

Welcome to our Summer newsletter with a variety of articles, experiences from Family Safeguarding Authorities, developments and updates.

We are sure many will agree that 2021 has been an extremely busy year so far, from our side, we have delivered over 100 virtual workshops and refresher sessions.

Further lockdown restrictions have provided us with the opportunity to continue to find innovative ways of working with Family Safeguarding adopter authorities and whilst we greatly miss meeting colleagues face to face, we recognise the fantastic team working between the SFPC FS Project Team and colleagues in adopter authorities to ensure continued momentum and delivery of their Family Safeguarding models.

Lancashire County Council went live with their FS model on 11th February 2021. Telford and Wrekin Council went live with their Family Safeguarding model on 28th June. Congratulations to both authorities. The SFPC team are currently supporting Wandsworth and Swindon with their Family Safeguarding implementation and looking forward to hopefully having some face to face interaction in the not too distant future.

In other exciting news, thanks to a successful bid for a grant via the Sector Led Improvement Programme (SLIP) we are now in a position to support additional authorities to implement the Family Safeguarding model. We are pleased to advise that our team has now expanded and we would like to take this opportunity to formally welcome Angela Clarke, Deputy Programme Director, Louise Brakes, Practice



Lead and Brooke Donovan, Project Officer. They all bring a wealth of experience and are excited to start supporting those authorities implementing FS as a result of the SLIP funding.

We also look forward to hearing the outcomes of the strand 3 bids for the Regional Recovery grants in September as we are aware of large numbers of authorities from several regions who are bidding for funds to undertake feasibility studies into the benefits of adopting Family Safeguarding in their authorities.

The SFPC DCSs will be meeting in September to discuss how we can work together to share our growing knowledge and experience about the impact of our new ways of working across the wider system in England and it has been great to see Family Safeguarding being mentioned in the Care Review and the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) response to the review publications.

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MEET THE TEAM

Deputy Programme Director - Angela Clarke



Angela qualified as a Social Worker over 30 years ago; starting her career in London, before relocating to the South West for her first senior management role 15 years ago. She has been a Service Director in 3 different Local Authorities and has expertise in leading across the full range of services for children and families. She has led strategic safeguarding partnership arrangements; has extensive experience of developing quality assurance systems; participated in sector-led improvement and peer reviews; and has contributed to positive outcomes from inspection. She is an alumni of the systemic Practice Leadership Development Programme.

Angela is an enthusiast for innovation and improvement, who has led transformation programmes and inspired others to deliver excellence. She is committed to delivering high quality, accountable and ethical public services. A passionate advocate for promoting the upbringing of children by their families, upholding people's rights, strengths-based practice and providing real support to families to overcome adversity. She has supported the values and aims of the Family Safeguarding model since its inception, having helped secure funding to implement it. [@DeputySDirector](#)

Practice Lead - Louise Brakes



Louise is a qualified social worker with over 13 years' experience in children's safeguarding as a practitioner and senior leader. Louise has expertise in leading across service areas including MASH, Assessment and Safeguarding teams and has extensive experience of care planning both as a practitioner and senior leader. Louise is passionate about supporting families to achieve the best possible outcomes through advocating

strengths-based practice to support change. Louise has experience of change management and has worked in several authorities that have undergone restructuring and implemented new models of delivery within children's services. Louise has extensive experience of developing and working alongside partners to design, implement and deliver improvements to services.

Louise has successfully supported the implementation of Family Safeguarding within other local authorities and supported internal and external evaluations of the model. Louise works alongside Liz as a Practice lead as part of the Sector Led Improvement programme and will offer expert advice and guidance to Local Authorities on adopting and implementing the Family Safeguarding model.

[@FSpracticelead](#)

Project Officer - Brooke Donovan



Brooke has worked for Hertfordshire County Council for just over 2 years, and before joining the Family Safeguarding Project team in July 2021, Brooke's previous role was a Service Support Manager in Children's Services. She managed 15 Business Support Officers across MASH, Assessment, Family Safeguarding and Frontline. Both Brooke and her team's day to day work was to support the frontline teams and services.

Brooke also played an important role in the Covid Response team, recruiting over 40 workers from September 2020 to ensure teams were fully resourced through the Covid 19 pandemic. Prior to Brooke's time at HCC, she worked in recruitment for 5 years and before that, The Football Association for 9 years. Brooke will be supporting the Sector Led Improvement side of the Project. Keep up to date Follow us on Twitter [@FamilySafeHerts](#)



IMPACT OF FAMILY SAFEGUARDING IMPLEMENTATION



On 21st June 2021 What Works Centre, commissioned by the Department for Education, published their Family Safeguarding Pilot Report.

This evaluation report explores the implementation of the Family Safeguarding model in Cambridgeshire who were the trailblazer authority for the pilot. The pilot report aimed to provide early insights into the rollout of the model and found that most elements of the model were implemented despite Cambridgeshire launching their FS model weeks before the start of a global pandemic.

The findings of the report are testament to the hard work carried out by Cambridgeshire in setting up their Family Safeguarding model and indeed to the positive outcomes the model provides for Children and their families.

“Potential benefits of Family Safeguarding reported by staff and families included improved engagement of families, improved outcomes particularly for parents, as well as de-escalation of statutory involvement and greater momentum, i.e. less drift and delay in cases”.

The full report can be found here: [Strengthening Families, Protecting Children: Family Safeguarding Pilot Evaluation Report](https://www.whatworks-csc.org.uk/whatworks-csc.org.uk)

- What Works for Children's Social Care ([whatworks-csc.org.uk](https://www.whatworks-csc.org.uk))



LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL – “our FS transformation journey”



Lancashire Family Safeguarding went live on 11th February 2021. To celebrate, we welcomed nearly 600 colleagues to our virtual launch on 1st March 2021.

The highlight of this event was that we had the privilege of hearing from children and families who are working with our services and who were willing to share what they felt good practice looks and feels like to them. They spoke about empathy, the provision of practical support, excellent communication skills, and most importantly, professionals working with families in partnership - truly listening and responding to their views in a meaningful way.

Their advice reflected the direction of travel here in Lancashire. We aspire to create a culture of kindness throughout all our Children's Services and we aim to do this through practice that is strength-based and trauma-informed. In fact, it was for this reason that we chose to implement the Family Safeguarding Model; with its core components including responsive teams that work with families proportionately, that offer expert support at the right time and right pace, and that seek to identify and fortify existing family strengths whilst facilitating change and personal growth through the skilled use of motivational interviewing, the model could not better match Lancashire's ethos.

And it's going well!

In the nearly 6 months since we went live, we have set up a Participation, Engagement and Coproduction group that has been pivotal in creating Lancashire's Parent's Forum - a consortium of experts by experience who are supporting us to create family friendly practices and policies throughout our service. The PEC group now have ambitions to set up a similar group for children. We have developed communities of practice to promote growth and development of our Consultant Social Workers

in support of our aspiration of becoming a learning organisation. We are well on our way to recruiting to the newly created Adult Specialist posts, we have launched a revised continuum of need and associated guidance aligning this to strength-based practice and language, and we have just completed Workbook Masterclasses from the ever-helpful team at Hertfordshire.

We are currently undertaking a phase of self-evaluation; allowing a moment to reflect on all that has been achieved since we began our transformation journey, and all that is yet to come. Although we have not yet collated our feedback from families, I will close this piece with some of the insights we have gained from Family Safeguarding professionals through this process:

"The overall ethos and principles are an extension to the main social work principles and felt like a natural fit to the way in which I tried to work in general".

- Social Worker.

"During my time in family safeguarding, I have been able to develop therapeutic relationships with parents and I am able to give them the right support and advice. A recent positive experience has been working closely in multiagency working to prevent a hospital admission. The parent is now thinking differently and more positively about life which is having a beneficial effect on the children. Hearing this makes me love what I do".

- Mental Health Practitioner

"I feel supported by my consultant social worker and manager. During group supervisions I feel that my views and expertise is listened to as well as being given the opportunity to reflect".

- Domestic Abuse Practitioner.

Shelley Ball - Family Safeguarding Project Lead (Systems)



LANGUAGE

On the 7th June the Family Safeguarding Assistant Directors group were treated to an inspiring and thought-provoking presentation by Portsmouth, on the use of language in our interactions.

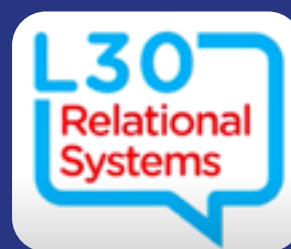
Portsmouth have put a lot of energy into thinking, with their workforce, about the language used and the impact it can have, when speaking to and recording information on families and the benefits are certainly paying off. In a recent focus group, a CP chair from Portsmouth spoke about the focus being on “responsible parenting not perfect parenting” and that this was allowing the building of better working relationships with families.

The message is clear, we all need to continually check ourselves and others, on the language we use. Portsmouth have reframed the way they challenge, as they recognize it is important not to shut people down but enable dialogue and reflection by changing from, “calling people out” to “calling people in”. That means we invite the person into an inclusive discussion on the language used and the impact as opposed to challenge that can be perceived as hostile and a criticism. This frequently leads to a defensive, closed response and an unwillingness to reflect and be open to change.

Events over the last eighteen months have challenged us all, in terms of equality and fairness and emphasised the need to be more empathetic and respectful of each other. We all need to be continually aware that our choice of words has an impact upon the outcome of a conversation. For example – talking to a parent about the risk they pose to their child is likely to result in a very different response to an empathetic conversation on the challenges a parents substance misuse has upon their ability to be available emotionally and practically for their children with the offer of support to help this change. I would suggest if someone accused any of us of putting others

at risk this would have a very different impact than a conversation on the specific actions that were causing concern with help and support to change. This could not be more important than with the families that we meet and is an integral part of Family Safeguarding, values and behaviours.

Motivational Interviewing is a pillar of Family Safeguarding and key to enabling social workers to develop the listening skills e.g. when ‘panning for gold’ to find examples of motivational statements that come from parents that we want to reinforce/harness and finding ways to convey confidence/hope/empathy that will enable us to engage families in choosing to accept the support we can offer them to create change for their children and in their own lives. It is vital we enable our practitioners to be creative in finding a different language to reflect restorative and motivational approaches and gain confidence in this area, if we are to move practice away from adversarial practices that have dominated child protection practice over the last two decades. To this end, several Family Safeguarding authorities are already investing in recruiting dedicated Motivational Interviewing Practitioners, as part of promoting and embedding their ongoing learning and development offer to practitioners.



Here is a link to a resource we have found helpful on this subject

[Restorative Language Video.](#)

Please share with staff and think about initiating a strategy in your authority to promote the conversations on the importance of the language we use.



WALSALL TEAM MANAGER – experience of FS case supervision

We have been holding group supervision sessions since the Family Safeguarding model went live in September 2020.

The group supervision sessions enable everyone present to consider the children's lived experiences in much more detail, particularly when considering the impact of parental substance misuse, domestic violence and mental health difficulties on children, from different points of view. This helps social workers to come up with different hypothesis about what might be happening and moves away from social workers becoming 'fixed' in their thinking.

The group supervision sessions offer an opportunity for practitioners to appropriately challenge one another and a more in depth conversations about threshold and language can take place. The adult practitioners' input is invaluable, as they help social workers to consider what family members and professionals working with family understand from their reports and conversations from a 'non-social work' point of view. This results in more effective communication between family members and social workers. Having the input of the

adult practitioners also means there is a greater understanding of what the adult's life experience may mean for the child and how this impacts on their parenting capacity.


Business support minute our supervision sessions which means I can focus on being fully present in the discussion to ensure more meaningful conversations, reflections and outcomes are considered. I have developed an agenda that helps me to structure the group supervision sessions so that participants remain child focused, consider Social GRRACCEESS, the cycle of change and focus on what they are most and least worried about.

We have received very positive feedback from social workers and adult practitioners about the usefulness of group supervisions and I am a keen advocate for ensuring this model continues and is reflected where possible in other service areas.



**Walsall
Council**

finally...

We hope you have all managed to enjoy a well deserved break over the summer. As always, lots has been going and we are already in full swing as we head into Autumn. As a Project Team we are very excited to see what the next few months have in store for Family Safeguarding. Keep up to date with key developments by following us on Twitter  @FamilySafeHerts

Thank you for reading our Newsletter. If you have any questions or would like to find out more about Family Safeguarding please email us FSProjectTeam@hertfordshire.gov.uk