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.

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 and recruiting social workers to work for us has been noticeably easier.

WHAT WE’VE LEARNED

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 within 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 and which enables all Family Safeguarding Team members to share and access information at a family level. Strong leadership is needed to ensure consistency of data sharing.

OUR IMPACT

"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 because they’ve let me do it my own way.”

(Feedback from father)

Our multi-disciplinary teams have been shown to make a key difference to outcomes for families.

280 staff worked with adults and children in 940 families of which 44% were experiencing domestic abuse.

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

£2.6m

Estimated annual cost saving for children’s services 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
OUR INNOVATION (LEEDS CITY COUNCIL)
We have embedded restorative practices within social care systems and children’s services. This included developing Family Group Conferencing as a core offer for families and intensive work on domestic violence prevention and pre-birth assessment.

CHALLENGE
Leeds has a clear aim: to reduce the number of children unnecessarily coming into care. Our challenge is to create safe, high-quality packages of support to extended family and kinship carers, working alongside families to prevent children being taken into care.

INNOVATION
We are embedding restorative practice across all council services, offering a common theory of practice for the whole workforce, as well as developing Family Group Conferencing as a core offer to families in a wide range of circumstances. Our aim is to create the conditions in which families can mend relationships and make change for themselves.

PARTNERS
Family Valued is a cross-agency partnership led by Leeds City Council and includes:
- West Yorkshire Police
- Local NHS and other health services
- Local schools
- Drug and alcohol services
- Leeds Safeguarding Children Board
- Domestic violence services
- Housing
- Probation
- Family Judge for West Yorkshire
- The Leeds Health and Wellbeing Board
- Leeds Community Safety Partnership
- Leeds Children’s Trust Board

USING FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCING AND RESTORATIVE PRACTICE
We are using Family Group Conferencing (FGC) at scale, exploring ways of extending the offer to families affected by domestic violence and commissioning additional support services according to what families say they need. All families who are subject to an Initial Child Protection Conference are now offered an FGC.

 family valued

FAMILY VALUED
Taking a restorative practice approach to put the family back at the heart of children’s social care

A WORKING CULTURE OF HIGH SUPPORT AND HIGH CHALLENGE
Leeds has a 75,000 strong workforce involved in lives of children in some way. The new approach to working with families is reflected in new ways of working with one another. Through large-scale training programmes, restorative practice is being embedded as the core ethos of working in Leeds.

AN ‘OBSESSIVE’ FOCUS ON THE THINGS THAT MATTER
Leeds began by setting one clear aim: reducing the number of children unnecessarily coming into care. Everything stems from this. We use Outcomes Based Accountability to track our progress towards our goals for children and families, and make this data visible to everyone.

A CLEAR VISION FROM A CROSS-AGENCY LEADERSHIP TEAM
The Leeds leadership team has set a clear and strong vision that means everyone understands what we are trying to achieve together. This extends across the cross-agency partnership and includes managers at the most senior level and our elected members.

WHAT WE’VE LEARNED
Building momentum around culture change
Early findings from the evaluation show reported evidence of momentum-building around restorative practice, suggesting culture and practice change. Feedback from training sessions is overwhelmingly positive. FGC principles are seen by a wide group of stakeholders as having wider application to a range of family-based decision-making models.

Supporting social workers
A radical change to practice can be unsettling if it feels as if your professional competence is challenged. The model requires social workers to relinquish some control, as they were previously the only people who could refer to FGC. It’s been important to give safety to social workers to operate in the knowledge that they will be supported by managers.

Communication crucial to learning
In addition to clarity of communication from the leadership, we have found that continuous communication and engagement over time is important in ensuring all partners are on board with the process as it develops and that learning is shared.

A need to join up data
The daily meeting has required intelligence sharing and has massively opened up an understanding of the knowledge that sits in services across the city. It evidenced a lack of co-ordination between services, with a victim of domestic violence typically experiencing up to ten calls from a range of services.

OUR IMPACT
10k
PRACTITIONERS
across the children’s workforce and beyond trained in restorative practice

13% REDUCTION IN THE FIRST YEAR

£755
Saved per family

100% of families surveyed in 2016

OFFICE OF THE CHILD IN NEED
OFFICE OF THE CHILD PROTECTION PLANS

FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCING
Managing a whole family focus
Having a strengths-based practice framework
Using systemic approaches to social work practice
Ensuring high intensity and consistency of practitioner
Enabling staff to do skilled direct work
Undertaking group case discussion
Multi-disciplinary skills working together

7 FEATURES OF PRACTICE

“‘You get your views heard and everyone gets their chance to put their point across and everyone gets listened to. It was really, really, positive for us all.”
(Mother, Case Study Two, Leeds Family Valued Evaluation Report)
OUR INNOVATION (STOCKPORT METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL)

We have integrated social workers with the wider children’s workforce, including health colleagues, and located these teams in the heart of communities, linked closely with schools. This new Stockport Family model is underpinned by restorative practice, helping families to deal with conflict and challenge and repair relationships.

WHAT WE’VE LEARNED

We have spearheaded an ambitious programme of cultural and structural transformation with a clear strategic vision. The leadership team of Stockport Family has developed an approach to service improvement which blends skilled project management and value-based service design to create the conditions in which practitioners thrive. The approach to the transformation has changed the way we do change. Conversations and collaboration is valued over processes to achieve change at pace. The “Your goal is my goal”, shared outcomes approach has gained traction in the wider public service reform agenda.

Embedding a relationship based model supports whole staff groups across partnerships to constructively address challenges. The relational/restorative work with families is resulting in positive changes, protecting children from harm and avoiding escalation.

Relationships with anchor institutions within communities are fundamental to the delivery of services to children and families. Linking early help activity to health visits and school settings supports community driven early intervention.

PROJECTED COST SAVINGS

Our experience has been fantastic, very supportive. They help me to bring the best out in my child... like skills and learning new approaches. As a mum you just go on doing what you think is best but knowing the special skills that they teach me - that’s been a great help.

Family interview

CHALLENGE

Traditional children’s social care systems can fail to differentiate adequately between ‘struggling’ and ‘harmful’ families. This can mean that some families are subjected to costly and unnecessary interventions. Relationships between organisations and families can be adversarial and unproductive, resulting in multiple ‘hand-offs’.

INNOVATION

We adopted a restorative approach to help families identify solutions for themselves, instead of professionals making decisions about them. We were organised within a locality structure to deliver whole family services, taking out transfer points and with a focus on the journey of the child.

PARTNERS

Enhanced partnership working is fundamental to the Stockport Family model, moving from co-location to integration and developing a ‘your goal is my goal’ approach.

OUR IMPACT

Services for children have improved at every stage of the child’s journey. Good social work practice is now in place across all children’s services in Stockport. Social work practice is consistently strong. Workers know children well, and effective partnership working and a wide range of services, including an extensive range of early help support, are available to help and protect children.

Cofsted 2017
OUR INNOVATION (LONDON BOROUGH OF EALING)

We have reshaped the way we work with young people in and on the edge of care. The Brighter Futures model enables workers to build effective, consistent relationships with young people, families, communities and carers to bring about sustained change.

INNOVATION

The Brighter Futures programme is focused on building effective, consistent relationships with young people, families, communities and carers to bring about sustained change. We want to get better at supporting young people and families where there is a risk of breakdown, and to ensure that where children and young people are looked after by Ealing they can be placed with foster carers locally.

PARTNERS

Brighter Futures is a cross-agency partnership led by the London Borough of Ealing and including:

- West London Mental Health NHS Trust
- Ealing Clinical Commissioning Group

WHAT WE’VE LEARNED

Shared casework results in better support for professionals and young people alike

Reduced caseloads and increased administrative support have created time to dedicate to young people. The regular group supervision enables discussion of issues or cases, improving the quality of decisions and ability for professionals such as youth workers to take action.

Creating a new team identity

The new model has created a culture where there is energy, enthusiasm and shared learning. Leaders and team members seek and consider multiple perspectives and views on work with children, families and young people and how the team is working together. An openness to and respect for knowledge and expertise from within and outside the team leads to more productive outcomes.

The value of the Dyadic Developmental Programme

The Dyadic Developmental Programme has allowed workers to develop a shared language of PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy), which has been shared with foster carers. Staff and foster carers are able to use the tools learnt through DDP to suit a specific situation.

Giving flexibility to team leaders

A core framework was developed for what carers are able to use the tools learnt through DDP to suit a specific situation. A core framework was developed for what carers are able to use the tools learnt through DDP to suit a specific situation.

7 FEATURES OF PRACTICE

A space where team members jointly hypothesise and develop a shared understanding of the family and relationships.

An integrated training programme supports workers to work differently to achieve better outcomes.

Foster carers report that the training has improved their interactions with their foster children and their ability to prevent situations escalating into crisis.

OUR IMPACT

9 young people moved out of residential placements during the pilot

£800k

...with associated cost avoidance of around £800k

“The support I am getting helps me to achieve new things that I wouldn’t do before.”

Young person
The project at a glance

Creating stronger communities

A fundamental change to the way local practitioners and partners work together to safeguard vulnerable children

Challenge

North East Lincolnshire has seen a rise in the number of children identified as being ‘in need’, with a significant rise in the number of looked after children and child protection plans in recent years. A high proportion of these cases were repeat referrals and this has put substantial strain on services in the region.

Innovation

The innovation brought together four established tools within social work and community practice: outcomes based accountability, restorative practice, Signs of Safety and Family Group Conferencing. This shift enabled practitioners to accurately identify risk and focus practice on conflict resolution.

Whole system buy in

In order to achieve improved outcomes at ‘whole population level’ the whole system needs to be engaged. It is not just the Council that is responsible for the outcomes of children and families, every agency has a part to play. All partner agencies have been engaged from the start (this is key). We all own the changes that need to be made across the system. Key partners have been trained in OBA, Restorative Practice and Signs of Safety. Creating Strong Communities was instrumental in the development of an NELC Outcomes Framework which has given absolute clarity to staff, citizens and our partners on what our priorities are.

What we’ve learned

Leadership at all levels and across agencies

If we had to give only one essential factor in ensuring success, it would be to model the behaviour from the top. This is critical. Our Chief Executive ensured this happened, by rolling out Restorative Leadership to all managers and implementing Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) across the council; this has ensured that everyone understands the principles, uses the same simple and understandable language, and importantly, is achieving real and sustained improvements.

Workforce development

This programme is the foundation of a huge workforce development plan which is underway in NELC. O-19 aims to change how the children’s workforce integrate to deliver services for the future in this area. Restorative practice is different way of working. We ‘do with’ rather than ‘doing for’ or ‘doing to’. This is a huge culture change, but it really makes a difference. Families are engaged from the start and understand the changes they need to make – they own the responsibility.

Celebrating and affirming success

It’s really important to shout about the successes that have been achieved – and keep doing it. It keeps everybody engaged and motivated and helps to bring more partners along that had perhaps struggled. We made a film, produced newsletters, showcased at events etc. It reminds everyone how important their role is in achieving real and sustained change.

The project at a glance

Our innovation (North East Lincolnshire Council)

We created an innovative approach to social care called the ‘Creating Stronger Communities’ model, fundamentally changing the way local practitioners and partners work together to safeguard children.

Our impact

COST SAVING ACROSS 20 FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCES

There is evidence of a saving of £18.20 for every £1 spent

£18.20

£1

-50%

-75%

-18%

“I am glad we had the FGC it has made things better for us.”

Family Group Conferencing service user

88%

90%

Reduced referrals to social care

-75%

Child in need cases

-18%

Using a clear, strengths-based practice framework

1

Using systemic approaches to social work practice

2

Having a whole family focus

3

High intensity and consistency of practitioner

4

Enabling staff to do skilled direct work

5

Undertaking group case discussions

6

Multi-disciplinary skill sets working together

7

“Active use of restorative practice to implement change.”

Family Group Conferencing service user

Indicated that the application of signs of safety generated clear benefits in the way they worked with families.