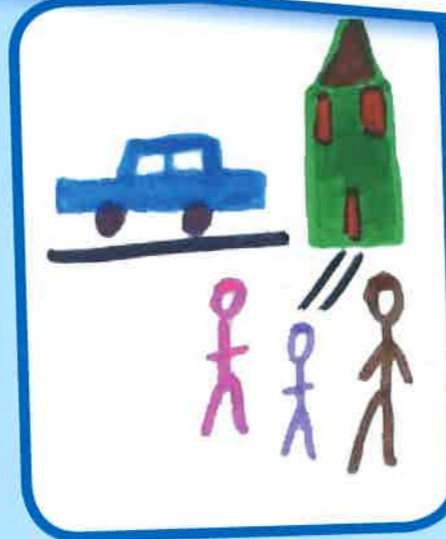
3. Lewis went to bed, the police came and woke him up at 5am. Lewis said his mam was crying. The police took her to the police station, Lewis was taken to Kylie's house in the police car.



4. Jane and Julie, police and Laura (social worker) visited Lewis at Kylie's house. Lewis talked about what happened. Lewis said he was worried, frightened and hungry. He said he did not want his mam to drink anymore. We talked about Lewis staying somewhere safe until his mam could get sorted out.



5. Laura took Lewis to his foster carers, Dot and Jimmy's house. Lewis had a look around the house and asked lots of questions. There were two other boys in the foster placement, Stephen and David. Lewis seemed excited and happy to stay with the foster carers.



6. Laura and mam went to court. The judge decided Lewis is to stay with his foster carers until his mam gets better properly. Mam will get help to stop drinking.



7. Mam has been at the doctors to talk about what she can do to stop drinking. Mam is meeting with Laura to look at what needs to happen to make sure Lewis is looked after and safe. Mam will do anything to get Lewis back home. She said she would get the help she needs and will try very hard.



8. Mam and his brothers and sisters were all worried that Lewis was in foster care but now they are all happy as Lewis is happy. Mam wants Lewis home in the future but she is pleased he is settled in his foster placement. Lewis will still attend school and see his mam during contact times.



Affected by Neglect - Case Scenario (Lewis)

Affected by Neglect - Case Scenario (Carol)

Carol (aged 14) was referred into Children's Services by police after a domestic incident at home.

Police were worried that there was very little food in the home and downstairs was covered in animal urine and faeces.

Carol told the police there was often no money for food or bus fares to enable her to go to school.

Sam, (Carol's mam) didn't seem to understand what the Police were worried about, however, once the social worker started working with the family, mam was able to improve things in the home.

Despite improvements in her home situation, Carol was refusing to go to school and when the social worker (Sue) asked her why she did not want to go, all she would say was that she was not getting bullied.

Staff at school tried to find out what the problem was but Carol would not talk to anyone.

Sue decided to do a 'Safety School' with Carol to find out what would make her feel safe and as a result of this she discovered Carol was being bullied by several pupils in her school.

Mr. C. A teacher who always shouts at me.

I would be able to learn more about science.

I would like to have my dinner with Joe and Sophie, my friends in the learning specialist unit. Three children - Joe, Carol and Sophie.

Safety plan

- Carol would be able to go into school 30 minutes late and go straight to her lesson so people would not push her when there is a big crowd.
- People in her school would treat each other with respect - no name calling or hurting each other.
- People would listen to teachers so everyone could learn.
- People would be kind in school, say please and thank you.
- People will not take things which do not belong to them.
- Teachers would listen to Carol and help her understand things when she got stuck.

Affected by Sexual Abuse - Case Scenario (Charlotte)

Charlotte is seven years old; police discovered that her dad had been accessing child pornography, and had downloaded over 4,000 images of children aged two to eight years, many of the images were the most serious level of child pornography.

As a result mam and dad separated and dad moved out of the house. Mam (Judith) and other family members, worked with the social worker (Sue) to develop a Safety Plan. They then used the Safety House to illustrate and explain the plan to Charlotte.

In the roof of the house is the bulk of the Safety Plan and in the main part of the house, Charlotte has said what sort of things she would like to be happening in the future.

Mam and social worker used picture of swimming costume to tell Charlotte about private parts, and they then told her that dad had taken and looked at photos of children's private parts.

Dad will not see Charlotte without mam, Aunty Joe, Grandma Jill or Grandad Bob being present. All of these family members know what dad has done.

Dad will not take photos of Charlotte when he sees her.

Dad will not take Charlotte swimming or to parks.

Dad is not allowed to collect Charlotte from school.

Mam and Charlotte will go swimming together.

Mam and Charlotte will go shopping together.

Charlotte will help mam with the baby when he is born.

Dad will go to Graham's to live.

Mam will take Charlotte to school in a car.

Affected by Sexual Abuse - Case Scenario (Katie)

Katie (aged eight) told her mam that during the night Dean had sneaked into her bedroom and 'licked and touched' her 'private parts'.

Katie's mam called the police who took the information and passed it onto a social worker.

The social worker (Laura) visited Katie with Julie (child protection police officer) and they spoke to Katie about what had happened.

Julie and Laura took Katie to the hospital and she gave her statement which was to be used in court.

Dean was arrested; he pleaded guilty in court to sexual assault and was sent to prison.

The words were devised with Katie's mam and this helped her to focus on how to talk to Katie about what happened.

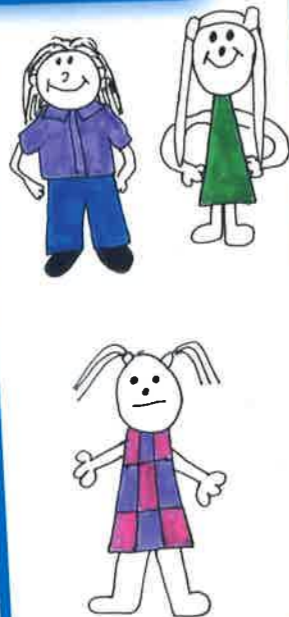
Katie then drew the pictures to go with the words to be sure she understood what had happened to her. This served to reinforce to Katie she had done the right thing by telling her mam, the police officer and the social worker. It also helped Katie to understand about private parts and safe touching.

The completed Words and Pictures were used (with permission) to refer Katie to a social work therapist.

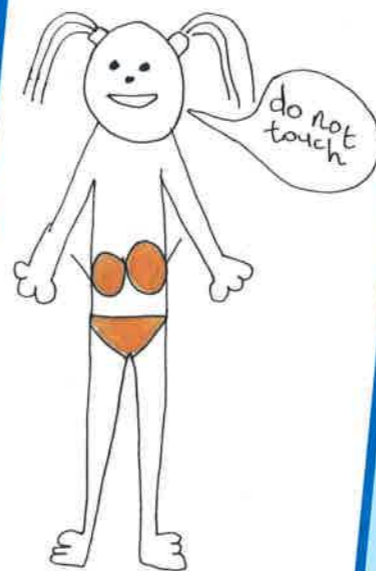
1. Mam was worried because Katie told her Dean had done something to her in the middle of the night. Mam rang the police.



2. Julie (police) and Laura (social worker) visited Katie at home. Katie said Dean hurt her and touched her private parts.



3. Private parts are the parts of your body a swimming costume covers. These are the parts of the body other people should not touch.



Affected by Sexual Abuse - Case Scenario (Katie)

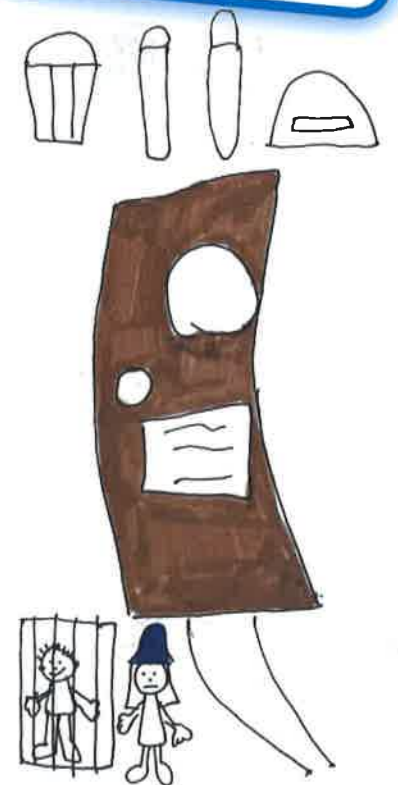
5. Mam said Katie is very brave for telling her what happened. What Dean did was wrong and Katie was clever for talking about this to her, the police officer and social worker.



4. Katie, mam and nanna went in the car with Julie and Laura to the hospital. Katie talked on a video about what happened with Dean. The judge in the court will watch the video so he knows what Dean has done.



6. Dean is in prison now and he can't hurt Katie anymore. The police have put an alarm in the house to make sure Katie and mam are safe. Mam is very proud of Katie. Mam will make sure Katie is looked after and safe.



Affected by Domestic Violence - Case Scenario (Sarah)

Mark (dad) has been sent to prison due to domestic violence. Mark attended the address of Lisa (mam) and the children; he was not allowed to do this as there was a restraining order in place.

Mark was drunk, angry and abusive; he was waving a 12 inch knife around threatening Lisa and frightening the children.

Although Lisa said she was not going to get back with Mark when he was released from prison, she began visiting him.

Mark told his probation worker when he was released they would be married.

The social worker (Laura) used the Safety House to spend one to one time with Sarah (aged seven) to get her thoughts/feelings about her father and the issues of violence.

Safety House

Sarah spoke about seeing her dad bite her mam. She also said her dad hurt her mam. Sarah talked about her dad being in prison for killing people. It was clear Sarah had not understood why her dad was in prison. Sarah was able to discuss good things that happen when her dad is around.

Sarah identified people who would visit and ensure she is safe, Auntie Janet, Police and neighbours.

Sarah seemed confused as she wanted her dad around but also identified him and her older sibling as someone who make her worried due to them hurting her mam.

I then decided to do the words and pictures to help explain to Sarah what had happened and why her dad was in prison.

Words and Pictures

The words were devised by Lisa and myself, then shared with Sarah. This enabled Sarah to share her feelings about this, she stated 'I'm frightened of that story'.

Sarah did the words and pictures to go with the words. Sarah then understood why her dad was in prison. She no longer thought he had killed someone.

Affected by Domestic Violence - Case Scenario (Sarah)



Affected by Domestic Violence - Case Scenario (Sarah)

1. Mam became worried because dad came to the door, shouting and bawling. He also had a knife, he was drunk and angry.



2. Mam was shocked and worried. Sarah was screaming. Lucy was asleep. Carl was there too. Dad was waving the knife around.



3. Mam said call the police. Dad left the house. Police came to the house to find out what had happened. Mam made sure all the children, including Sarah, were okay.



4. After this happened, mam said Sarah was upset and cried sometimes at night. Dad was in his own flat, but sometimes came round to visit.



5. Dad went to court and the judge sent him to prison for having a knife and frightening mam and Sarah and the others who were there. Sarah has visited dad in prison.



6. Laura and Dale (social workers) are visiting mam and the rest of the family to try and make sure they are safe when dad comes out of prison. They want to make sure no-one is frightened or hurt or worried.



Affected by Alcohol Abuse - Case Scenario (Peter)

Peter (aged nine) lives with his dad Paul.

Paul has depression and alcohol dependency.

Peter's mam and siblings live in another local authority area. One night Paul (dad) rang Emma (mam) to say he was going to kill himself, Emma arranged for Peter to be collected for the night and Peter stayed with his Nanna. Paul was taken to hospital but was later discharged.

Peter returned to his dad and an assessment was undertaken to look at the care Peter was receiving. Peter said he missed his siblings and mam as they lived in another town.

In order for Peter to talk about good things worries and wishes, the social worker (Laura) decided to adapt the Three Houses and use a football pitch instead as Peter is very keen on football.

Peter drew himself and then chose the people closest to him on his team, all wearing his team colours.

Peter then chose to draw the others who were close to him, but not as close, in another colour. He positioned everyone in terms of how important they were to him by placing them in proximity to him on the pitch. Peter drew his mam's partner who he does not like on the bench.

He then did his worries, hopes and wishes in separate goals, the wishes were the way he was aiming/shooting.

Peter also wrote the good things in the middle.



Affected by Alcohol Abuse - Case Scenario (John)

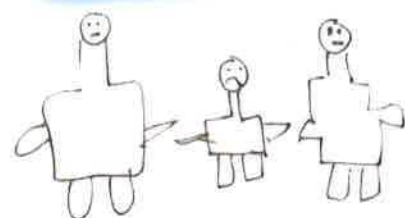
Auntie Eileen rang Children's Services worried that her sister Joanne was drinking on a regular basis when her children John (aged six) and Donna (aged twelve) were in her care.

Joanne had been drinking for a number of years but John and Donna's older sister Sharon (aged 21) used to live with them and would look after the children.

Things got so bad that Donna and John went to live with Sharon. The social worker (Sue) decided to use the Words and Pictures tool with the family to help John and Donna understand why they needed to live with their older sister.

Who's worried about John and Donna?

Sharon, Eileen and Sue (social worker).



What are they worried about?

John and Donna's older sister Sharon, Auntie Eileen and the social worker are worried that when mam is drunk she sometimes falls asleep and John and Donna are unable to wake her up. Donna sometimes goes out with her friends leaving John to look after himself and John gets frightened because he is only little.

What are we doing about the worries?

Mam will work with the drug and alcohol team
 Mam will take medication to help her feel happier and stop her from drinking
 Sharon will let John and Donna stay with her until mam is better
 Mam will see John and Donna at the park, and Sharon will stay to make sure mam hasn't been drinking.

What happened then?

Mam had a really bad weekend, she felt sad and drank a lot. Donna was angry and her and mam had a fight. So Donna rang Sue. Sue went to see John and Donna at home and saw that Joanne (mam) was very drunk. Sue rang Sharon who said John and Donna could stay with her until mam felt better.



Affected by Drug Misuse - Case Scenario (Michelle)

The police referred this family to Children's Services because they had been told that Natalie (mam) was buying heroin and methadone. When the social worker checked with the school, they learned that Michelle (aged ten) was frequently absent. Staff had tried to talk with mam about this but she wouldn't talk to them.

The social worker (Sue) attempted to visit mam several times but even though it seemed she was probably in the house, she wouldn't answer the door.

In order to find out whether things were ok or not, the social worker decided to visit Michelle at school and talk to her using the Three Houses.

Sue has found that by using the Three Houses, she is often able to get to the critical stuff quickly, and that proved to be the case with Michelle.

House of good things

I like it when my mam cooks nice things for me.
 It's good when my mam and us play together and go out together.

My mam makes sure people are kind to me.
 I like seeing my friends at school.
 My mam gets me what I want, like if I ask for a pound or a toy, I sometimes get them.



House of worries

I do not like it when my brother gets hurt, he's in jail and some bad people hit him.

I worry that my Joe's dad comes back. He hit my mam in the mouth and knocked her teeth out because my mam was going out with Kenny.



House of dreams

It would be good if I played out in the street with all of my friends and we didn't fight.

