



The implementation of therapeutic life story work: practice review of a pilot program

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The Therapeutic Life Story Model

Therapeutic Life Story Work (TLSW) is a model of intervention developed by a Social Worker in the UK named Richard Rose. The Rose model of TLSW has been implemented in the USA, Portugal, Japan and New Zealand. Richard Rose has published two books about his model and his third book is due for release in July 2017. This book includes chapters from Life Story practitioners and this pilot program is included as a chapter in the book.

The model draws on existing theoretical literature as an evidence base for the intervention.

The theory underpinning TLSW includes:

- Attachment and Trauma
- Internal Working Models
- Child development and brain architecture



- Completion of an assessment.
- The assessment includes the child's history, the impact of that history of their emotional development and the relationship between the child and carer. The assessment makes recommendations about the viability of commencing TLSW.



- Starts with the externalisation of thoughts/memories and experiences.
- The child, carer and practitioner start to explore the narrative by illustration, discussion and reframing.
- This stage generally includes 16 fortnightly sessions.



- The Life story book is developed by the therapist. The child gets to edit the book and ultimately decides on what information is included.
- The book uses the child's words and pictures from the illustrations.

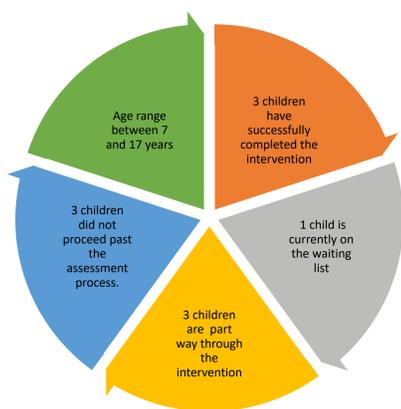
The intervention supports emotional stability by assisting the child to work alongside their carer or a main support person (for children in residential care) to firstly understand and explore the child's narrative and secondly to promote trauma processing and reparative healing by the use of intervention skills and by drawing on the child's relationships as a source of healing.



The Pilot Program

The Pilot Program began in September 2015 in The Illawarra Region of NSW. There are two non-government OOHC providers involved in the pilot. The intervention is provided by the practitioner at a reduced cost to the agencies.

Since the commencement of the pilot, there has been 10 children referred to the service.



The first step to implementing TLSW was to promote the model to OOHC workers and carers. Promotion occurred by providing training to OOHC workers, foster carers and residential support workers.



In addition to training, the intervention was promoted at team meetings and practice forums across the Illawarra. The biggest interest for the intervention came

from foster carers and the first referral for TLSW occurred two weeks after the first training session.

The TLSW model in the pilot differs slightly from Richard Rose's model in that the initial assessment completed is a formal psycho-social assessment. The assessment is the first piece of work provided to the carers and the agency. The purpose of the assessment is to:

- Detail the chronology of the child's life.
- Gain information from the child's birth family and previous foster carers. The birth family are asked questions about the child, not about the child protection history. They are asked to provide nurturing stories that can be passed on to the child.
- Includes details of ALL previous OOHC placements.
- Includes details of ALL previous schools including the names of the child's teachers
- Includes the child's carers so they are part of the process from the very beginning.

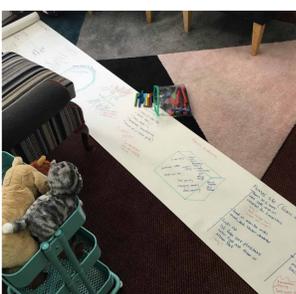
The assessment looks at the IMPACT of the history on the child's internal working model.

The assessment has a dual purpose in that it informs the TLSW intervention, but it also provides a summary of the harm the child has experienced and the impact of this harm on their development. To date, the psycho-social assessments have been used to support children's victim compensation claims.

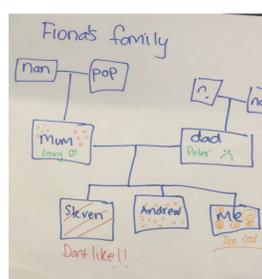
The intervention stage consists of an initial 10 sessions that are free of charge for the pilot OOHC services.

Generally between 12 and 15 sessions are required.

The intervention stage is where the narrative is explored and trauma processing occurs. The work is completed on a roll of paper that acts as a visual reminder about the change process during the TLSW journey.



Some examples of narrative exploration:



The final stage of the intervention is the development of the life story book. The book is completed on power point and the child has all editing rights.

The book is a reflection of the wall paper.



My name is Lisa and I am 8 years old.

I live with Susan and Greg. I call Susan and Greg my mum and dad.

Elle is our dog. She lives with us too.

This is a picture of the three of us.

