

THE PROJECT AT A GLANCE



OUR INNOVATION (HERTFORDSHIRE)

We have redesigned our child protection services to high risk families by bringing together children's social workers with specialists in adult mental health, domestic abuse and substance misuse. Our integrated support has helped to reduce the numbers of children coming into care and costs across public services.



FAMILY SAFEGUARDING

Bringing together all the professionals we need, under one roof to protect children

CHALLENGE

Without access to specialist help, children's social workers alone cannot address the risk of harm to children from parental mental health, domestic abuse and substance misuse. Children's social workers don't have enough training or expertise in these areas and need to refer parents on to other agencies, where they may not meet eligibility thresholds and may be reluctant to attend appointments.

INNOVATION

We created 22 co-located, multi-disciplinary Family Safeguarding Teams (FSTs) including adult specialists who provide direct help for the issues that place their children at risk. We changed our focus from 'monitoring compliance' to the engagement of families and producing change through Motivational Interviewing. FSTs use an electronic 'Workbook' that enables information sharing and reduces the recording burden on social workers.

PARTNERS

The innovation was founded on, and overseen by, a strong multi-agency partnership including the County Council, CCGs, police, probation, Recovery Service and the local mental health trust. Adult specialist posts across our 22 safeguarding teams are funded and employed directly by these organisations.

CO-LOCATING MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAMS

We have brought together social workers, domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health specialists into 22 co-located teams under a unified management structure. Information sharing between agencies means social workers can offer the right support at the right time to families, to help them reduce the risks to their children.

FOCUSING ON FAMILIES' ABILITIES

Motivational Interviewing is a proven method of practice for increasing the engagement of service users with their workers. It is a core tool of the Family Safeguarding Teams, with 280 staff across all disciplines receiving training and participating in skills development workshops.

SIMPLIFYING RECORDING PROCESSES

We have developed the 'Workbook' - a new interface to our Integrated Care System (ICS) that drastically reduces the time that Social Workers spend recording information, and which enables all FST members to share and access information about families.

TARGETED LOCAL AND NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

We intend to extend the model to include a wider mix of professionals, including educational and child mental health specialists to improve their life chances and health. In addition, we are working with other local authorities who are interested in adopting our model.

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

Creating a culture that staff want to be part of

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the new model. This has resulted in lower social worker turnover, fewer vacancies and reduced spend on agency staff. Attracting and recruiting social workers to work for us has been noticeably easier.

Change at the right pace

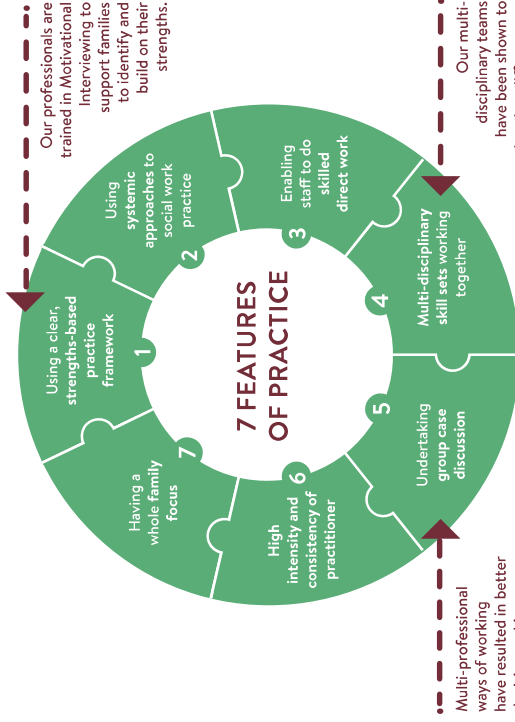
The implementation to date has been incredibly fast-paced given the nature of what we set out to do and the scale on which we have done it, across such a large county as Hertfordshire. Strong leadership (including cross-party member support), good project management, a workforce development strategy were all important factors in this success.

Making change happen within existing contexts

We have also learned how hard it is to change our culture and social work staff find it difficult to practice motivationally in an unchanged adversarial legal framework. Recruitment of mental health specialists has been and remains more challenging due to national shortages of professionals across all disciplines.

Strong leadership to set norms around data sharing

Agreeing information sharing protocols was inevitably challenging, in particular in relation to matching and collating sensitive information at a family level. Strong leadership at senior levels across all partner agencies has been important to resolving these issues, as have good personal relationships across the partnership at strategic and operational levels.



OUR IMPACT

280 staff worked with adults and children in

940 families of which **44%** were experiencing domestic abuse.

IN THE FIRST 12 MONTHS

The intervention reduced:

- CHILD IN NEED CASES: **-9%**
- CHILD PROTECTION PLAN CASES: **-29%**

The average number of days children spent in care more than halved

'Working with the pair of them, I would give them 10/10 ... they've really pushed me forward. And I have pushed myself forward at the same time cos they've let me do it my own way.'

(feedback from father)

Estimated annual cost saving for children's services of **£2.6m**

...with additional estimated savings of **£107,000** to the police due primarily to decreased incidents of domestic abuse and **£200,000** to the NHS due to a **53% reduction** in emergency admissions