

Southend-On-Sea Borough Council Case Study



Background

Being one of the first local authorities in the UK to implement Cornerstone VR across its services in 2018/19, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council has set out to use VR to improve awareness and understanding around childhood trauma across its services, in turn, supporting the timely decision making process regarding their most vulnerable children.

Initially trialing the VR content across 10 service areas in 2018, some of the services represented included adoption, fostering, SGO, marigold assessment plus, mental health workers, virtual schools and educational psychologists.

After sharing the experience with the senior leaders and realising the power VR had on its users, Southend-on-Sea worked in partnership with Cornerstone VR to develop a framework that supported the borough in becoming a trauma informed town.





The Mission





Using Cornerstone VR's immersive films, Southend-on-Sea deployed the VR across the borough, allowing users to be immersed in the young people's experiences, providing them with an opportunity to feel and understand how trauma can impact their lives.

It was important for those who were involved in caring for or making decisions for the most vulnerable children in their borough to have an emotional and physiological understanding of attachment and the impact of trauma.

The immersive films provide the opportunity for carers and professionals to see trauma from a child's perspective, therefore supporting them to offer a child centered approach.

The Solution

The main objectives the project set out to achieve included:

-  Improving placement stability across Southend-on-Sea's adoption and fostering services.
-  Improving individuals understanding of the impact on children's behaviour and development.
-  Increasing individuals' skills and awareness around being trauma-responsive.
-  Improving the Boroughs wider learning and understanding of trauma and its long-term effects on children.



The Outcome

Southend was the first to deliver a VR session to children's guardians in Cafcass to support their skills and knowledge in understanding the lived experience of a child impacted by trauma.

After experiencing the VR, virtual schools and educational psychologists have been able to incorporate the VR experiences into their programme, specifically their 'Safe to Learn' training, allowing the VR content to filter further across schools in the Southend.

In addition to this, the virtual school have also run VR sessions in a number of primary schools across the town to build on their understanding of trauma.

One of the main benefits of using Cornerstone VR across Southend-on-Sea has been witnessing how this tool engages people, as it brings a different perspective, increasing users' understanding of safeguarding and the impact that trauma has on children. Feedback from foster carers, adopters and social workers has allowed them to have a greater understanding and insight into what is behind a child's behaviour and the reason why they may require a different type of care.



Practitioners, staff and other users of VR agreed that:

- ✓ VR helps raise awareness and understanding around childhood trauma.
- ✓ VR training provides a greater understanding and insight into early childhood experiences.
- ✓ VR develops confident and knowledgeable professionals who use their skills to shape their approach to individuals.
- ✓ VR is an effective tool to help increase social workers, adopters/foster parents, schools and ASYE understanding of trauma.
- ✓ The VR training has continued to successfully equip users with the skill sets and understanding to take forward in their own practice.





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

For more information about our services, please get in touch.

 0808 1756 414

 info@cornerstonevr.co.uk

 www.cornerstonevr.co.uk

