### Background

Looked After Children are among the most vulnerable children in our society, often having experienced complex and cumulative trauma which has resulted in their being placed in the care of the Trust. Engagement of Looked After Children (LAC) in their care planning is vital to the delivery of a high quality social work service to this population. The challenges inherent in facilitating meaningful engagement of LAC in formal decision making processes are in tension with their right to be involved (DHSSPS, 2006, UNCRC, 1989). As a service we have a responsibility under the Children (NI) Order 1995 to facilitate meaningful engagement of LAC in these decisions. Research has shown that meaningful engagement of children and young people in the decisions that are being made about their lives can be empowering, safeguard their wellbeing and promote stability. All children and young people have the right to be meaningfully involved in the decision making processes that affect their lives, is enshrined in legislation, policy and best practice directives.

Participation of LAC is a complex task that is often difficult to achieve, requiring skilled practitioners and tailored interventions. Before engaging in this project current practice was that the child or young person would be asked to complete a paper based ‘Listen to Me’ consultation booklet. These booklets were completed in preparation for the child or young person contributing to their statutory LAC review in order ensure that the voice of each child was part of this decision making process. Practice experience evidenced the need to reconsider how we sought to promote the meaningful engagement of children. Baseline data was collected in relation to the participation of 305 children in their statutory LAC reviews, this evidenced 54% completion of the ‘Listen to Me’ consultation booklet. In order to ensure that we are meaningfully engaging children in the decisions made about their care it was decided that we needed to establish a process that would engage as many children as possible, this was addressed through the Institute for Healthcare Improvement Model of Improvement. The project sought to pilot the use of the ‘Mind of My Own’ (MOMO) app via iPad and test whether this brought about positive change.

### Aim

To improve the engagement of young people in expressing their views as part of the Looked After Children Review process to 80% by May 2014

### Method

- Throughout the project we adopted the Institute for Healthcare Improvements (IHI) approach to guiding improvement.
- This approach included testing changes within a project on a small scale, by using the Plan – Do – Study – Act cycle (PDSA).
- This PDSA framework allowed the project to test the MOMO app and assess its impact on the child/young person’s engagement in their LAC review.

### Process measures

The process of using the app, has led to the LAC reviews beginning with consideration of the child’s views. This has been a benefit to the social work team including the chair and the child.

Benefits for the chair of LAC review meetings: chair now has better understanding from the child’s perspective with a more informed, decision making approach.

Benefits for the child: a better quality of care planning for the child’s case, understanding from the child’s perspective with a more informed, decision making approach.

### Outcome measures

The outcome of using the MOMO app in comparison to the previous consultation tool highlights that children and LAC review chairs favour the MOMO app.

The engagement of children in the use of the MOMO app was 100%, exceeding the project aim of 80%. When asked for their views on MOMO all children stated that they enjoyed using MOMO and preferred MOMO to the previous consultation tool.

LAC review chairs also stated that they preferred receiving children’s views via the MOMO app when compared to the previous consultation tool. It was highlighted that the MOMO app very helpful in hearing the voice of the child and in decision making. Development is required in ensuring that the chair receives the MOMO data at least 2 days prior to review.

### Results after using MOMO:

There was a 100% compliance when completing the MOMO app, this exceeded the project aim of 80%

The results highlight the very positive engagement of children and young people in the use of MOMO. The project exceeded the aim of 80% engagement of children in expressing their views and achieved a 100% compliance rate. Comparison of this result with the baseline data identifies a improvement of 54% engagement to 100%.

The project conducted to use of MOMO with a random sample of children (n=11). In order to continue with this positive change the MOMO app will be piloted across all 3 LAC teams in the Trust. If there is resistance to engage from some children this will be explored, including Trust feedback to the MOMO team in relation to further development of the app.

### Challenges

- Data protection & Retention of data when using MOMO app – addressed through completion of Data Access Agreement & Privacy Impact Assessment in ensuring that use of the app is compliant with Trust data protection arrangements.
- Training on use of iPad and MOMO app – addressed in partnership with MOMO team with training developed and disseminated to the 3 LAC Social Work teams.
- Access to iPads for Social Workers – funding has been achieved for 7 iPads across the 3 LAC Social Work teams.

### The Way forward

- Complete pilot of MOMO app with young people across 3 LAC teams – gather quarterly data & spread across directorate.
- 3 year contract has been signed between Trust and MOMO – leading the way in Northern Ireland in participative practice with children.
- iPads disseminated to Social Workers.
- Training roll-out across the service.