

Strengthening families

SCALING INNOVATIONS IN CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE



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Acknowledgements

The Department for Education, Mutual Ventures, Innovation Unit and Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) - partners in the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children Programme - would like to thank the innovators, adopters and What Works in Children's Social Care (WWCSC) for their excellent contributions to this edition of the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children Learning Journal.



Foreword

SUZANNE LUNN

Director, Children's Social Care
Department for Education

Welcome to the second issue of the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children Learning Journal.

I was involved at the very start of the Department for Education's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme in 2015. Six years on, I have returned to this area of work to see not only the many successful projects delivered through the Programme but to oversee the next stage in our innovation activity. It is fantastic to see the huge amount of work that is happening in local authorities across the country to implement one of the three most successful Innovation Programme whole system change models. The work to implement the Leeds, Hertfordshire and North Yorkshire models will help to transform practice and outcomes for children and families in your own local areas. Your work will play a crucial role outside of your individual local areas by helping us to strengthen the evidence that these models are truly effective, helping influence the practice journeys that other local authorities might take in the future.

Your work is made all the more challenging by the Covid-19 pandemic and associated restrictions. I know that this has meant changes to working practices, on top of those that you're implementing as part of the SFPC Programme. The disruption to implementation plans and timescales due to uncertainty surrounding the pandemic has also not been easy to deal with for any of us. It makes it all

the more heartening, therefore, to read about the fabulous progress that has been made to implement Family Valued, Family Safeguarding and No Wrong Door in your local areas. The real world examples of the differences that these models have made to your ways of working, to social work practice and to your relationships with children and families are exactly what we in DfE had hoped for when we established the Programme. Although the evaluation that What Works for Children's Social Care is undertaking will take some time to deliver a final report, I know that many of you are already experiencing improvements in outcomes, which is excellent news.

The sharing of experiences through this Learning Journal will, I hope, help to facilitate learning across the different models, which is such a crucial element of the Programme. In that vein, I hope that you will also find the What Works Centre's evaluation of the implementation of Family Safeguarding in Cambridgeshire (featured in this issue!) a useful and informative read. Evaluations of the implementation of Family Valued in Darlington and of No Wrong Door in Middlesbrough should follow later in the year.

Finally, I hope that you all enjoy reading about each other's progress and successes as much as I have. Keep up the great work – I'm really looking forward to hearing more about the differences the Programme is making as implementation progresses in more areas.



Department for Education



Welcome

This is the second issue of the [Strengthening Families Learning Journal](#) – the regular publication dedicated to capturing learning from the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children (SFPC) Programme.

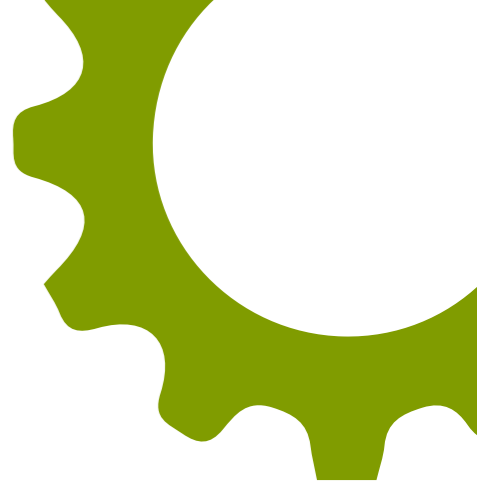
SFPC is a five year Department for Education Programme supporting local authorities to improve their work with families and safely reduce the number of children entering care by implementing successful sector-designed innovations.

The Strengthening Families Learning Journal shares learning from the Programme, focusing on the changes to systems and practice taking place in local authorities across England, where teams are adopting three recent innovations in children's social care: Hertfordshire's Family Safeguarding; Leeds' Family Valued and North Yorkshire's No Wrong Door.

This issue of the Strengthening Families Learning Journal looks at how these new models are changing the way practitioners in the children's social care workforce do their work and the conditions in which they are working.

You will learn about how training provided by Hertfordshire County Councils, Leeds City Council and North Yorkshire County Council is helping to build practitioners' confidence; how coaching and core practices like relational working and motivational interviewing are changing cultures, and about how multi-agency teams are working together to share risk and create new opportunities for staff as well as children and families.

We hope you enjoy the Strengthening Families Learning Journal and we welcome your feedback. [Follow this link](#) to complete a short survey where you can tell us what you think about this issue, and about things you'd like to see covered in the future. You can also find back issues of the Learning Journal and the SFPC Newsletter on our [website](#).



The Innovators, Innovations and Adopters

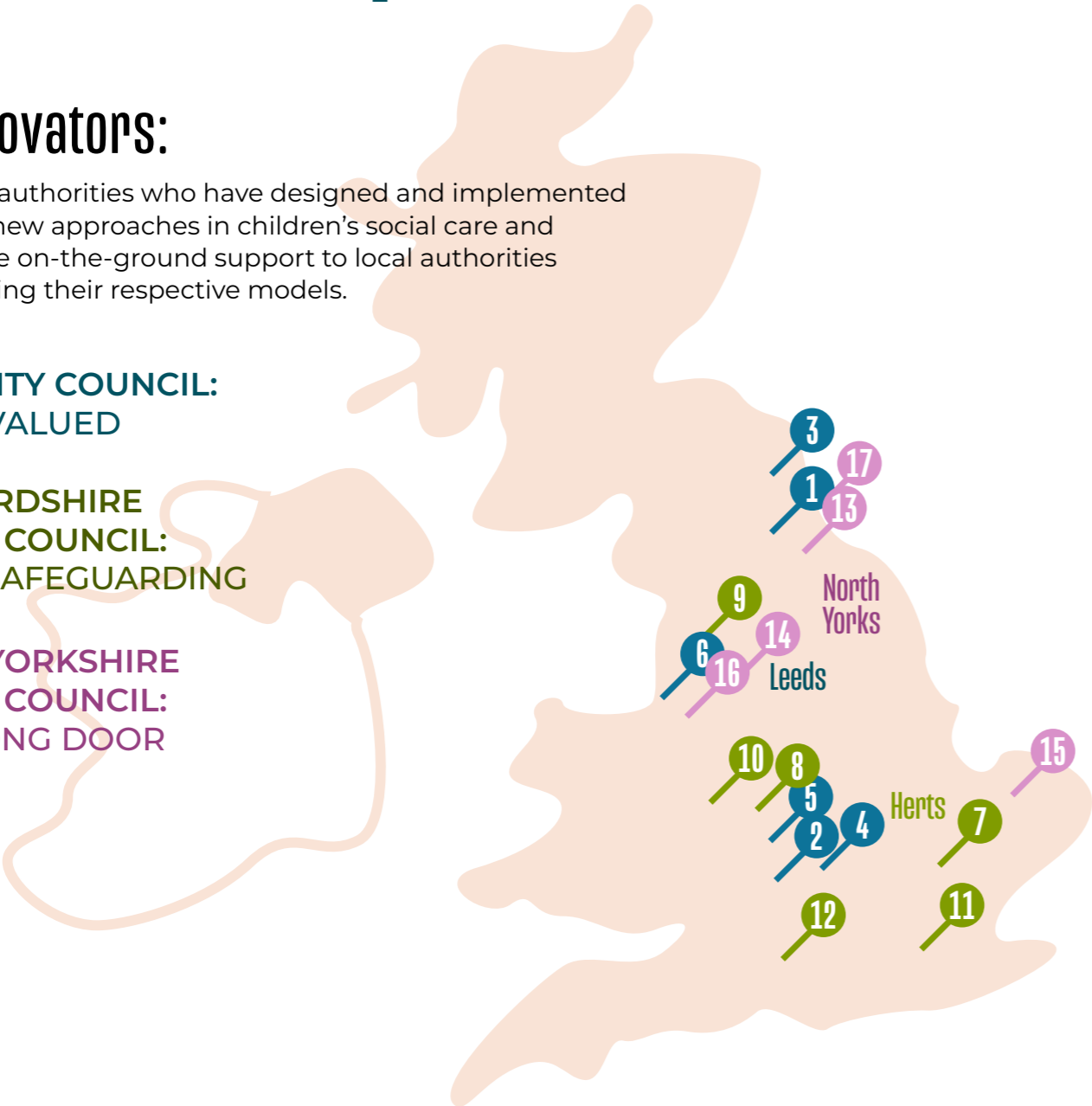
The innovators:

Three local authorities who have designed and implemented successful new approaches in children’s social care and who provide on-the-ground support to local authorities implementing their respective models.

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL:
FAMILY VALUED

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL:
FAMILY SAFEGUARDING

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL:
NO WRONG DOOR



The innovations:

Family Valued is an approach that seeks to promote relational (restorative) practice. It is underpinned by fostering a clear set of shared values and practice principles that emphasise the strengths and importance of family. The approach is centred on productive working relationships between workers and families, and beyond that with partner agencies and the wider community. Family Valued is centred on a clear focus on the child and how reform, and day-to-day work, will improve their outcomes.

Family Safeguarding is a whole family, strengths-based approach to child protection. Our child safeguarding work is undertaken by children’s social workers, adult mental health practitioners, substance misuse and probation officers, working together as one team. Together, we combine our knowledge and expertise to assess the needs of the whole family, providing services to meet those needs and supporting parents to achieve sustained change for themselves and their children. By meeting the needs of parents and developing their confidence, we can successfully reduce risk to children and reduce the need for children to come into care.

No Wrong Door® (NWD) is an integrated service and approach to supporting adolescents in or on the edge of care. The model combines a defined culture and practice with a range of services, support and accommodation options and a team of specialists working together through a shared practice framework. At the heart of the model is a residential Hub, which provides short-term placements and outreach (Edge of Care) support.

The adopters:

Local authorities who are adopting the innovations into their local areas. Adopters receive direct support from the innovators to facilitate the successful implementation of the models.

FAMILY VALUED

- 1 Darlington Borough Council
- 2 Warwickshire County Council
- 3 Newcastle City Council
- 4 Coventry City Council
- 5 Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
- 6 Sefton Council

FAMILY SAFEGUARDING

- 7 Cambridgeshire County Council
- 8 Walsall Council
- 9 Lancashire County Council
- 10 Telford & Wrekin Council
- 11 Wandsworth Borough Council
- 12 Swindon Borough Council

NO WRONG DOOR

- 13 Middlesbrough Council
- 14 Rochdale Borough Council
- 15 Norfolk County Council
- 16 Warrington Borough Council
- 17 Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council



: Changing practice.
: Changing people.
: Changing systems.

“

Watching our new team come together, their passion and commitment to doing a good job shines through and, although we only launched 7 weeks ago, we can already see the positive impact they are having on outcomes for the children and families we work with.”

WARRINGTON COUNTY COUNCIL



Start Anywhere

How Innovating in One Area of Practice Is Changing A Whole System

LEEDS FAMILY VALUED



Andy Lloyd – Head of Workforce Development and Change
Leeds Children and Family Services



In this article Andy explores the role of restorative and relational practice in retaining staff across Children and Family Services; just one of the cost saving benefits of Family Valued, which is effective at keeping children out of care and safely with their families.

START ANYWHERE - LEEDS FAMILY VALUED

COMPLEX BUT NOT COMPLICATED

Any innovation working with children and families must have as its primary objective a determination to improve their lives and experiences. That, surely, is our moral imperative, and it needs to be at the forefront of our minds at all times.

Working with children and families is complex and nonlinear; a system that does not follow simple Newtonian input-output-outcomes rules. It requires many different organisations and individuals - children and families, practitioners, leaders, partners, and elected members - to come together to work towards the desired outcome.

However, while the system is complex it is not complicated; innovations which start in one area of practice can help change the system as a whole – start somewhere and it leads everywhere! Any innovation in our work with children and families will have benefits for, and interactions with, the whole system.

This has certainly been our experience in Leeds, where we began our Family Valued work in 2015. A [2017 external evaluation](#) identified a number of whole system benefits connected to the introduction of Family Valued.

WE LISTEN MORE CLOSELY TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Listening consistently to the voices of children, young people and families is central to the Family Valued approach and by being true to that commitment we have seen an increase in the influence that the voices of the youngest citizens of our city have.

Family Valued ensures that children who are looked after and those who have left care are able to shape our thinking and help us design and improve our services to that cohort of children. Children report that they feel heard and taken seriously.

WE WORK WITH FAMILIES

Family group conferences (FGCs) are an integral part of Family Valued, reflecting Leeds’ restorative approach. They create opportunities for families to use their skills, capacities, their understanding and their love for their children to resolve their own problems. In Leeds, all families at risk of statutory intervention are entitled to an FGC.

FGCs are a highly visible part of a wider strategy of rebalancing the system to be more in line with the spirit of The Children Act 1989 and have helped to drive learning and behaviour change across a wide range of public services and other organisations across the City.

As part of the evaluation of Family Valued, 54 families that participated in an FGC were interviewed:



By supporting families in this way we are able to keep families safely together, de-escalate child protection plans and other interventions, return children to their families from care and reduce the number of children coming into care overall.

As a consequence of less time spent in the social care system, savings are estimated at £755 per family. If intended outcomes are achieved and sustained, these savings will increase significantly.

WE RETAIN MORE STAFF

Everything we do in Leeds Children’s Services is based on a commitment to relational working; doing things with people rather than doing things to or for them. This commitment also informs our work together as colleagues, affecting organisational behaviours, systems and structures at all levels of the organisation from the senior leadership team to practitioners and support staff.

If we want people to work relationally we have to create an environment that enables and supports relational working. Colleagues across Children’s Services enjoy the permissions that relational practice gives and the strong working relationships that result.

Over time, we have seen a dramatic reduction in the use of agency staff and our staff retention rates increased. Colleagues working in Children’s Services have decided to stay working for Leeds – and continue to do so.

Another significant factor in retaining staff has been having a clear learning and development offer that has values, relationships and families at its heart, coupled with clear progression opportunities. We value our relationships with research academics from the UK and internationally, and ensure that the latest research is made available to colleagues in accessible ways.

Over the past three years for which there is data, agency staffing formed less than 1% of overall social work posts in Leeds, compared to an average of over 15% nationally.

PRINCIPLES APPLIED

The principles of relational working were, first and foremost, designed to improve the way we work with children and families. But the principles of Family Valued – prioritising the rights and outcomes of children and families; working to rebuild and nurture relationships; and working through fair and inclusive processes - are proving just as useful to building relationships across the many partnerships in Leeds.



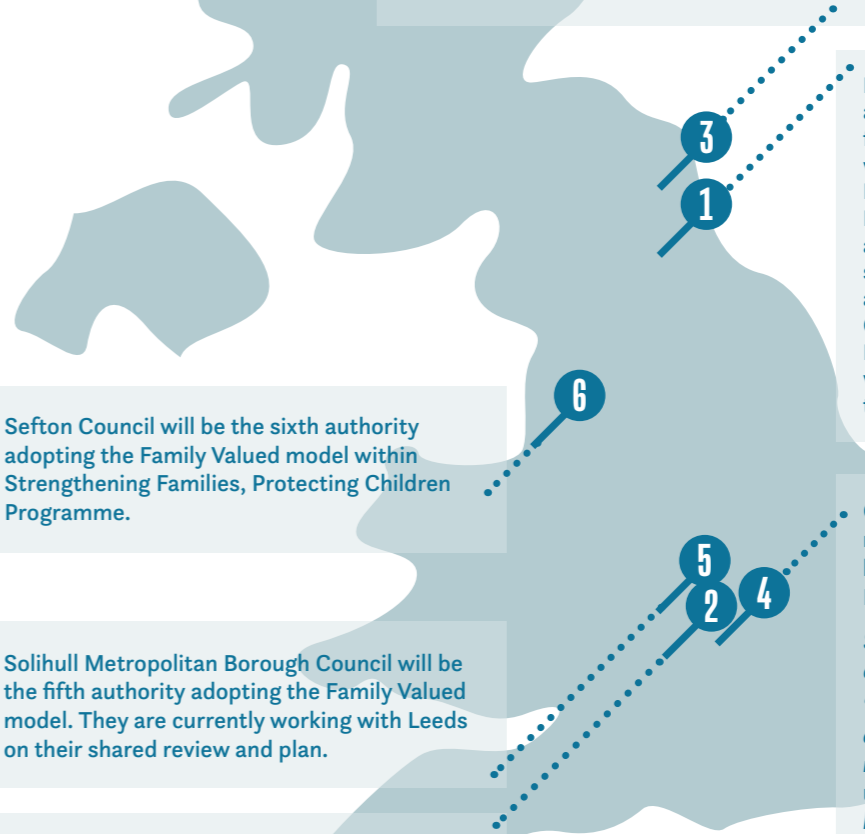
Adopter Updates

Family Valued

Newcastle City Council is the third authority to adopt the Family Valued model within the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children. They began implementation of the model in November 2020.

Our biggest aspiration for Family Valued is...

"For all our staff to feel confident to work in a relational way - with each other, partners and with the babies, children, young people and families they work with. We aspire for children in Newcastle to feel that we want to hear their voices in decisions about their city and their lives; that we value them and will act upon them, whether that is about asking them if they feel safe in their parents' care or their views on a new leisure facility. We want families to be able to quickly access a range of services in their local area, in a place that welcomes them. Our staff tell us that they want families to actively engage in developing their support plans. As such, it is crucial for Newcastle that families who need specialist support are given the time, help and skills to identify the strengths and resources they have within their own networks, and build on these to reduce risk to children and sustain positive changes they make."



Darlington Borough Council is a trailblazer authority and was first to adopt Family Valued within the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children Programme. They completed awareness raising training for staff as well as recruitment and training of their Family Group Conferencing service by February 2020. Further training was delivered to staff in August to September 2020.

Coventry City Council is the most recent local authority to begin implementation of the Family Valued model.

Sonia Watson, Hannah Bedford and Sarbjee Bhambra commented:
"The most exciting thing about adopting Family Valued is realigning with the core values underpinning practice by recognising the impact of relationships when working with families, to keep children safe and improve children's lives within their communities."

Sefton Council will be the sixth authority adopting the Family Valued model within Strengthening Families, Protecting Children Programme.

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council will be the fifth authority adopting the Family Valued model. They are currently working with Leeds on their shared review and plan.

Warwickshire County Council was the second authority to adopt Family Valued. They began implementation of the model in April 2020.



Working Together to Make Warwickshire Brilliant for Children and Families

WARWICKSHIRE FAMILY VALUED



Nigel Minns – Strategic Director for People
Warwickshire County Council



Warwickshire County Council, with support from Leeds City Council, has been implementing Family Valued. In this article, Nigel explains how restorative approaches at the heart of Family Valued are influencing culture and practice across Children’s Services.

WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE WARWICKSHIRE BRILLIANT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES - WARWICKSHIRE FAMILY VALUED

The Children and Families Service at Warwickshire County Council is on a journey of vast and fundamental change as we adopt and integrate the Family Valued approach. But this journey will be meaningless unless we can bring every member of our workforce with us - and undertaking this is key to our approach.

As a team we all want Warwickshire to be the best it can possibly be for children and young people to grow up in. That goal - and that alone - drives us with every step we make along the way.

The golden thread running through this not-so-quiet revolution is restorative practice and the belief that we work with people, rather than do things to them or for them. Every aspect of our programme of change has that notion at its core, and it is where our story begins.

Supported by DfE, we are providing an extensive programme of events and training, which help colleagues to make restorative practices a natural part of the way they work. Ensuring that teams understand and are comfortable with restorative practice means we can be confident that, through this approach, they can work effectively to resolve difficulties, strengthen relationships within families, and repair harm if there has been conflict between individuals or groups.

NEED HELP? LET US KNOW

In Warwickshire, we know that we can achieve nothing without the individuals who make up our workforce. So as we adopt the Family Valued model it has been essential to continue consulting and taking feedback from colleagues - listening to the voices of our workforce is absolutely essential to making this period of change a success.

We understand that staff sometimes feel overwhelmed with the pace of change and increasing demand, and this is factored into our communications, engagement and service development. We use virtual events, broadcasts and practice weeks to keep staff informed of all changes and new services as we go along. We have also created additional guidance and crafted special intranet pages.

We have a dedicated team providing bespoke restorative training packages for individual service areas, ensuring every member of our workforce has access to the tools and techniques they need to be the committed and effective individuals that they are. Our approach is: “Need help? Let us know.”

EVERYDAY RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

The result is that there are now multiple everyday examples of how, as an organisation, we have embedded restorative practices in the way we work – from the language colleagues use to the way we meet.

Before Covid-19 this meant we held fewer physical meetings, our workforce had become accustomed to meeting in restorative circles. Sitting in circles is proven to reduce power imbalances; it means there is no ‘head of the table’ and signals that everyone is equal. The ethos of the circle continues virtually and helps relationships to flourish more easily. Meetings include relaxed and friendly check-ins and check-outs at the beginning and end, which create further opportunities to build relationships and hear everybody’s voice.

“It’s exciting to adopt a model that has already been proven; being able to jump into implementation without having to spend months building a business case.”

CHILD-FRIENDLY WARWICKSHIRE

A child-friendly county is the vision we strive for. This means working to build relationships not just between services and departments in the local authority itself, but also within communities across the county.

For our changes to really make a difference to the lives of children and young people it is imperative that every individual in our workforce shares and understands these values and that is what I believe we are achieving in Warwickshire.

Our journey has just begun, but I know the Family Valued model will make sure we reach our destination.





Retaining Great Social Workers

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION



Tim Heyes – Assistant Director for Strategy in Social Work Reform

In this article Tim shares some of the strategies local authorities are finding helpful in retaining staff, essential for improving outcomes and reducing costs.

RETAINING GREAT SOCIAL WORKERS - DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

It will come as no surprise to practitioners and leaders taking part in Strengthening Families, Protecting Children that fundamental to great social work practice, and therefore key to making Family Safeguarding, Family Valued and No Wrong Door work to their full potential, is a stable and experienced workforce. Retaining staff is an ongoing and urgent challenge, particularly acute around newly qualified social workers, those in the most challenging teams and in leadership positions.

Retaining great social workers doing brilliant work with children and families means that:

- Children and young people benefit from trusted relationships made possible by working with the same practitioners over time; and
- Local authorities can save money on expensive agency staff.

Each agency worker costs a local authority around £22,700 more than a permanent staff member.

Speaking with social workers across the country reveals a complex set of reasons why they might choose to leave their role, their local authority or the professional altogether. They tell us that:

- Their workloads are high;
- They experience high levels of stress and find it hard to achieve a work-life balance;
- They feel disempowered by a focus on performance metrics without a complementary culture of learning and support;
- Career progression opportunities are limited for those who want to continue to work with families; and
- Social workers from ethnic minorities, who are over-represented in agencies, tell us that they find it hard to find permanent roles and to progress.

Most worrying of all, they feel that social work is not valued as a profession.

The good news is that across the country local authorities are finding ways to meet these challenges and retain their talented and valuable staff.

Elsewhere in this issue of the Strengthening Families Learning Journal you will hear about how staff retention has been dramatically improved and spending on agency staff reduced in Leeds City Council, which they attribute to a more relational and restorative working environment.

Similarly in Warwickshire, they are noticing changes to the way staff work together, influenced by the culture and practices of Family Valued.

In Hertfordshire and the local authorities they are supporting to adopt Family Safeguarding, confidence is on the increase and anxiety is reducing as multi-agency working and ready access to specialists help to share the load and specifically the risk of working with some of our most vulnerable children and families.



Other approaches that show promise include:

- Reducing workloads by over recruiting newly qualified social workers, offering case load promises and using workload weighting tools.
- Improving resilience and recognition through the use of group and individual supervision, fostering a learning culture and promoting peer support.
- Blending home and office working and introducing flexible shift and working patterns e.g. job shares and part-time roles.
- Retention payments and rising increments; other kinds of perks and gestures of recognition e.g. housing allowances, gym memberships.
- Leadership programmes and improvement strategies that marry high expectations with high levels of support, have visible leadership and are part of a learning culture.
- Offering CPD in exchange for retention and introducing learning academies.
- Diversifying career pathways to include e.g. early career pathways, specialisms, non management progression routes.
- Appointing anti-racist practice leads, using blind recruitment and leadership programmes.

There is clearly a lot more to do, and learning about promising approaches being developed by the sector is one of several work streams designed to help us meet this urgent challenge. If your authority is making progress on retaining experienced social workers and/or reducing agency costs we'd love to hear from you at tim.hey@education.gov.uk.



Motivating Families and Sharing Risk: How Family Safeguarding is Building the Confidence of Frontline Practitioners

HERTS FAMILY SAFEGUARDING



Sue Williams - Programme Director
Strengthening Families/Family Safeguarding
Hertfordshire County Council



In this article, Sue shares how features of the Family Safeguarding model are making a big difference to social workers' practice and improving their confidence and wellbeing as they work with some of our most vulnerable families.

MOTIVATING FAMILIES AND SHARING RISK - HERTS FAMILY SAFEGUARDING

Family Safeguarding empowers social work practitioners to grow their skills and confidence to create change in families through the use of Motivational Interviewing.

Family Safeguarding practitioners work as part of multidisciplinary teams (21 in Hertfordshire), including probation workers, drug and alcohol recovery and adult mental health specialists to provide direct support to parents where there are issues of domestic abuse, substance misuse and/or mental health challenges.

Family Safeguarding teams work with children in need, and children on child protection plans or in proceedings, to promote their welfare and keep more children safely within their families.

EARLY SIGNALS THAT SOMETHING IMPORTANT WAS HAPPENING

Before any reports about the impact of Family Safeguarding for children and families were published, practitioners began to talk about the difference working in a multidisciplinary team made for them and their wellbeing; the relief they felt when they were no longer the sole responsible professional, and the empowerment they felt when they began to learn how motivational practice could harness families' motivation to change.

As one of the leaders of Family Safeguarding, I was struck by the language practitioners had chosen and what they meant by 'relief'.

"It feels amazing to be a part of something that will affect so many young people and their families from across the country, and challenging ourselves and others to effect wider system change."

A social worker, substance misuse worker and a probation officer recently came to update the Family Safeguarding Partnership Board about their early progress. As each practitioner spoke, it was clear there was a great deal of emotion in the room.

- The **social worker** said she never dreamed she would have access to the level of advice and support that her colleagues from adult specialisms provided, and how much better she was sleeping as she no longer felt burdened by being the sole responsible professional for children's welfare and protection.
- The **substance misuse specialist** said she had always felt anxious about the impact of parent's substance misuse on the rest of the family and how much better she felt to be doing home visits to engage parents, rather than making decisions based on self-reporting in a session at an office.
- The **probation officer** said she could make far better decisions about support she could offer to perpetrators of domestic abuse when she had live examples of behaviour to discuss with the (mainly) dads she was working with.

NOT JUST A HERTFORDSHIRE PHENOMENON

As part of the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children Programme, a small team of Hertfordshire staff work with the local authorities who are adopting Family Safeguarding with support from the Programme. As well as supporting senior leaders with strategic set-up, we deliver seven workshops for practitioners and leaders, which explore some of the history of social work, how we got to where we are now in terms of practice as well as 'how to' workshops.

Meeting these adopting teams, we realised that the positive effects we saw for the Hertfordshire team's emotions and wellbeing were being replicated in every adopting local authority, 13 so far.

WHAT MIGHT EXPLAIN THIS EFFECT?

Working as a sole responsible professional, with the fear of a child's death ever-present, has a huge impact on social workers. This fear, exacerbated by the challenges of accessing specialist services for parents, undermines practitioners' confidence and has taken social work down an increasingly bureaucratic path. Instead of assessing needs and providing services to meet those needs, practice has tended to focus on 'risk' and gathering evidence to use against parents.

The greatest part about being part of the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children Programme is experiencing the many 'light bulb' moments we see in workshop after workshop:

- Practitioners begin to visualise group supervisions where the adult specialists share their assessments of parents and set out plans to address their needs, so the social worker does not feel responsible for everything and can keep their focus on the child.
- By working with statutory partners, social workers have easier access to the information they need to make the best decisions.
- By working to the same practice model of Motivational Interviewing and providing not just basic training but long-term skills development, the whole team feels better equipped to do a brilliant job in keeping children safely within their families and make a real difference - which is after all what they all came into their profession to do.



Adopter Updates

Family Safeguarding

WHY PRACTITIONER WELLBEING MATTERS

In the [DfE evaluation](#) of the first five local authorities to adopt Family Safeguarding, published in November 2020, researchers at York Consulting surveyed 500 practitioners over two years.

Practitioners were unanimous in saying there was nothing they would change about the model.

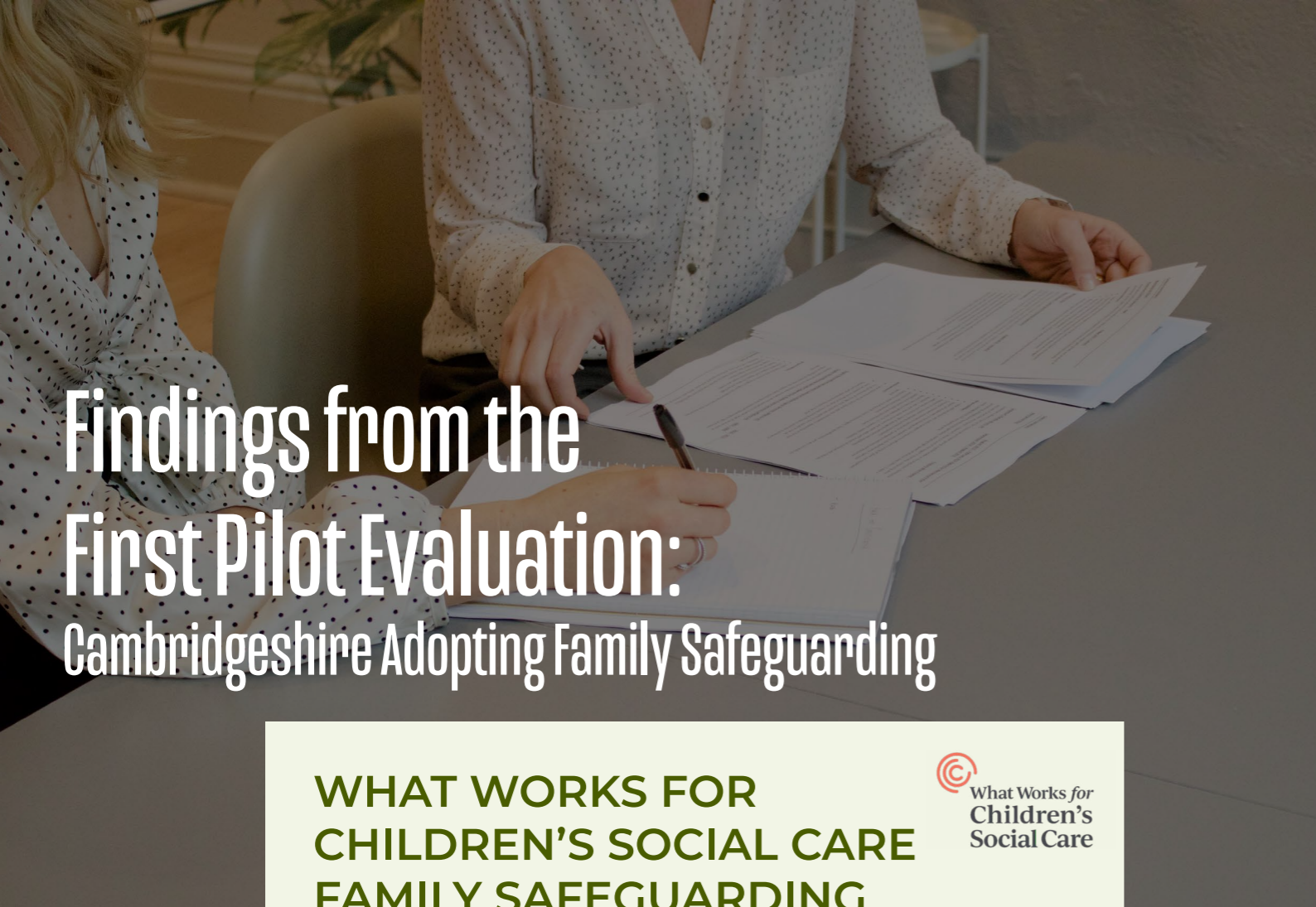
Families too, noticed the difference in practice and reported that social workers had changed their behaviour towards them; they were kinder, less directive and enabled them to develop their plans for change themselves.

Four years after supporting the first four additional adopters, the overwhelming majority of practitioners say Family Safeguarding is the best model of practice they have worked with. They tell us it improves their practice and increases their job satisfaction and that they would not want to go back to the old way of practising. They also tell us that they intend to stay where they are, which is great news for retention of staff and skills.

As we look forward to the outcomes of the Care Review we hope, whatever recommendations are made, that a new system emerges that ensures social workers are empowered to derive pleasure and job satisfaction from helping families to stay safely together, working as part of multidisciplinary teams and feeling better equipped to create the change for children and families that Motivational Practice can deliver.

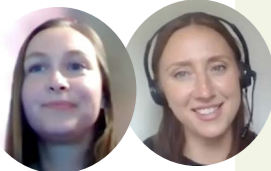
“The best moment for us so far has been getting to the point when we could say ‘we are now open for business’ and starting to take referrals.”





Findings from the First Pilot Evaluation: Cambridgeshire Adopting Family Safeguarding

WHAT WORKS FOR CHILDREN’S SOCIAL CARE FAMILY SAFEGUARDING



Hannah Collyer and Anna Bachoo

What Works for Children’s Social Care (WWCSC) has just published its first [Pilot Evaluation](#) in the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children Programme. The evaluation report looks at the implementation of the Family Safeguarding model (the model) in Cambridgeshire County Council.

In this article Anna Bachoo, Practice Lead at WWCSC interviews Hannah Collyer, Senior Researcher at WWCSC, to find out more about the report and what we can expect to learn from it.

FINDINGS FROM THE FIRST PILOT EVALUATION - WWCSC FAMILY SAFEGUARDING

WHAT CAN A PILOT EVALUATION TELL US?

Hannah leads WWCSC’s Qualitative Research Team and our work to understand how the SFPC practice models are being implemented. Coming from a social work background, I’m less familiar with what a pilot evaluation looks at so I was interested to hear from Hannah on this. She was quick to explain that pilot evaluations don’t tell us whether or not something works in terms of improved outcomes for children. That’s the business of impact evaluations and in SFPC we can expect to see those kinds of results in 5 - 6 years time. For now, Hannah explained that we can learn about ‘feasibility, evidence of promise and readiness for trial’ from implementation in Cambridgeshire. It can also provide us with some lessons for implementing the model in other local authorities.

FEASIBILITY OF THE MODEL

Assuming that, like me, most people reading this article are not used to these research terms, I asked Hannah to tell me more about them. She explained, ‘feasibility is about understanding if it was possible to implement the model in the way it was intended, and if there were any challenges with it’.

The report had good news on this front! In Cambridgeshire, the model was broadly implemented as planned with restructured teams, the introduction of group case discussions and motivational interviewing being put into practice. Furthermore, roles for specialist adult workers, which are a critical aspect of the Family Safeguarding model, were created and embedded in the new teams.

The feasibility study also found that, on the whole, practitioners were happy with the new model and a survey showed staff satisfaction to be high. But Hannah pointed out that less than half of staff felt they’d had enough training in the new ways of working; this is something that future adopters of the Family Safeguarding model can take into account when planning implementation timelines. Staff also said they would have benefitted from more examples of good practice, including the best way to record their work in the electronic workbook, to help them have a better sense of their aims.



EVIDENCE OF PROMISE

The next part of the evaluation looked at Evidence of Promise. Hannah helpfully explained that this is about discovering how the model works, or whether it works as expected. I asked Hannah about the mechanisms in the Family Safeguarding model and whether they found anything unexpected about how they work. She said ‘shared responsibility for cases came across as making a big difference for staff and this was closely linked with the adult specialist workers being part of teams’. This was also linked to the second finding of Evidence of Promise, which related to the speed and intensity of support for adults: ‘we found a sense that parents were being better supported and were getting the services they needed immediately’. Hannah noted that researchers had expected to see this as a mechanism for how the model works. Therefore, the evaluation found that the adult specialist posts need to be fully recruited and well-integrated into teams for the model to be successful.

READINESS FOR TRIAL

The final part of the evaluation report looked at Readiness for Trial, which Hannah explained is about determining whether it’s possible to test the model on a larger scale as part of a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT). We know that the next stage of the SFPC Programme is an RCT, so what we are really finding out here is whether there are any problems or contradictions in the model that would affect a trial. It also helps to ensure that the trial can be implemented and evaluated in the best way possible. The findings of the report were positive on this front too and the Family Safeguarding model will be rolled out in five further local authorities as part of the stepped-wedge RCT over the next two years (find out more about the research method [here](#)).

So, although we need to wait to know whether the Family Safeguarding model works in SFPC local authorities, this Pilot Evaluation tells us a great deal about the way that practice has been implemented in Cambridgeshire. There are positive findings about the way the model is working for practitioners and families. The report will be an important read for future adopter sites to help them implement the model in the best way possible. The full report can be found on our website.

Pilot evaluation reports on the other two SFPC models, Family Valued and No Wrong Door are expected later this year.





The Drum Beat of Culture Change: How No Wrong Door Changes Hearts and Minds as well as Practice

NORTH YORKSHIRE NO WRONG DOOR



Iain Kirkup - Team Manager, No Wrong Door®
Central Delivery Team, North Yorkshire County Council



In this article Iain explains that, far from being a model of practice that can be bolted onto existing services, No Wrong Door is a movement to be adopted and adapted to fit changing needs within different contexts, whilst remaining faithful to its core values.

THE DRUM BEAT OF CULTURE CHANGE - NORTH YORKSHIRE NO WRONG DOOR

At first glance, No Wrong Door can seem like a fairly simple plug in and play model with the primary purpose of providing residential care and community-based support for families with children on the edge of care. But, scratch the surface a little and you find things aren't as they first appear!

No Wrong Door has a set of key principles, '[Distinguishers](#), [Non-negotiables](#) and [Provocations](#)' which all underpin an innovative multidisciplinary staffing team, model and approach.

The four Provocations of No Wrong Door

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| Would this be good enough for my child? | What kind of adult do we want them to be at 20? 35? 50? | Are we managing risk for the child or for the organisation? | Is there a shared approach to parenting? |
|---|---|---|--|

To read about the No Wrong Door Distinguishers, Non-negotiables and Provocations, please visit our [website](#).



GOOD ENOUGH FOR MY CHILD?

Far from being a fixed model approach, No Wrong Door is first and foremost a values-based way of being, which is deliberately ‘crazy about the children and families we support’ and that seeks to position ourselves in the places where we can do the most good. This is best epitomised by the first provocation that underpins everything we do in No Wrong Door, where we ask, “would this be good enough for my child?” A provocation that has been taken on unilaterally across the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children No Wrong Door adopter.

“The ethos and culture of No Wrong Door through the provocations make you think about decisions and care plans for the child. ‘Is this good enough for my child?’, and “are we managing organisational risk or risk for the child?’ has really got me changing the way I think and practice.”

MICHAELA ELSEMERE, DEREHAM HUB

Further exploration into the distinguishing features and non-negotiables - without which a service would cease to be ‘No Wrong Door’ - reveals a set of guiding principles, not a prescribed set of rules. The guiding principles have been designed to create a space where we are encouraged to be bold, brave and aspirational for our children, to stick with them no matter what and constantly strive to do better, because we love and care for them, and they deserve nothing less.

“Partnership working is tricky at times but it’s absolutely worth it.”

CHANGING CULTURE AS WELL AS PRACTICE

The development of No Wrong Door was predicated on wanting to change the culture surrounding how children were cared for by North Yorkshire County Council. We recognised that we needed to build on the strengths in a family and community and that being cared for by a local authority isn’t the best thing for children in the long term.

In the intervening years there has been a strong commitment to persistently ‘beat the drum of culture change’, both within No Wrong Door and across our wider Children and Families Service system, including partner agencies. This consistent approach has proved to be successful and has contributed to positive outcomes for children and families through our wider ‘Strengths in Relationships’ practice model.

“At the start, you always need to win across other people whether that be partners in education, or in social care. You’re always coming across somebody new who doesn’t know about it and isn’t working with the No Wrong Door non-negotiables and provocations. What’s hard is sometimes pushing back, and giving that challenge by using provocations and non-negotiables. But this is a challenge I enjoy and am passionate about.”

ROB HAMER, MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

It is into this arena that the intrepid adopter local authorities, who are taking on No Wrong Door step. This is where the No Wrong Door ‘drumbeat of culture change’ is loud and unapologetic. It is where we build a shared vision for culture change, moving from a few individual ‘drummers’ into a movement, a ‘marching brass band’ as they then beat their own drums in their context.



What do we mean by Culture Change?

Culture is about attitudes, values and ‘ways of working’: ‘how we do things around here’. Culture is created by the people who are part of it, but it is often an unconscious ‘way of being’ that is not seen or named. The culture of an organisation or workplace is something we only tend to become aware of when someone new arrives and starts asking ‘why is it done like this?’. Or when things go wrong. A culture can be powerfully positive, empowering and enhancing for the people working in and with it, but it can also be negative: ‘this is just how it is’; not something to question, challenge or change.

Culture change is a vital aspect of successful innovation. It is never enough to decide to redesign a service or to adopt and adapt an innovation in a new context; it is also, always about committing to culture change. This means communicating with people and bringing them with you on a journey, one step at a time, in a consistent, committed way.

**FUTURES FOR FAMILIES - NO WRONG DOOR
IN MIDDLESBROUGH**

Between 2015 and 2020 Middlesbrough saw their number of cared for children almost double. Since the implementation of Futures for Families and a focus on wider culture change across their system (commencing in earnest from 2019), they have experienced a 5% reduction in their cared for children numbers, against a national trend that has seen on average a 10% increase.

A place where the culture and ethos of No Wrong Door are firmly embraced is Middlesbrough Council where their version - named Futures for Families - is making a real difference. Middlesbrough Children’s Services has had a particularly challenging couple of years and has undergone a great deal of change. Much of this change is around culture and practice, with Futures for Families playing a major role in helping to influence, shape and embed a culture, not only within their service but across the wider Children’s Social Care teams under the strapline “Middlesbrough Children Matter”.

However, culture is only effective if turned into action and the Futures for Families service is now making a real difference to the lives of children and families. This has included supporting the returning of children from external residential settings by creating opportunities for families to be together again and to remain in their community. They are ‘working with’ families within their contexts and successfully reuniting them. At the end of December 2020, only 1 child needed to become cared for following support from Futures for Families (of the 30 plus families that were being supported in this period).

“What’s different about working in the No Wrong Door way is speed. Previously if you wanted some information from working with CAMHs, you’d have to email or wait for a multi-agency meeting to take place. In Futures For Families, with the co-located Life Coach, you get that support then and there; you develop strategies together for direct and indirect support.”

ROB HAMER, SERVICE MANAGER FUTURE FOR FAMILIES
AT MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Futures for Families exemplifies how a local authority can take the principles, values and ethos of No Wrong Door and adopt and adapt it for their context, creating the right environment and culture that allows their team to have the most impact.



Adopter Updates

No Wrong Door

No Wrong Door is the best innovation for us:

“...because it is about our commitment to getting it right for young people and their families using strong relational practice. It supports us to think beyond young adulthood and to challenge ourselves by asking ‘would the service be good enough for my child?’”

ANNE TULLY, ROCHDALE

What does it feel like to be an adopter?

“The last 12 months as an adopter of the NWD model have been exciting and challenging in equal measure. Our involvement in this project has been a catalyst for a whole service redesign and a re-evaluation of the way in which we work with children on the edge of care.”

SHARON COOPER, WARRINGTON

No Wrong Door is the best innovation for us, because:

“It puts our young people at the heart of everyone’s decision making. We are collectively supporting our young people through adolescence and beyond.”

FRANCES GOLIGHTLY,
REDCAR & CLEVELAND

A key lesson we have learnt from the No Wrong Door approach is:

“There are so many key lessons we’ve learnt from using the No Wrong Door from the power of the deep dive and understanding the young person’s journey to the use of RAISE and holding onto risk. But the most key lesson learnt is the power of relationships and how they are the foundation of everything we do in service.”

ROB HAMER, MIDDLESBROUGH

What does it feel like to be an adopter?

“Exciting, and privileged to be part of something bigger than just our local authority.”

KEITH HOLMES, NORFOLK

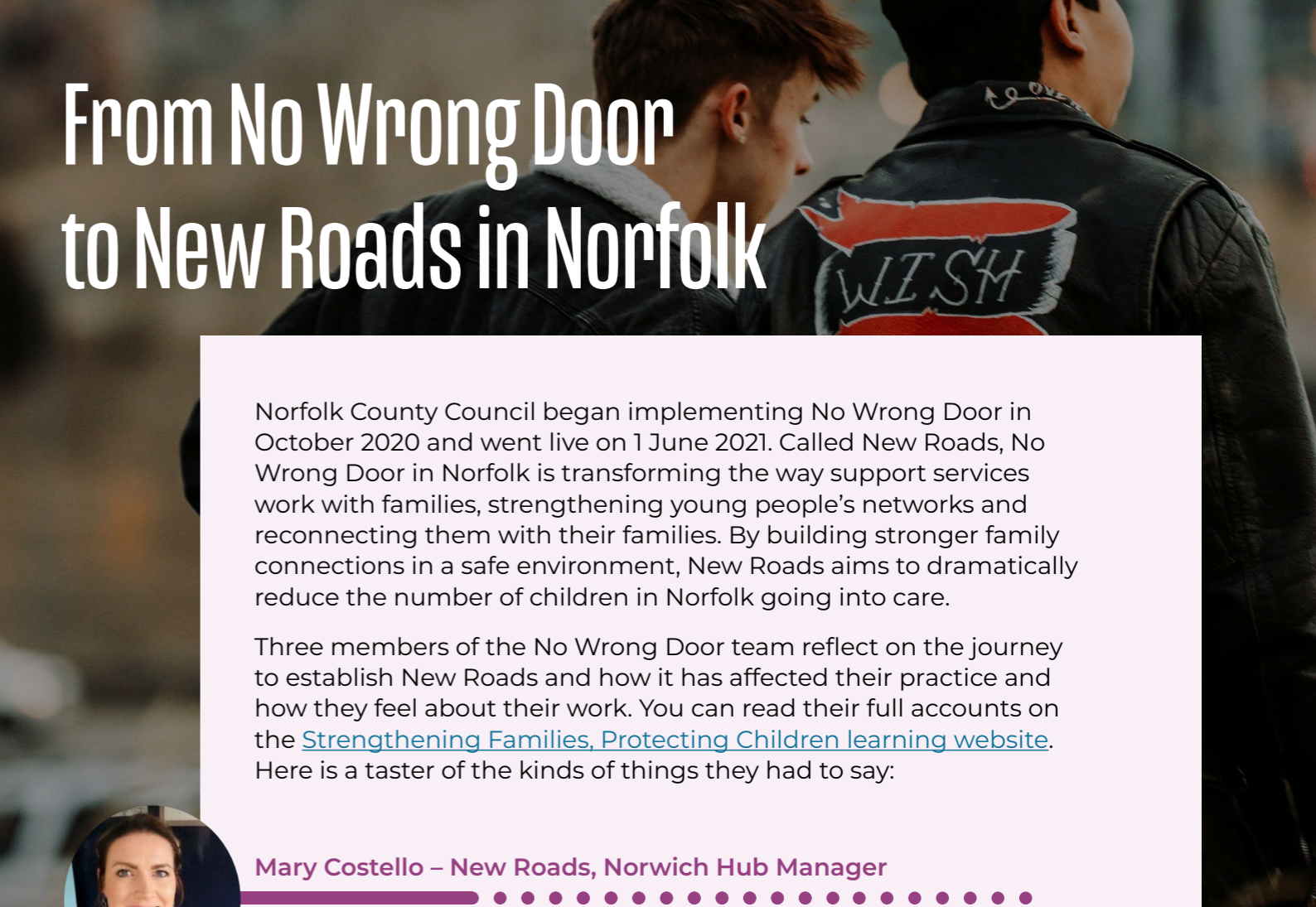


No wrong Door in Warrington - Yes We Can!

No Wrong Door Warrington launched on 1 April 2021. Based at a hub called ‘The Lighthouse’ in the town centre, the new service replaces traditional council-run children’s homes with a range of integrated provision.

The Lighthouse includes residential care home beds, emergency residential beds, community foster family placements, supported accommodation and supported lodgings and outreach support. Each hub also has a dedicated and embedded team, including key workers, clinical psychologists, speech and communications therapists and police intelligence roles ensuring each young person has the support and care to meet their needs.

In this short film team members at The Lighthouse share their thoughts and reflections.



From No Wrong Door to New Roads in Norfolk

Norfolk County Council began implementing No Wrong Door in October 2020 and went live on 1 June 2021. Called New Roads, No Wrong Door in Norfolk is transforming the way support services work with families, strengthening young people’s networks and reconnecting them with their families. By building stronger family connections in a safe environment, New Roads aims to dramatically reduce the number of children in Norfolk going into care.

Three members of the No Wrong Door team reflect on the journey to establish New Roads and how it has affected their practice and how they feel about their work. You can read their full accounts on the [Strengthening Families, Protecting Children learning website](#). Here is a taster of the kinds of things they had to say:



Mary Costello – New Roads, Norwich Hub Manager

I really like the trauma-informed lens No Wrong Door uses and how it encourages us to look much deeper than the behaviour we see, to the need that lies behind it. Using theory to practice like this really empowers the team and creates a more resilient workforce. Having a range of multi-agency professionals within one team is also really important and gives us a wealth of knowledge and experience to immediately draw upon for our young people and families, creating holistic strength-based plans and being able to enact these at the pace that is needed.



Michaela Elsmere – New Roads Portfolio Lead, Dereham Hub

I have now started doing outreach work with different families. On my first visit, I was worried about going into someone’s home as outreach isn’t something I’ve had that much experience with. However, I knew I had a good team around me, and we are all there to support each other, and this is helping to build my confidence the more visits I complete.

It made me feel really positive and proud to be able to work with a family that would have had their child removed and taken into care without our intervention. I could see the positive impact this had on the whole family and how this outcome is so much better for the child than if they had gone to live in a children’s home.



Coaching for Innovation in Strengthening Families

INNOVATION UNIT



Siobhan Edwards – Senior Associate at Innovation Unit
and an Innovation Coach in Strengthening Families



In this article, Siobhan explains the role that coaching plays in supporting practitioners and leaders as they adopt and adapt innovations in Strengthening Families. You can [read the full article](#) on the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children learning website.

COACHING FOR INNOVATION IN STRENGTHENING FAMILIES - INNOVATION UNIT

Coaching is a core part of the support offered to local authorities adopting and adapting an innovation.

Innovation coaches provide:

- One to one coaching support to ambitious senior leaders to help them lead the work;
- Challenge and support around the discipline of innovation, including the complex task of adapting a successful model to a new context; and
- Mentoring change teams to support the culture change required to make innovation sustainable.

Fundamental to this approach, as it is for all coaching, is a focus on asking questions, listening and providing a supportive space for reflection and for problem-solving through challenge and accountability.

Coaching is different from other approaches, such as teaching, training or managing in that it assumes resourcefulness and capability, and works to bring these into play.





Department for Education

The Department for Education (DfE) are overseeing and funding the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme. The DfE are working closely with each of the Innovator authorities to support them.

Our role:

The DfE has commissioned a support partner for the Programme - a partnership between Mutual Ventures, Innovation Unit and SCIE. This support will focus on providing coaching to the local authorities leading the innovations ('the Innovators') and those adopting the innovations ('the Adopters'), technical support and a learning programme.



MV are a specialist advisory firm working exclusively in the public sector to implement national policy programmes across devolved government. MV bring expertise in areas such as:

- Strategic planning
- Organisational design
- Change management
- Financial modelling
- Programme implementation



IU are innovation specialists - supporting the design and delivery of public services innovation in the UK and internationally. They bring expertise in:

- Design of innovation
- Scaling innovation in children's services, health, mental health
- System wide change
- Leadership development
- Learning design and delivery



social care
institute for excellence

SCIE is an innovative, not-for-profit organisation committed to improving thinking and practice in social care. SCIE:

- Has extensive reach and engagement with the sector
- Provides learning design and delivery
- Researches, produces and shares evidence
- Supports and scales changes in leadership and practice



What Works for
Children's
Social Care

The Strengthening Families, Protecting Children Programme is being evaluated by What Works for Children's Social Care (WWCSC). WWCSC seeks better outcomes for children, young people and families by bringing the best available evidence to practitioners and other decision makers across the children's social care sector.