

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES CABINET PANEL
WEDNESDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2018 AT 10.00AM**

<u>Agenda Item</u> <u>No.</u> 6
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PROGRESS REPORT ON THE OUTCOMES FROM FAMILY SAFEGUARDING

Report of the Director of Children's Services

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1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To update members on the progress of Family Safeguarding in Hertfordshire, to share progress on the extension of Family Safeguarding with other Local Authorities and within Hertfordshire and to outline the outcomes achieved.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Family Safeguarding is a whole system change to how child protection services are delivered in Hertfordshire. It was initially funded with a grant of £4.86m that was awarded to the County Council in January 2015 from the DfE's Innovation Fund (Wave 1) This report outlines the work being undertaken and the outcomes for children, families and the workforce that have been achieved during the last year. Family Safeguarding operates within the broader continuum of support to children, young people and families within Children's Services and across the partnership of agencies in Hertfordshire.
- 2.2 In January 2017, the DfE's Innovation Fund (Wave 2) awarded a grant of £11.6m to implement the Family Safeguarding model within four other Authorities, and also to extend the Family Safeguarding model in Hertfordshire. This funding is to focus on improving the educational attainment of children in need/in need of protection at the end of Key Stage 2 (KS2) and to improve mental health outcomes for children in need/in need of protection who have suffered abuse and neglect within their families.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 For Hertfordshire County Council to work closely with the partnership to continue to gather data on a cross agency basis in order to further build on the evidence base for this way of working and the improved outcomes for reduced costs that can be achieved.
- 3.2 For the Panel to receive a further paper updating on progress in Autumn 2018

3. Background

- 4.1 The Family Safeguarding model was implemented to transform the delivery of child protection services across the County. The Council's aim was to keep more children at risk of significant harm and impairment of their health and wellbeing safely within their families, by tackling the 'Toxic Trio' of substance misuse, domestic abuse and parental mental health. Officers sought to do this by:
- 4.1.1 Developing multi-disciplinary teams to include expertise in domestic abuse, mental health and substance misuse within children's social work teams;
 - 4.1.2 Establishing Motivational Interviewing (MI) as the unifying method of practice for all staff in the teams. Motivational interviewing is a counselling method that helps people resolve ambivalent feelings and insecurities to find the internal motivation they need to change their behaviour. It is a practical, empathetic, and short-term process that takes into consideration how difficult it is to make life changes.
 - 4.1.3 Adapting the nationally mandated children's services recording system (Integrated Children's System, ICS)) to reduce the burden of bureaucracy and provide for integrated recording across all professional disciplines.
- 4.2 Children's Services have changed the approach to working with parents, moving away from the adversarial systems and processes within which child protection is practiced nationally and instead developed relationship based interventions that better engage parents to accept help with the issues that place their children at risk.
- 4.3 Family Safeguarding was fully operating in Hertfordshire from November 2015. In July 2017, the independent evaluation by the University of Bedfordshire was published, using intelligence gathered between June 2015 and June 2016. The evaluation concluded very early in the implementation of the project which went on to achieve some even better outcomes in some areas.
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-safeguarding-hertfordshire-an-evaluation>). The evaluation highlighted the following improvements identified as a result of Family Safeguarding:

Figure 1 University of Bedfordshire evaluation 30/06/2015 – 30/06/2016

	% Change
Children on Protection Plans reduced	-29%
Domestic Abuse Call Outs reduced	-66%
Adult A & E Admissions reduced	-53%
School Attendance improved	+36%
Days in care for newly allocated cases reduced	-39%

- 4.4 The evaluation considered that there is strong evidence that Family Safeguarding produced substantial reductions in expenditure during the first year of operation. These were identified as £2.6m for Hertfordshire County Council. They also saw promising indications from the reduced use of emergency health services and police involvement that the impact of Family Safeguarding would continue to lead to the reduced use of services and costs for other agencies. The evaluation concluded that all local authorities should consider the potential that multidisciplinary working has for improving practice and outcomes in Children's Services.

- 4.5 The additional wave 2 funding has enabled Hertfordshire to support the implementation of Family Safeguarding in four other Local Authorities; Luton Borough Council, Peterborough City Council, West Berkshire Council and Bracknell Forest District Council. These are all unitary authorities and in total the caseloads in the four authorities equal the size of those in Hertfordshire. The purpose of this work is to extend the evidence base, by working with an independent evaluating body to test whether the same positive results could be achieved across a number of authorities with different demographic profiles, partnerships and Ofsted grades.
- 4.6 Wave 2 funding for Hertfordshire's families was granted to focus on improving the emotional wellbeing for children and to see whether focused input on children's educational attainment could help improve their welfare and life chances. The grant of £819,230 over twenty months will extend the remit of Hertfordshire Family Safeguarding Teams. This is being developed in two ways:
- 4.6.1 Two deputy Head Teachers (to be based within the Virtual School) have been appointed to help primary schools and children's social work teams to develop and monitor individual educational plans for children in need and children in need of protection to improve their educational attainment in English and Maths in the year up to Key Stage 2. There will also be two family learning practitioners, based in the Family Safeguarding teams who will help connect parents with support offered by HAFLS (Hertfordshire Adult and Family Learning Service) to support parental literacy and family learning as this has been shown to improve children's educational attainment. Many of the parents who are supported through the Family Safeguarding teams have explained that they dropped out of schools before the statutory school leaving age as they were unable to read or write properly (often connected with other adverse factors in their childhood). They would value support to improve their reading and writing as well as their relationships with schools, in order to support their children. This project will run between Easter 2018 and December 2019. The impact of this work will be independently evaluated by York Consultancy LLP, on behalf of the DfE and results will be published nationally.
- 4.6.2 In addition, two Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) psychologists are in the process of recruitment. These staff will be placed within the multi-disciplinary Family Safeguarding teams to conduct assessment and treatment work with children who have mental health support needs as a result of the abuse/neglect they have suffered. This work aims to help children to regulate their feelings and emotions and strengthen the bonds they have with their parents. It is hoped that by focusing on children under 11, this will give children the support they need to become more resilient, improve their behaviour and relationships and help protect them and prevent them coming into care as teenagers. The timescales for this project and the evaluation arrangements are the same as outlined above.

5 Outcomes Achieved from Family Safeguarding (Wave 1)

- 5.1 The table below shows the relevant performance data since Family Safeguarding became operational in Hertfordshire. The data is only one part of the story and the quality of work continues to be subject to regular, independent auditing which also shows an improving picture of the quality of the work being undertaken with families.

5.2 Hertfordshire County Council performance related to Family Safeguarding is outlined in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2

	No. as at 02/01/2015	No. as at 30/11/2016	% change from 02/01/2015 to 30/11/2016	Number as at 31/12/2017	% change from 30/11/2016 to 31/12/17	% change from 02/1/15 to 31/12/17
Children with Child in need Plans exc. 0-25	970	1020	+5%	1011	+0.9%	+4.2%
Children with child Protection Plans	1032	530	- 49%	601 (22.5 per 10,000)	+13%	- 42%
Children Looked After (excluding UASC) under 12 years	454	393	-13.4%	363	-7.6%	- 20%

5.3 There has been some fluctuation in the performance data this year, with an increase in the number of children with child in need plans and children with child protection plans. The DfE grant funding of the two additional social work teams and all of the adult specialist roles in the service was made to set up and evaluate the outcomes of the project for the financial year 2015-16. Hertfordshire's partnership of Hertfordshire County Council, Constabulary, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's) and Probation Services agreed before the bid was submitted, that if this way of working proved successful, they would fund the additional staffing costs to retain the model going forward. Due to contributions from Public Health, Bench Rehabilitation Company (probation) and Children's Services from the outset, the grant funding stretched over two years, rather than one. From April 2017, the grant funding for the adult specialist staff was replaced by funding from the local partnership of Adult Care Services (ACS), Public Health, East & North Herts CCG, Police and Crime Commissioner and Children's Services. Given the challenges across public services finances, there was some reduction in the numbers of adult specialist posts funded within the service. As a result, there has been some degree of turnover amongst the adult specialists which led to some additional pressures on children's social workers. It is for these reasons that we believe the child protection numbers increased in some areas and as the adult's specialist staffing has now stabilised, with all posts appointed to and in place from January 2018, performance is again improving.

5.4 Hertfordshire's performance should also be considered within the national context. Over the last seven years, nationally the number of child protection investigations has doubled, which is not the case in Hertfordshire, where we have seen a decrease of 25%. Hertfordshire now has one of the lowest rates of children with child protection plans in the country at 22.5 per 10,000 (0-18 years) reducing from 44.1 per 10,000 in 2014. Our statistical neighbour average is 38 per 10,000.

- 5.5 Against a backdrop of 15% per year national increases in Care Proceedings, changes in practice in Hertfordshire have led to a significant reduction in cases being escalated to court, and a reduction in expert witness reports being requested by the court. Table 3 indicates the reduction in the total number of care cases in court and the number of Public Law Outline (PLO) cases.

Figure 3

	April 2016	April 2017	April 2016 to April 2017 % change
Cases in Court	130	86	-34%
Children in Pre-proceedings / PLO	83	23	-72%

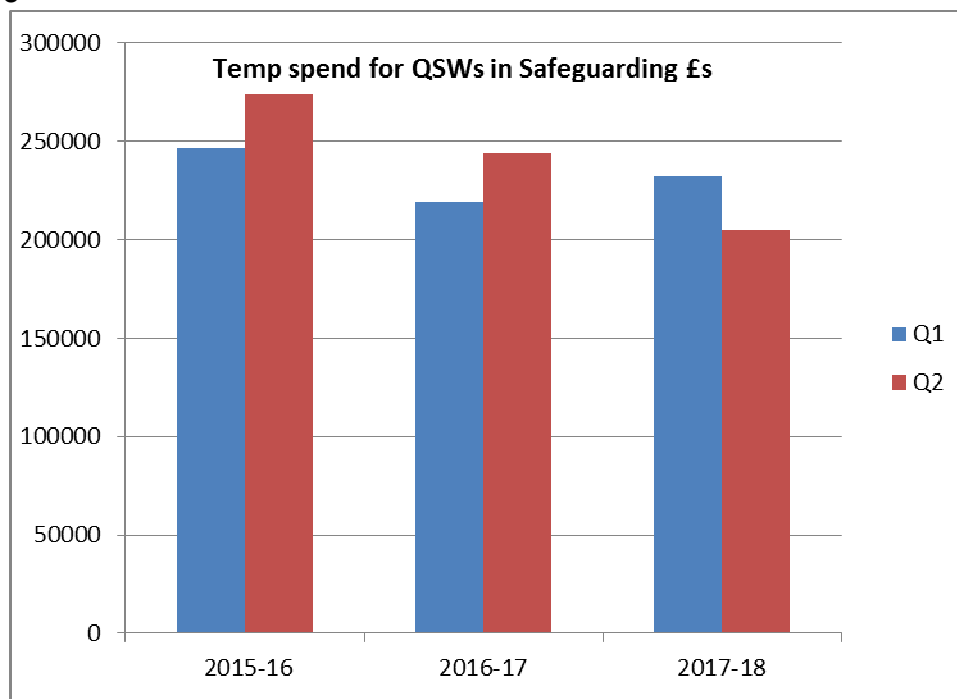
- 5.6 The impact of Family Safeguarding on recruitment and retention is also a positive picture. Vacancy levels have reduced significantly, see figure 3 below:

Figure 4

Year	WTE Establishment Total	Vacancies	Vacancies as a percentage of establishment
2015	233	33.50	14%
2016	233	28.00	12%
2017	233	17.50	7.5%

All vacant posts are covered by agency workers and we aim to avoid long term agency staffing. The spending on agency staffing in Safeguarding has reduced over the last two and a half years, as shown in Figure 5, which indicates comparable spend for each of the first two quarters of each year.

Figure 5



- 5.7 This reduction in spend is partly related to the significant improvement in recruitment and retention in Family Safeguarding, and also related to the regional memorandum of cooperation, which introduced an hourly rate cap for qualified social workers (QSW) and a push for conversion of temporary to permanent staffing where possible. Figures indicate three conversions during the year 2016/17 and eight conversions so far in 2017/18.
- 5.8 Children's Services have had consistent senior, middle and frontline leadership in place since 2015, which has enabled staff within Family Safeguarding to be supported well during the implementation period, as well as embedding effective practice, including Motivational Interviewing and the intervention programmes. The evidence from the Pulse staff survey in 2016 indicates strong appreciation for the quality of line management in Family Safeguarding and a recommendation by Family Safeguarding staff of the County Council being a great place to work.
- 5.9 Children's Services continue to focus on skills development in Motivational Interviewing (MI) through action learning by a group of social workers and managers who have developed MI activities and exercises that they lead on in team meetings, as well as an effective training programme by specialists in MI.
- 5.10 In order to develop confidence in practice for all professional groups, officers have moved from following prescribed processes and monitoring to intervening therapeutically. Managers and staff within Family Safeguarding in Hertfordshire have developed a range of intervention programmes for each professional group to follow, giving them a focus and ability to plan their work with children and families. This enables practitioners to evidence the outcomes of the work they have undertaken and see the results of their positive practice. In carrying out these interventions the focus is to empower the parents and allow them to explore their strengths and risks and develop a plan of action for change together. These

intervention programmes have been enthusiastically received by the other Authorities we are working with.

6 Innovation bid wave 2 developments of Family Safeguarding.

6.1 Family Safeguarding is now operating in the four other partner authorities; Luton Borough Council, Peterborough City Council, West Berkshire Council and Bracknell Forest District Council. All the Authorities have embraced the practice methodology of Family Safeguarding. The achievements of the wider extension of Family safeguarding in the other authorities includes:

- Skills development of the workforce in Motivational Interviewing;
- Understanding and using Group Case Supervision and the Intervention Programmes, as appropriate
- Recruitment of additional workers;
- Engagement of their partners, who are employing the adult workers who are seconded to Children's Services;
- Implementing the Integrated Children's System 'workbook' or 'workarounds'.

Resulting in all authorities implementing many elements of Family Safeguarding during Autumn 2017.

6.2 The main challenge for the other Authorities in achieving the full implementation has been the recruitment of adult workers into the multi-disciplinary teams. They are working closely with their partners to work together to resolve this. The independent evaluating body, York Consulting LLP was contracted by the DfE in January 2018 to evaluate the impact of this way of working from October 2017 to October 2019 with the report being produced by summer 2020. They have commenced working with all five authorities and started the complex process of gathering the evidence of outcomes across partner agencies in the five local authority areas.

6.3 The Hertfordshire team members, who implemented Family Safeguarding in Hertfordshire, were funded by the DfE to support the four new authorities to set up the family safeguarding model. This has included setting up:

- governance arrangements,
- information sharing agreements,
- project management mechanisms,
- partnership collaboration,
- financial modelling,
- contracts and recruitment
- development of a unified set of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)
- workshops and coaching sessions for strategic and middle managers
- training of staff and skills development in the intervention programmes, group case supervision and the ICS workbook for operational staff and managers

We have also attended and supported them at their Operational and Partnership Board meetings,

7. Next Steps

- 7.1 The implementation of the extension of Family Safeguarding in Hertfordshire will take place during the spring 2018, which will be subject to further independent evaluation by York Consulting LLP.
- 7.2 We have been exploring, as a part of the requirements of the wave 2 innovation funding, how other authorities could establish Family Safeguarding without reliance on DfE grants. One route the Innovation Unit have been investigating is how Social Impact Bond funding could be used as an opportunity to extend Family Safeguarding to the twelve new interested authorities wanting our help with implementation. This will continue to be explored over the next six months. However, Children's Services is mindful that our primary focus must be on continuing to embed the Family Safeguarding model in Hertfordshire.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 With DfE Wave 1 funding in January 2015, Hertfordshire Children's Services implemented a whole system change to the child protection system. Multi-disciplinary teams were introduced to keep more children at risk of significant harm and impairment within their families. Motivational Interviewing was established as the unifying method of practice, whilst an ICS 'workbook' approach has helped to improve practice, reduce bureaucracy and provide for integrated recording across all professional disciplines.
- 8.2 The achievements have been very positive. The independent evaluation of Family Safeguarding, published in July 2017, reports a 39% reduction in days in care, a 66% reduction in domestic abuse call outs by the police, a 53% reduction in adult A &E admissions and a 36% improvement in school attendance for those children supported by Family Safeguarding.
- 8.3 A second successful innovation bid to DfE of £11.63m has enabled the opportunity of scaling up the family safeguarding model within four unitary authorities; Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire, Luton and Peterborough. The aim is to develop a strong evidence base to test whether the same positive results can be achieved across a number of authorities with different demographic profiles, partnerships and Ofsted grades.
- 8.4 In early 2018, Hertfordshire will extend their Family Safeguarding service and Virtual School to a) improve the educational attainment of children subject to Child in Need Plans and Child Protection Plans at the end of Key Stage 2 and b) add additional CAMHS support for children who have experienced significant trauma and attachment issues.
- 8.5 Family Safeguarding is recognised as a successful model and has recently been awarded both the Care category and Overall Public Services winner in the Guardian Annual Awards 2017. In addition we have received a positive letter from the Minister-of State for Children and Families congratulating Hertfordshire on our work on Family Safeguarding both within Hertfordshire and across Luton, Peterborough, Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire.

9. Financial Implications

9.1 From the independent evaluation report there is clear evidence that for Family Safeguarding families there has been a reduction in the number of days children in those families spent in care and there has also been a reduction in the number of children escalated to Child Protection plans and to care proceedings. These two outcomes alone led the evaluators to conclude that “there is strong evidence that FSH produces substantial cost savings” (Forrester et al 2017). They estimated the reduction in expenditure for the County Council as £2.6m, which can be split as follows:

Reduction in Child Protection and Children in Need cases	£1.478m
Reduction in days in Care	£1.193m
Total	£2.671m

9.2 The Children Looked After (CLA) Strategy identified Family Safeguarding as the service that would have the biggest impact on reducing CLA numbers and gave the service a target of reducing the numbers of CLA by 45 annually which represents 77% of the overall target reduction. The Family Safeguarding approach has had a considerable level of success at keeping children at home with their families but this more intensive level of work requires smaller caseloads so the savings / reduction in expenditure achievable will not result in reductions in Family Safeguarding salary costs in the short term.

9.3 In addition to the potential cost savings identified in the evaluation report, there has been a reduction in agency costs in Family Safeguarding teams resulting from increased stability of the workforce. The reduced expenditure on agency costs was £144,291 for Family Safeguarding Teams in 2016/17 compared to the previous year and is estimated these reductions will remain at a similar level in 2017/18.

9.4 The evaluation concluded that based on the positive nature of the evaluation it is important that the agencies in the partnership continue their impressive cross-agency working and support for FSH. The evaluation provided “a very positive set of initial indicators of outcomes” and “it provides unequivocal support for continuing the development of FSH”. (Forrester et al 2017). The report also stated that all authorities should consider the potential of working in this way and replicate this project.

10. Equalities Implications

10.1 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of, and have themselves rigorously considered the equality implications of the decision that they are making.

10.2 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the County Council’s statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EQiA) produced by officers.

- 10.3 The Equality Act 2010 requires the County Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 10.4 The evidence from the evaluation of Family Safeguarding indicates many benefits for vulnerable children and their families. The independent evaluation of Family Safeguarding, published in July 2017, reports a 39% reduction in days in care, a 66% reduction in domestic abuse call outs by the police, a 53% reduction in adult A &E admissions and a 36% improvement in school attendance for those children supported by Family Safeguarding. This indicates that under Family Safeguarding, children are more likely to stay within their families than become looked after, and are at less risk of significant harm and impairment within their families, than they would otherwise have been.
- 10.5 No EqIA was undertaken in relation to this report