

NHS Trust Dartford & Gravesham Case Study



Background

After a Senior Sister for Safeguarding discovered Cornerstone VR at an NSPCC conference and recognised its potential for enhancing safeguarding training, Darent Valley Hospital, an NHS Trust hospital in Dartford, began integrating VR into its training and development programs.

The safeguarding team trains over 3,000 staff using the 'Think Family' approach, which highlights the impact of mental health, domestic abuse, and substance misuse on families. The Cornerstone VR programme aligns with this model, providing a powerful introduction that reinforces the importance of safeguarding by immersing staff in the experiences of neglected and abused children.

Overseen by the Safeguarding Children's Team, the Cornerstone VR Programme is being used as a training and development resource for the hospital workforce.



Delivering Training

At Darent Valley Hospital, staff in A&E and other clinical settings frequently encounter family situations involving alcohol abuse, domestic abuse, and other issues that can significantly impact children. With the right training, they can identify these concerns and make timely referrals to social care.

Cornerstone collaborated closely with the hospital, training staff, including midwives and safeguarding team members, to deliver the VR programme. These trained staff can now implement VR training across the hospital, primarily targeting frontline clinical staff attending Safeguarding Level 3 training, such as those in A&E, paediatrics, and maternity.



Measuring Success

Darent Valley Hospital has consistently embraced innovative training methods, and the latest VR technology is a valuable addition to its development programme.



To measure the success of the VR programme, the Safeguarding Team looked at the number of safeguarding referrals over the following months and staff evaluations of the sessions.



There are also other potential opportunities where VR could be used, including a stop smoking initiative and working with other health partners to provide trauma informed training.





I could quickly see how powerful the VR was and how the immersive experience would help staff understand and recognise certain situations with more empathy.

Senior Sister for Safeguarding

Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust



Findings

Safeguarding Knowledge - Children



Before training, only **9%** of participants rated their knowledge as "Excellent," while **33%** rated it as "Fair."



After training, the "Excellent" category increased significantly to **41%**, and no participants rated their knowledge as "Poor."



The number of participants rating their knowledge as "Good" increased from **54%** to **93%**.



Findings

Safeguarding Knowledge - Adults



Before training, only **6%** had an "Excellent" understanding of adult safeguarding, increasing to **36%** after training.



The percentage of those with "Good" knowledge rose from **49%** to **91%**.



The "Poor" category was eliminated, reflecting a significant improvement.



Findings

Understanding of ACEs



Prior to training, **2%** of participants had never heard of ACEs, and **36%** had limited understanding.



Post-training, there was a remarkable shift, with **104 out of 135 participants (77%)** achieving "Expert knowledge."



The "Limited understanding" category dropped from **36% to 5%**, showcasing enhanced awareness.



Findings

Knowledge of Current Issues (Domestic Abuse / Mental Health)



Before training, **14%** of participants were "Not confident."



After training, **107 out of 137 (78%)** reported being "Very confident," eliminating the "Not confident" category entirely.



The "Fairly confident" group also grew from **54% to 30%**.



Findings

Importance of Sharing Information



Before training, **77%** considered sharing information "Essential," which **increased to 80% participants** post-training.



"Fairly important" responses **decreased from 1 participant to 0**, indicating a stronger consensus on the importance of information sharing.



Findings

Confidence in Challenging Decisions



Before training, **19%** of participants were not confident in challenging colleagues or other agencies.



Post-training, **96% felt confident**, with only 5 participants still lacking confidence.



The Outcome

The VR training programme significantly enhanced participants' knowledge and confidence in safeguarding-related issues.

The most notable improvements were in:

- ✓ Increased expertise in ACEs (from 13 to 104 participants).
- ✓ Higher confidence in addressing safeguarding concerns and challenging decisions.
- ✓ A complete elimination of "Poor" knowledge ratings in all categories.

These results demonstrate that structured training programs can effectively equip professionals with the knowledge and confidence needed to handle safeguarding concerns, ultimately improving outcomes for vulnerable individuals.





About Cornerstone VR



Cornerstone VR is a multi-award-winning, trauma-informed virtual reality programme used by professionals and caregivers who work with vulnerable children and their families.

Our 360-degree immersive films allow users to 'walk in the shoes' of children, bringing the challenges of trauma, neglect, and societal pressures to life.

Spanning critical stages of child development from pre-birth to adolescence, this approach helps professionals, educators and caregivers have a deeper understanding of the child's perspective - building empathy, improving decision-making, and raising the standard of care.

Our programme is used across almost 50% of local authorities, as well as independent fostering and adoption agencies, children's residential homes, schools, virtual schools, universities, NHS trusts, ambulance services, the police and other providers.

Our VR experiences cover key topics across our sectors, including:

- Abuse, Neglect & Trauma
- Child Criminal Exploitation
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness
- The Digital World - Social Media and Digital Platforms
- Youth Violence and Knife crime



Contact us

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