

What is Family Safeguarding?

Instead of children's social workers alone, we work as a multi-disciplinary team including domestic abuse, mental health, and substance misuse specialists. We share information and make decisions together. We make it as easy as possible for parents to get help and support to make a difference to children. We all use Motivational Interviewing practice which embodies the values and beliefs that our professions promote.



**The Centre for Family
Safeguarding Practice**

“In the majority of cases, families become involved with children’s social care because they are parenting in conditions of adversity, rather than because they have caused or are likely to cause significant harm to their children. We have a shared obligation to help families raise their children.”

The Case for Change

The independent review of children’s social care

<https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk/>



Family Safeguarding in England

There are currently 16 LAs who have, or are implementing FS – just over 10%.

We are currently working with a further 10 authorities hoping to implement in 2022/23

Why do we need to change?

Resources used for assessment and monitoring, not supporting change

Experts in process not influencing change

Human Rights and empowerment vs oppressive practice that blames parents

Offering autonomy to make choices

Recognising that children in care may not be better off in longer term

Moving away from identifying and managing risks to meeting family needs

Family Safeguarding

A whole family approach to working with children and families that supports parents to create sustained change for themselves and for their family

Our vision

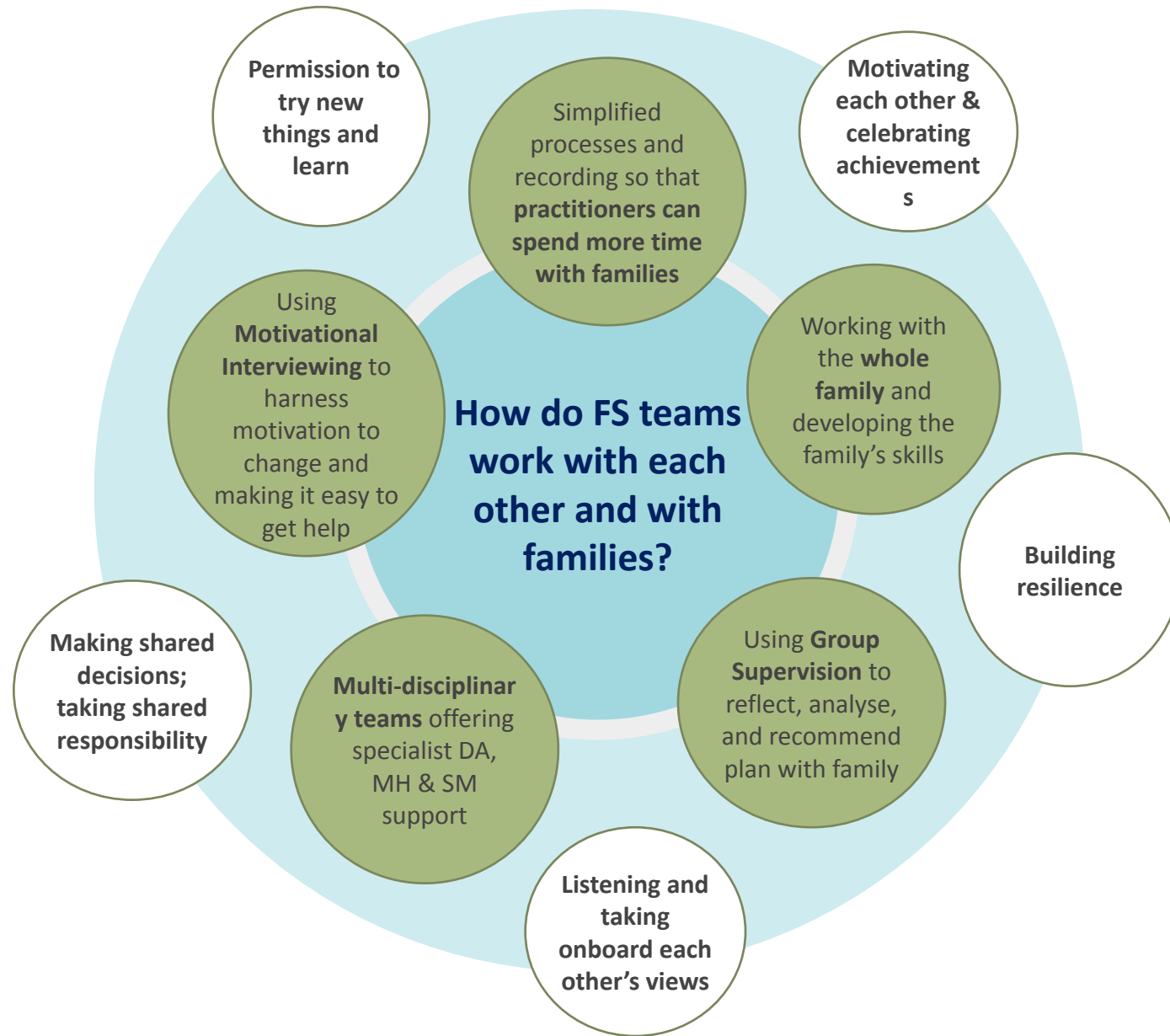
To keep more children safe at home with their families

What is it?

A multi-disciplinary team approach - working **with** parents; providing help and support to create lasting change. Reducing bureaucracy to free up more time for purposeful direct work with families

Outcomes for children & families

- Reducing likelihood of abuse and neglect in families
- Fewer children needing to be in care or adopted
- Families becoming more resilient & developing greater confidence in their



Values & Beliefs

Collaborative

Practitioners and families are partners - we do things *with* people, not *to* them

Strengths-based

All families have strengths, and we focus on using strengths to support change

Purposeful

Our role is to meet child and family needs & give families the right support, first time

Rights-based

Families have a right to help and support for their children, and the autonomy to make choices

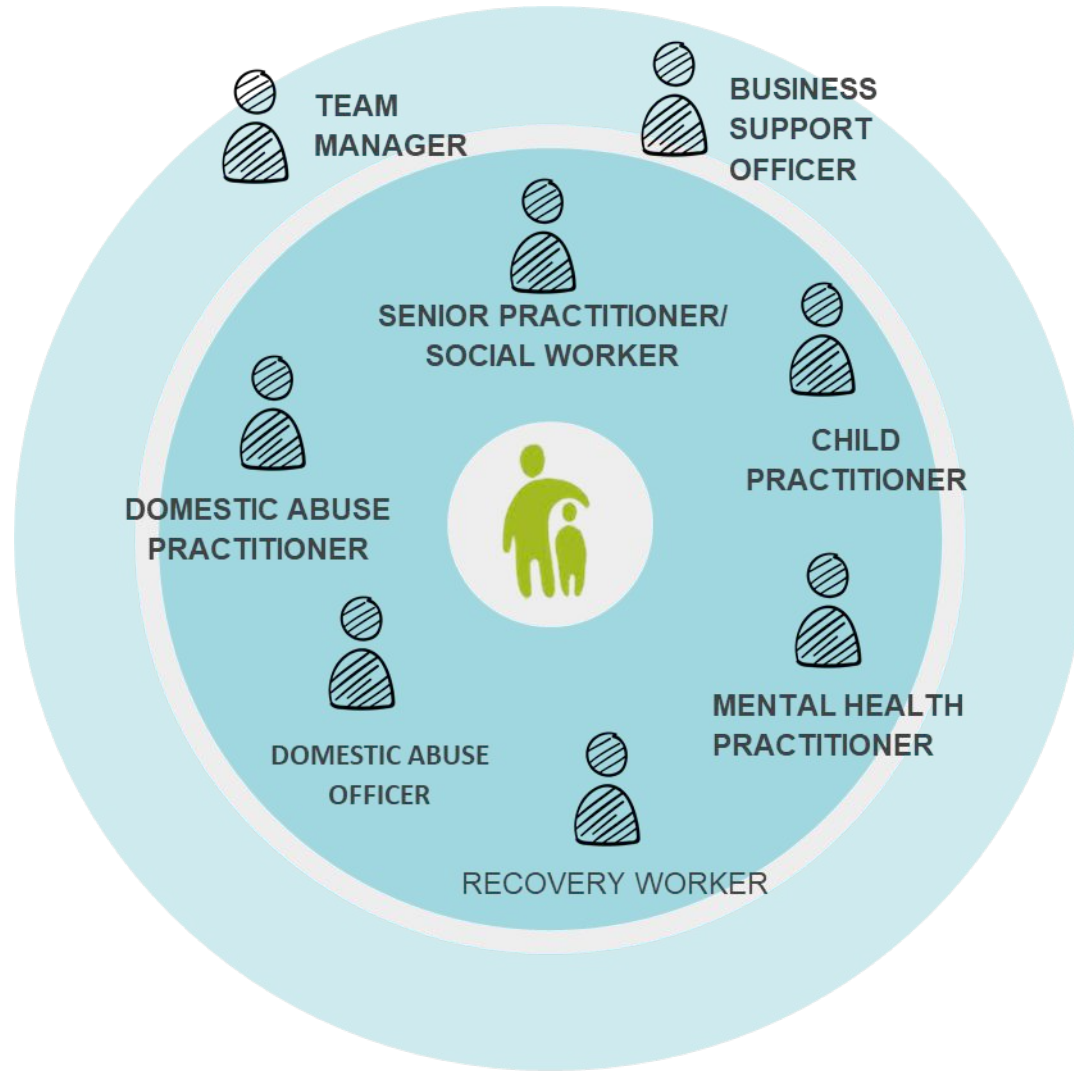
Empathic

We listen carefully to families & offer a helping hand to create change for children

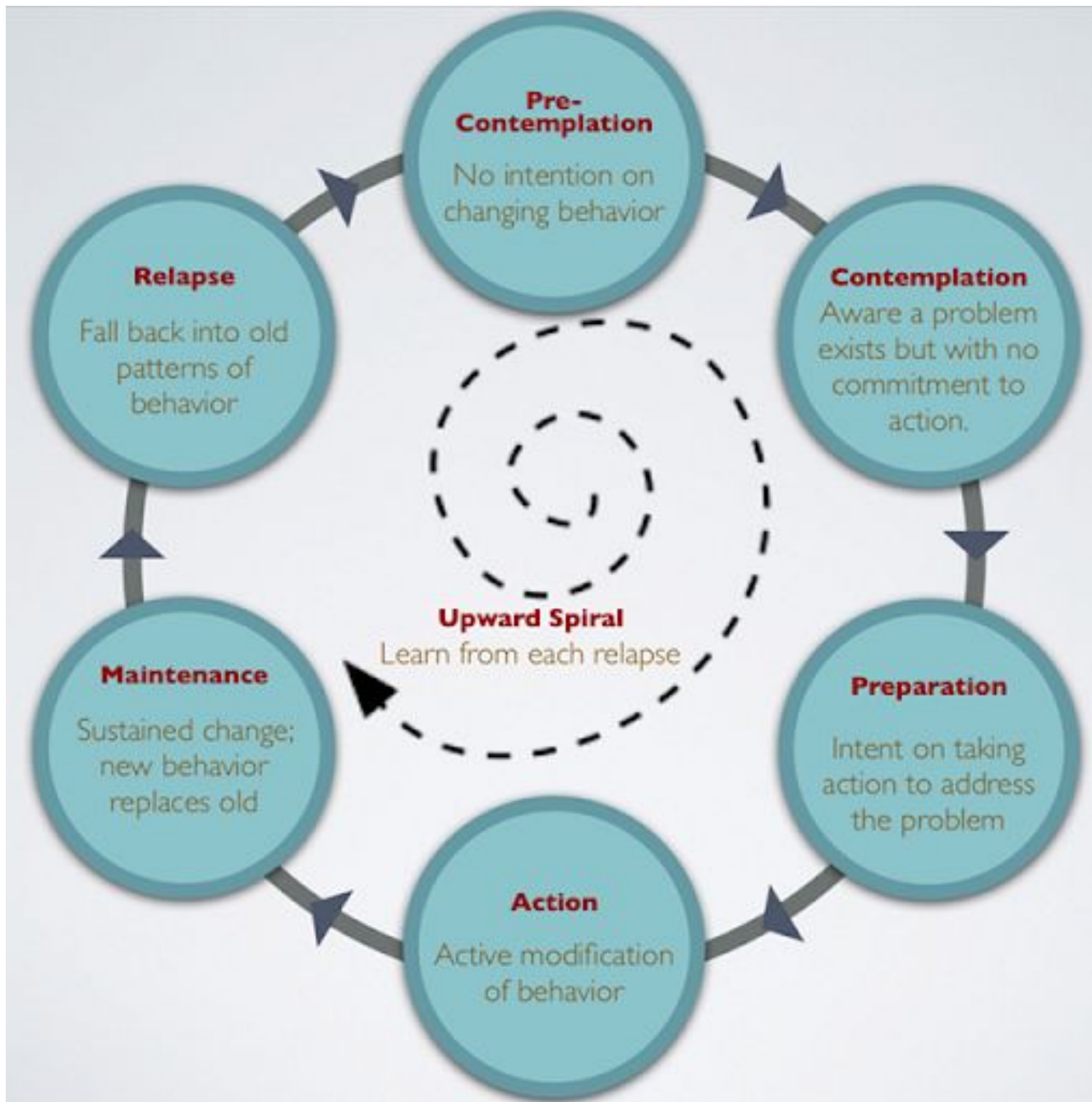
Aspirational

We want the best for families and to help them to sustain change





Multidisciplinary Teams with the full range of skills necessary to address threats to children's well being associated with domestic abuse, drug and alcohol problems, and poor mental health



Motivational Interviewing

Motivational Interviewing is at the heart of our practice and all workers in the FS Team use it as a tool to improve engagement and encourage change. Motivational Interviewing (MI) is described as a “collaborative conversation style for strengthening a person’s own motivation and commitment to change”

Together we....

- Work as one team, sharing information, relying on each other's knowledge & skills
- Focus on achieving better outcomes by creating change
- Increase our knowledge and build our skills through shared practice model (MI)
- We fund and provide adult specialist roles on a partnership basis, thereby strengthening shared commitments and strategic relationships
- Prioritise our reflective group supervision & make decisions together, as one team
- Keep innovating, together, via our community of practice
- Build on family strengths, creating trust & confidence, but not naïve to harm
- Work in partnership with families
- Provide real help and support, that families choose to have
- Keep families together where in best interests of the child, but don't hesitate to act when protection is necessary

How does
working on a
family basis
produce good
outcomes?

What difference should you expect to see in FS areas?

Appropriate application of Sec 17 and Sec 47 thresholds, and evidence of actual or likely significant harm if in CP process

Consent for information sharing and statutory action clear across the system

Focus on the identification of needs for children and parents, with a multi-agency plan of help to address assessed needs

Strengths-based, well-evidenced, reflective practice, including direct work that is supporting the plan with the family

Fewer children coming into care, and fewer children needing to be the subject of CP plans and legal processes

More stable workforce, who value the FS approach

Positive feedback from families



“In each authority, there have been statistically significant reductions in looked after children numbers and/or Child Protection Plans in the two years following the introduction of Family Safeguarding. Police call-outs have reduced by up to two-thirds and there are signs that Family Safeguarding is reducing the frequency of unplanned, reactive mental health contacts amongst the adults it supports.

This evaluation supports the wider roll-out of Family Safeguarding and concludes that where children’s social care is not yet being delivered via close multi-disciplinary working and a solution-focused ethos, Family Safeguarding has the potential to improve outcomes and save money.”



What have Ofsted reported about FS adopters?

A selection of quotes from HMI letters:

“Implementation of the chosen social work model provides a collegiate, holistic and dynamic practice environment, allowing social workers to make quick inroads into addressing long-standing parental issues which impact on the experiences and progress of children. When parents engage well with workers, the outcomes for children are positive and their circumstances improve in a timely way.”

“Skilled practitioners, creative work with children and their families, and a multidisciplinary approach are making a real difference to children and their families in X. A relationship- and strengths-based approach means that practitioners work alongside families. Families are clear about the changes they need to make and the support they will receive.”

“Thresholds are applied effectively for most children who need help and protection, leading to them receiving timely support that is provided at the appropriate level of need. Strong performance management and quality assurance and the well organised implementation of a social work model have supported frontline staff to improve the quality of their work with children.”

“The quality of partnership working, particularly in the multi-disciplinary family safeguarding teams, is a real strength. The presence in these teams of adult workers with a range of specialist skills, knowledge and experience provides plenty of opportunities for joint working. It also encourages and facilitates creative solutions to long-standing and/or deeply entrenched problems, including those associated with parental substance misuse, mental ill-health and/or domestic violence. Inspectors saw repeated examples of parents being motivated to change their risky, abusive or neglectful behaviour. This is helping to make children and young people happier, healthier and safer by improving outcomes and reducing risks.”

“Family safeguarding teams are multidisciplinary. The implementation of the local authority’s practice model has significantly strengthened work to tackle domestic and substance abuse, which is highly effective for many families. In many cases, persistent, long-standing risks and needs are being addressed and reduced effectively, often through parents engaging with services for the first time. In some teams, this work results in insightful and effective multidisciplinary interventions for children and families.”

“Realising the rights of families is often the surest way to securing children’s own rights, which include their right to a family life. Help for families should be offered in partnership. Raising children can be difficult, and this is exacerbated by conditions of adversity. It is normal for all parents to need help, from wider family, friends, the community and sometimes from the state. This help should be available, responsive and free from stigma. When there is a risk of significant harm to children, services should be clear about concerns, compassionate in their response and decisive in their actions.”



**The independent review
of children's social care**

Further Reading

The Children Act 1989

The Children Act 1989

Children in Need in England Statistics

Characteristics of Children in Need 2021

Children Looked After in England Statistics

Children looked after in England statistics

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care 2022

Final Report IRCS 2022

Care Crisis Review 2018, Family Rights Group

The Care Crisis Review: Options for Change - Family Rights Group (frg.org.uk)

Holding the Risk 2018, Sir James McFarlane

Lecture by Lord Justice McFarlane: Holding the risk - The balance between child protection and the right to family life (judiciary.uk)

Clear Blue Water 2018 Isabelle Trowler & University of Sheffield

Sheffield_Solutions_Clear_Blue_Water_Full_Report.pdf

NCSGCH - Safe As A Child - Annual Report

Contact us:
[FSProjectTeam@Hertfordshire.gov](mailto:FSProjectTeam@Hertfordshire.gov.uk)
[.uk](mailto:FSProjectTeam@Hertfordshire.gov.uk)