

RIVRT Headset

An immersive training tool for social care



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A new training method that uses 360-degree immersive video will soon be available for newly qualified social workers, allowing them to learn about the barriers and enablers to relationships in long-term child protection work by experiencing encounters with the family as a 'fly on the wall'.

The method, detailed in a study published today in *Insert Journal*, follows a social worker's engagement with a family over 11 months, and presents two versions of the same case to show how subtle differences in actions, body language, tone and approach can affect outcomes in social work.

Watched on headsets, the 360-degree videos provide the 'best seat in the house', delivering an immersive, realistic experience so viewers feel they are present during encounters. They also allow viewers to look around the room, observe in their own time and replay scenes on demand.

The two narratives, known as the barrier and enabler version, have different endings. The barrier version sees the family remain on the child protection plan, with the social worker frustrated and the family unhappy, while the enabler version shows the family equipped to deal with their circumstances with support from non-statutory agencies and no longer on a child protection plan.

The study reported on the learning experience of social workers who used the videos during a 2-day training, and the findings suggest that the sensory-rich environment provided by immersive video allowed participants to learn 'vicariously'.

Focus groups held after the training suggested the trainees felt a sense of 'presence', as the 360-degree video replaced their own senses, enabling them to feel the emotion and tone in the scene and develop a level of empathy with both the social worker and the family in the video. Participants also reported using these sensory observations to feel, reflect on and change

elements of their practice, and use role modelling in the enabler video to improve their own practice.

Immersive learning is an immersive field in social work training. It is based on the principles of process modelling¹, which says that people can learn through imitating specific, observable behaviours through observing others. Importantly, it does not require direct experience

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/partners/enterprise/campaigns/tarsem-360>

References

1. Cooner, TS , <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02615479.2023.2257717>, Social Work Education