



Evaluation of Rory 3 as part of CHAT Pilot 2018



EVALUATION OF RORY 3 PILOT

BACKGROUND

Alcohol Focus Scotland developed the CHAT (Children harmed by alcohol toolkit) in 2016 following a successful pilot and evaluation with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. CHAT is now used by over 250 trained professionals who work with children, young people and families affected by alcohol harm.

CHAT aims to build resilience and protective factors in children, young people and families by:

- Helping them identify sources of help and support.
- Developing their emotional intelligence.
- Developing their problem solving and social skills.
- Helping them feel less confused and guilty about what may be happening
- Helping them understand the recovery journey and the challenges that may bring.

Feedback from practitioners in our initial CHAT pilot identified that many children, are removed from their normal daily life whilst their parent goes through recovery. Practitioners told of children feeling anxious, stressed and worried about their parent and feeling excluded from what may be happening.

This new CHAT – Rory 3 project sought to build on our existing CHAT pack to develop additional resources to support children from aged 5 to 12 years with a particular focus on those being looked after and removed from their home for a period of time.

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

Alcohol Focus Scotland secured funding to undertake further development of CHAT by developing a new Rory 3 storybook and associated materials. The aim of the new storybook and associated materials would be to:

- Help children understand recovery and what that may mean for their parent/carer.
- Help children to explore the emotions they may experience as a result of being removed from their home.
- Help children to cope with the anxiety of not being able to see their parent/carer.
- Provide practitioners with resources that can help children and families prepare and cope with the changes in their lives.

DEVELOPMENT

As part of our development plan we worked with kinship carers, foster carers and organisations working with looked after children to develop the new CHAT - Rory 3 resources and associated materials.

We hosted 3 focus groups to inform development of the Rory 3 storybook and associated materials. A total of 14 kinship carers and foster carers attended 2 focus groups held in Glasgow and Edinburgh. A final focus group for professionals was held in Glasgow and attended by 8 professionals working with looked after children. These included representatives from NHS, Social Work, Celcis (Centre for Excellence for Looked after Children in Scotland) and specialist voluntary sector agencies.

Focus group discussions helped us gain a better understanding on the reality of life for children who are no longer living with their parents as a result of alcohol which helped inform the development of storybooks and associated materials. The groups also provided valuable feedback on how Rory could be best utilised to help children to understand the situation and the emotions they may experience. Additional resources were also suggested for use with children and young people to help them explore and share their thoughts and feelings.

A number of meetings were held with groups in Edinburgh and Glasgow throughout development, to seek feedback on the new stories and materials as they were being developed.

The Rory 3 storybooks (4 in total) that were developed include a main story with three alternative endings. This enabled the book to be used to explore different situations and outcomes.

The first book, "Rory: The story continues", sees Rory's owner Fred trying to stop drinking. Fred's sister Sophie begins to visit and help look after Fred and Rory. The book ends with Fred asking Rory to live with Sophie so he can get the help he needs.

The subsequent three books explore different outcomes; "Going back home"; "Living with Sophie"; "A new life with Sophie".

A 'create your own ending' resource was also created to allow children to explore what they would like to happen with Rory which could then be used by carers/professionals to discuss and manage expectations of the child in terms of their own situation.

A Feelings Calendar was produced to complement the books to enable children to show their feelings and talk about what was happening in their life. This was suggested by kinship carers who felt that children were often reluctant to talk about their feelings and because it was difficult to demonstrate the impact of contact sessions with parents. This calendar provides a tangible resource which can be used to guide discussions but to inform case conferences.

Following development, a total of 6 kinship carers and 2 professionals working with children and families piloted the CHAT - Rory 3 resources for a period of 6 weeks. Each was given a resource pack containing:

- Rory 3: The story continues
 - Rory – Going back home
 - Rory – Living with Sophie
 - Rory – A new life with Sophie

- Rory 3: Your story
- Rory Feelings Calendar

PILOT FEEDBACK

A final online survey was issued to all who took part in the pilot seeking feedback on how the resource was used. 6 out of the 8 participants in the pilot group responded and provided feedback.

- Four respondents were kinship carers, one was a foster carer and one a professional.
- The resources were used with 7 children aged 6 to 11 years on a one to one basis.

WHICH RESOURCES WERE USED

All respondents used the resources during the pilot period.

Rory 3: The story continues.

This storybook forms the basis of the story and was used by all respondents taking part in the pilot. Feedback on this resource is shown below:

"Very true to life for my Granddaughter"

"He loved the story but felt sad for Rory. He asked a few questions about why Fred didn't just stop drinking".

"Really good story, we discussed what might happen before reading the next books".

Rory 3.1 : Going back home storybook.

This storybook option sees Rory living with Sophie before returning to live with Fred. This storybook was used by 4 respondents. Feedback is shown below:

"She was both happy and worried about Rory going back home. I was able to explain support and what this could be"

"This was his first choice of ending. He liked that Sophie was still seeing Rory too".

"I was reluctant to read this story as I thought it might give false hope to a kinship child but it was clear that Rory could only go home because Fred had stopped drinking and had a lot of support in place".

Rory 3.2: Living with Sophie.

This storybook sees Rory continuing to live with Sophie but seeing Fred. All respondents used this storybook.

"She loved this resource and related to the story and acknowledged that she had similar feelings to Rory, missing her Mum and brother and also disappointment, broken promises and feeling sad".

"I liked the message that it's okay to be sad because you miss someone but that Rory still had hopes of going home but knew he was looked after well by Sophie"

“Was good to reflect on our current situation. She said to me. Sophie’s just like you, she looks after Rory like you look after me”.

Rory 3.3: A new life with Sophie.

This story sees Rory living with Sophie indefinitely and having no contact with Fred. 4 out of the 6 respondents used this storybook. Feedback included:

“She related this to her life with me and the similarities of feeling loved, safe and happy”.

“A nice story of acceptance by Rory, Fred and Sophie about the changes in their lives”.

“She was sad and we did talk about what would happen if she didn’t see her Mum anymore”.

“We liked that Rory got a new friend. We talked about Rory’s new life but that he was sad that Fred didn’t come to see Rory anymore”.

Rory Feelings Calendar:

5 out of 6 respondents used the calendar with the children. Feedback includes:

“Stickers were great and we had a wee talk every night about how he was feeling and what was happening”.

“He enjoys using the stickers daily and is able to say why he has chosen the happy one (mostly) most dates”.

“The diary on the back is also a great way of writing down why he chose happy and encourages him to talk to me about how he is feeling”.

When asked if there was any suggested improvements, 5 out of the 6 respondents said no. One suggested more positive emotions than just happy be shown on the calendar.

RECOMMENDATIONS

All respondents reported that they would recommend the Rory resource to other families/professionals. Feedback included:

“I would highly recommend Rory. It is relevant and the various options are great because there is often uncertainty around what the final outcome might be so it was good to use Rory to talk about the different options”.

“Other people need to have these stories to use, they make difficult conversations possible and Rory is very loveable for the kids too”.

“Very useful resource for both professionals/families to provide greater understanding of alcohol abuse and the consequences.”

When asked how they would describe Rory to others, feedback from all respondents was very positive. Comments included:

“This is a wonderful resource which describes the feelings a child may have when their family circumstances change and they are not be able to verbalise how this feels for them. Very understanding and true to children’s change of life circumstances”

“A lovely set of books that help make discussions about kinship care possible. I would recommend it to anyone who is looking after a child because of a difficult family situation where alcohol is the cause”.

ACHIEVING INTENDED OUTCOMES

Although only a small number took part in the pilot, feedback received has shown that the new CHAT – Rory 3 books and additional materials were well received and children were able to relate to the stories.

When asked if the CHAT – Rory 3 resources had achieved the intended aims, all respondents agreed that it did:

- Help children understand recovery and what that may mean for their parent/carer.
 - Some reported having conversations about alcohol, the consequences and support required.
- Help children to explore the emotions they may experience as a result of being removed from their home.
 - Some respondents reported children relating to Rory's story. Respondents also commented that Rory was happy despite the circumstances was positive for the children. The feelings calendar was popular and enabled discussions about feelings and emotions.
- Help children to cope with the anxiety of not being able to see their parent/carer.
 - A small number reported using the books to facilitate discussions around not being able to see a parent and what it means for them.
- Provide practitioners with resources that can help children and families prepare and cope with the changes in their lives.
 - Again a small number reported that they were able to discuss their own situations with children.

CHALLENGES OF THE PILOT:

The biggest change to our initial plan was developing a suite of Rory books. It was a challenge to capture different experiences of children who can no longer live with their parents as a result of alcohol harm. From the focus groups we learned that there are often

different outcomes depending on family situations which meant that one book would not suit all and a suite of storybooks was more relevant and useful.

The second challenge was engaging with partners to take part in the pilot programme. Despite taking part in the development of resources in focus groups, social workers were not able to take part in the pilot. This was mainly due to the age groups and situations of the families they were working with at that particular time, however, we would hope to be able to explore the use of the resources further with this particular group of professionals following the end of the initial pilot.

LEARNING FOR THE FUTURE:

From the feedback received, it is clear that the resources were well used and achieved their intended outcomes, however, some kinship carers reported additional benefits in that the resources helped them to gain an understanding of how the child they cared for felt.

“My granddaughter related well to this resource relating it to her life with me and the similarities of feeling loved, safe & happy”.

“It was excellent and really helped us both to talk about the situation”.

“It taught us how happy he is with us and also how he realises why he doesn't stay with his parents and how safe he feels”.

“I really enjoyed taking part. I thought the stories were great and it has certainly helped me to talk more freely to my child about our situation. Due to his mums alcohol abuse”.

NEXT STEPS

The Rory storybooks and associated materials will now be finalised based on the feedback provided from respondents. These materials will now form a **CHAT plus pack** which will be available as an addition to the current CHAT resource pack.

The new CHAT plus resource pack will be available to purchase by our network of CHAT trained professionals. We also intend to make CHAT plus available to purchase alongside a short training programme aimed at supporting carers and professionals not currently using CHAT resources.

It is anticipated that the CHAT Plus programme will be available to purchase from Summer 2018.

We hope to continue to monitor and evaluate use of the new CHAT Plus pack in practice.

OUR THANKS

We would like to thank all the families and professionals who took part in the development and pilot of the new CHAT plus resources including Mentor UK, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Celcis (Centre for Excellence for looked after children in Scotland).



Alcohol Focus
SCOTLAND

Reducing harm caused by alcohol



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