

ANTSER CASE STUDY

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL

Embedding the Antser Virtual Reality Programme across Southend-on-Sea Borough Council to improve the lives of children and young people in care

ABOUT ANTSER

Antser is an integrated organisation delivering transformation in education, health and social care.

Led by our board of education, trauma and children's services experts, we have combined our experience with innovation and technology to address learning disruption and the underlying causes. Our holistic approach supports both the child and the team around the child – educators, support teams, parents and carers, as well as wider agency groups.

Our solutions range from core compliance to transformation and technology all with one aim in mind – to deliver better outcomes.

1990



reconstruct

Training, consultancy and children's services specialist, also the UK's largest provider of 'Independent Visitors'

2002



carterbrown

UK's largest provider of multidisciplinary assessments

2006



tri.x

Online procedures for children's and adult's services used by 95% of Local Authority market share

2015



cornerstone

Pioneers of the world's first VR experience for fostering and adoption services

2018



antser

Disruptive tech-innovators focused on transforming systems and processes across the health, education and social care landscape

INTRODUCTION: SOUTHEND-ON-SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL ADAPTS TO ANTSEY'S VIRTUAL REALITY TO IMPROVE TRAINING AND SERVICES

Being one of the first local authorities in the UK to implement Antser Virtual Reality (VR) across its services in 2018/19, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council 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 trialling 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. Over the past two years, these groups have embarked on a journey of discovery with Antser and began to explore the VR potential as a group of trainers.

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



AIMS OF THE PROJECT

Using Antser's 2D bespoke immersive films, Southend 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 where the carer/professionals can see trauma from a child's perspective and therefore supporting them to be child centred.

The main objectives the project set out to achieve include:

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



OUTCOMES

During 2019/20, Southend would often host monthly in-person trauma awareness sessions in the local civic center, in a bid to reach members of the community around the borough. These sessions often involved solicitors, headteachers, police officers, and adoption and fostering panel members, allowing the local community to engage and benefit from the VR experience.

In 2019, the VR was also shown to Ofsted who was equally impressed with the innovative nature of the technology tool.

Due to the pandemic, these drop-in sessions were drawn to a halt. Despite this, Southend still successfully engaged individuals and members of the local community through the Virtual Schools' use of VR to support foster carers during the pandemic with managing home learning.

In 2020, Antser continued to work in partnership with Southend to run a VR session at the Eastern Region Conference, an annual event where Virtual School heads and deputy heads come together to learn more about effective school leadership.



OUTCOMES

Using AntserVR, Southend has also delivered a VR session to staff at a children's indoor play centre, Megazone, which runs a community programme for local children. 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.

Despite the pandemic limiting the use of the 3D VR headsets, Southend has found the response to the headsets and 2D films has continued to be just as impactful and has opened up rich conversations about trauma and what changes services can make to do things differently.



In 2021, Southend successfully delivered training to 2 SGO training groups, 3 Adoption Preparation groups (2 virtually and one in person), 5 Skills to Foster virtual groups and 1 direct session with newly qualified social workers (NQSW) and a Virtual School team.

EVALUATION

One of the main benefits of using Antser VR across Southend has been witnessing how this tool engages people, as it brings a different perspective and increases users' understanding of safeguarding and the impact that trauma has on children.

Feedback from foster carers, adopters and even 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 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 to 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 traumatic situations.
- ✓ The VR training has continued to successfully equip users with the skill sets and understanding to take forward in their own practice.



FUTURE PLANS FOR USING ANTSER VR

Looking ahead to the future, Southend is hoping to see Antser's VR be more integrated within its services and across the Borough, more specifically across the education sector.

Southend is in the process of developing the VR's use within their Assessment and Intervention teams, where a practitioner is currently integrating the VR to assess parenting capacity.

The Virtual School plans to continue to implement the VR in more schools around the area, developing a whole school approach to trauma. From engaging all staff members in the school to experience the VR, for example from the receptionist, lunchtime supervisors, through to the Headteacher.

This whole-school approach is designed to support the school in becoming trauma aware and shifting their responses to children.

In addition, the Virtual School is also planning on working with more secondary schools in Southend, aiming to shift some of the school policies in becoming more relational to respond to the many children who have experienced trauma.



A photograph of a family of three sitting at a light-colored wooden table. On the left, a man with short brown hair and a beard is looking towards the center. In the middle, a young girl with brown hair is looking up at the woman on the right. On the right, a woman with curly brown hair is looking towards the girl. On the table, there is a yellow stuffed bear, a white container with hearts, and a blue box of crayons. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. There are decorative geometric shapes in the corners: a pink and dark blue L-shape in the top-left, a pink square in the bottom-right, and a yellow rectangle in the bottom-right corner.

For further information on any of
our solutions please get in touch

hello@antser.com

0800 0209 858

Follow us

  @antsergroup

[antser.com](https://www.antser.com)