

Keeping Families Together

Innovation

Following a successful bid to the Department for Education's Innovation Programme, West Berkshire Council was allocated funding in early 2017. West Berkshire Council is rolling out Hertfordshire's ground-breaking Family Safeguarding model (which achieved a 49% reduction in the number of children with child protection plans) bringing together a co-located, multi-agency teams with colleagues specialising in substance misuse, adult mental health, domestic abuse and access to clinical psychologists to address the issues that place children at risk of harm. There are four key elements to the proposed Family Safeguarding model are as follows: ● multi-disciplinary Family Safeguarding Teams; ● a core skills set with Motivational Interviewing at its heart; ● a structured 'workbook' approach to assessing parent's 'capacity for change'; ● an outcomes based performance framework. Family Safeguarding is a whole system change approach for child protection. The model creates multi-disciplinary, co-located teams that work together to address the issues of domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health that place children at risk of significant harm.

Partners

The innovation was founded on, and overseen by, a strong multi-agency partnership including the CCGs, Police, Probation, Swanswell Recovery Service and the local Mental Health Trust. Adult specialist posts across our 2 safeguarding teams are funded and employed directly by these organisations

Focus on families' abilities and support to make change happen

The concept of Family Safeguarding is a simple one: get people who are working with the same family to work in a team and share the concerns and risks

The shift to focussing on outcomes

Children's Services have changed the focus of how we work with families to a more motivational approach. This is a move away from our previous adversarial approach towards a more collaborative way of working where we aim to motivate parents to identify for themselves the change needed within their families rather than imposing change upon them. It is important that as professionals we come together to support parents to identify their own reasons for change and the actions which they need to take to make the necessary changes to ultimately keep their children safe. The overall aim is to bring about long term change within families which is driven by the parents themselves and is therefore likely to be more sustainable.



Co-located multi-disciplinary teams to provide joined-up support

Our workers are trained in working with and supporting families to understand why we are involved and supporting them to make the necessary changes

Multi-disciplinary teams are made up of

Social Workers work with families to support them to make the changes in their lives to keep their children safe.

Family Support Workers work with families and children and provide support to social workers
Domestic Abuse Practitioners support victims of domestic abuse, help them to recognise domestic abuse, and support them to make changes to safeguard their family

Domestic Abuse Officers work with perpetrators of domestic abuse to support them to recognise the impact of their actions and how these can affect their families.

Recovery workers work with parents who are experiencing difficulties with either drug(s), alcohol or both, and support them to make positive lifestyle changes

Mental Health Practitioners work with parents who are experiencing mental health difficulties
Psychologists work with parents on different aspects of parenting that may affect their children.

Changing our culture

Our multi-disciplinary team works with families to support them and address the difficulties they may be experiencing


Previously, social workers were often process-driven and task-focussed, following activities laid out in Child Protection or Child in Need plans. Relationships with families had a tendency to be adversarial. Case supervision would involve a meeting between the social worker and their manager, which would often involve summarising what was happening to the case and identifying further tasks and actions for the social worker. Before and after the meeting, the social worker would spend additional time contacting other agencies to gather information and discussing next steps. Now, group case supervision includes all the professionals working with the family and is outcome-driven and solution-focussed, with an emphasis of helping the family to utilise their strengths.

Simplified processes to share information

We have developed a new interface to our Integrated Care System known as the work book that reduces the time that social workers spend recording information

Tools and protocols to support practice

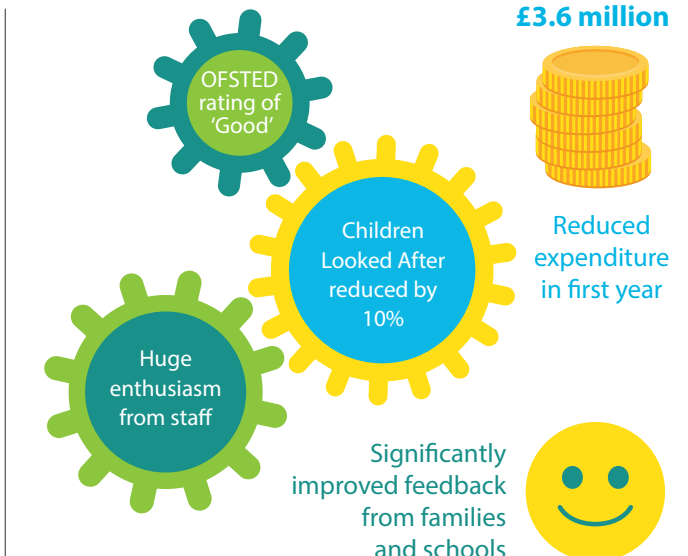
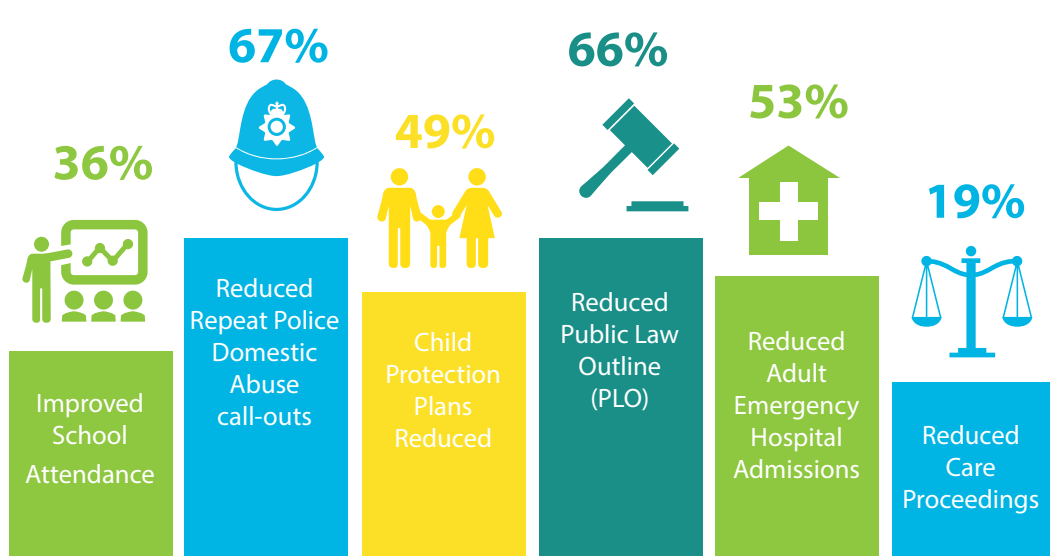
The Workbook guides the Family Safeguarding worker through the interventions they undertake with families over time. It evidences parental capacity to change, and incorporates tools to analyse risk and need. It helps to define priority issues and enables staff to set and track progress towards goals for each family member. The single family workbook for all professionals, combined with co-located working has reduced the amount of time spent on recording, travelling, meetings and writing separate reports. The Workbook provides a succinct record of the case, and has proved helpful in reducing time spent preparing for case proceedings.



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

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Findings from Hertfordshire County Council Family Safeguarding Programme.



John's Story

John has a long-term alcohol addition, repeated failed reduction attempts and a second baby on the way. The family has child protection status. These are John's reflections on Family Safeguarding:

"Mellow, trustworthy. Feel can be open able to offload. It is good – if we don't have them where would we be?"

It's all different, all the family are open about it (my drinking) ... it's made me feel better cos I haven't got to hide it now ... before I started working with the Family Safeguarding team I'd give myself around about a 3 and now an 8 or 9 ... I do feel a hell of lot better I really really do.

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

Mary's Story

Mary has had previous children removed. She is in an abusive relationship and using drink and drugs. The family has PLO status. Family Safeguarding has supported Mary to look after her new baby.

"All the support – the social worker, the mental health worker and domestic violence worker – all came together. They made their plans and they've worked for me. Without the support I've had ... I wouldn't have her today. She's my little miracle.

I'd like to thank everyone for what they've done. I have a new life and a new beginning. I want to get her into school. Never go into an abusive relationship. Do all the things she needs. I am on cloud nine.

"We held her and the unborn baby at the focus of all the interventions and made her feel safe. It worked well. Mum was ready to engage. She empowered herself to move on"
Mary's Social Worker

From the Dad's Domestic Abuse Group

"I'll be honest, when I was I was being sent on it, obviously I didn't want to come but it has been really engaging"

"I came along and was sceptical. I was very arrogant like I don't need help ... after one or two sessions now I really enjoy it – genuinely"

"If I'm sliding down a slippery slope I know there's wider help out there if I need it. It's really helped change me"

"It's completely changed me. Being able to reflect on things, be more open minded with relationships it's massively helped. Being able to analyse and break-down problems that have happened and see how they might escalate. Being able to read into it and learn a bit of self-control"

"It's definitely helped my children. I've noticed the difference. I feel calmer in myself. If I'm calmer my children are happier"