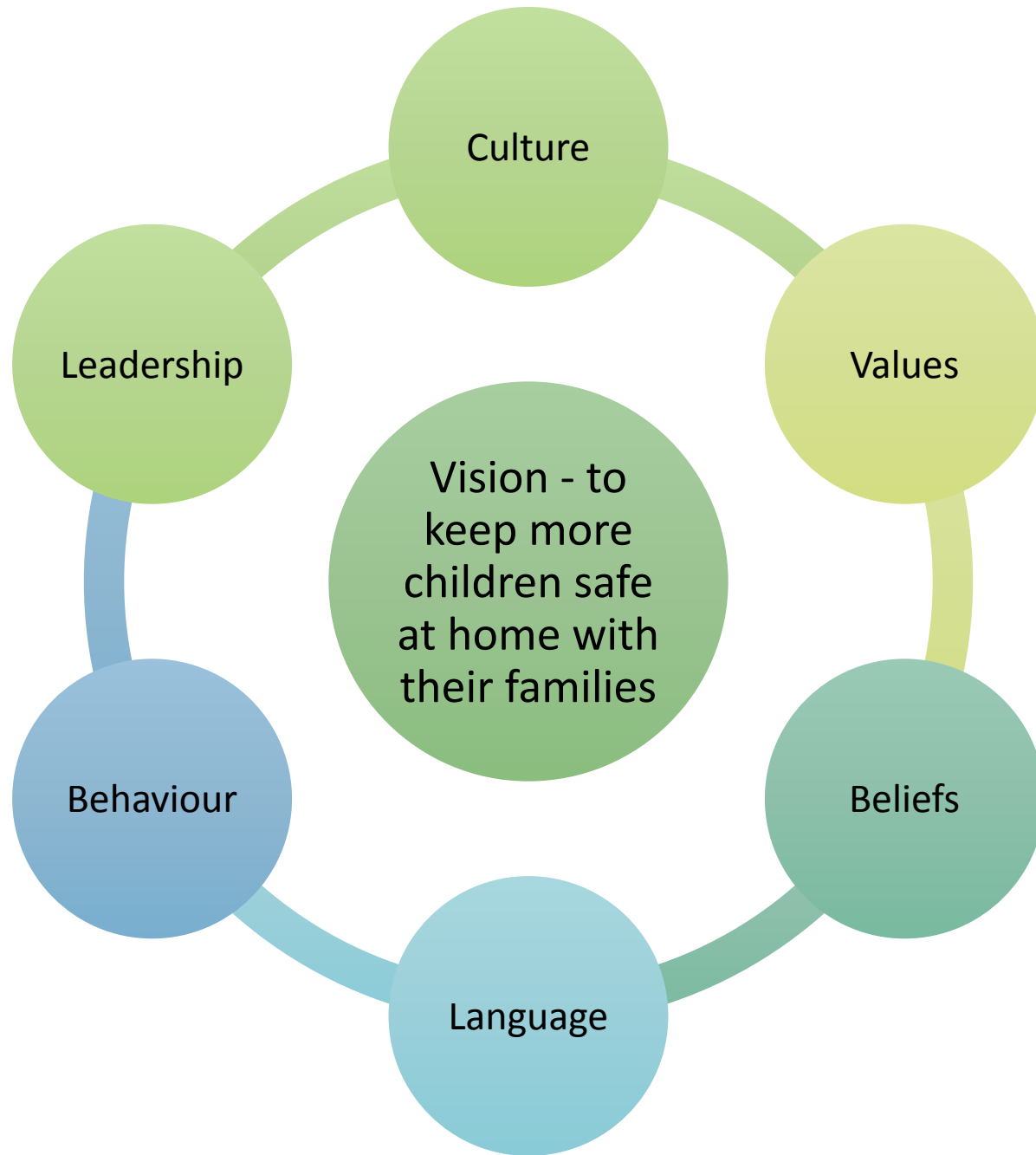


Being Family Safeguarding: leading system and cultural change



The Centre for Family
Safeguarding Practice





The Values of Family Safeguarding

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

Values based on beliefs

As Family Safeguarding practitioners and leaders, we believe:

That all people have value and inherent worth, and that they are deserving of our time, attention, and care

In the rights of people, and the importance of upholding them

That people have innate propensity for growth – they naturally want things to get better and to achieve their full potential

That people can learn to get things right even when they have got them very wrong in the past – being restorative rather than punitive in our approach

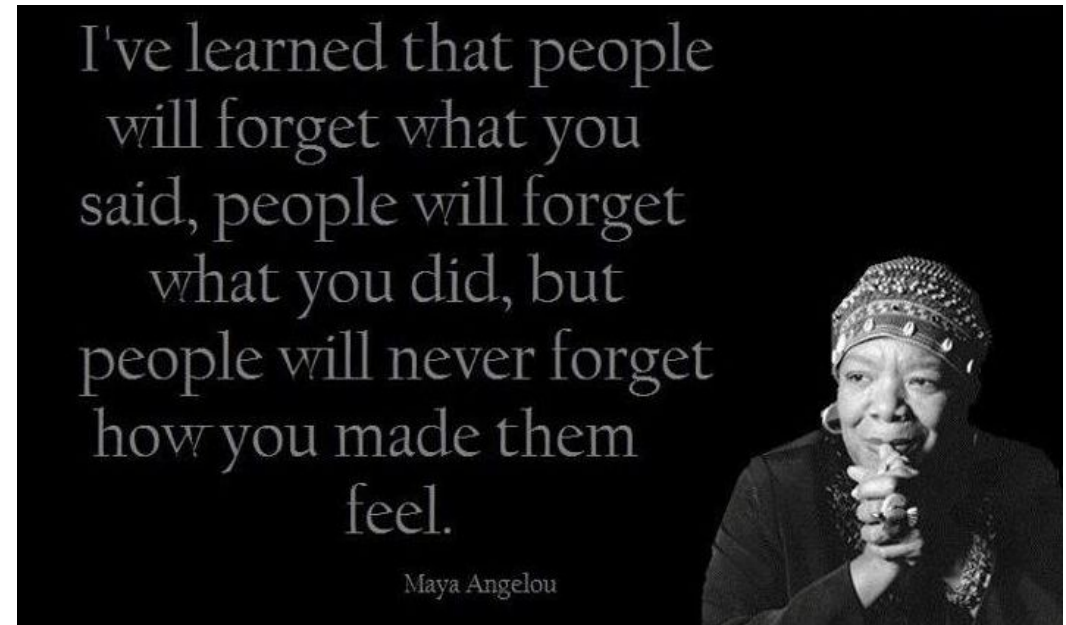
That children belong in their own family and the state should only intervene at parents' request or when it is essential to prevent actual or likely significant harm

Beliefs and values influence behaviour

If we believe in these values (and they in turn drive our practice) this should be evident in what we do in all our spheres of influence – it shouldn't be just slogans and straplines

Effective, empathic relationships are key (with children, families, colleagues, safeguarding partners) and are an essential determinant to support growth & change for the people we are trying to help – this requires us to 'walk the talk'

Families appreciate it when we earn their trust (especially when dealing with difficult issues and emotions) by being honest, authentic, open, and transparent – no surprises; fulfil our commitments; and always strive to do the right thing



Language & behaviour that reflects beliefs and values

If we value and believe in collaboration and partnership with families:

- Then we really listen and take time to understand how things are for the family - find out what they want to change, and help them to do this
- Instead of trying to control them and telling them what to do, we will be supporting families to make changes that make things better for their family
- Rather than labelling them as 'avoidant', and blaming them for not engaging, attending meetings, or not speaking to us, we will use our skills, and be persistent and creative in the different ways we try to understand resistance and engage people effectively
- We should not require people to prove their commitment to their children by demanding that they end relationships or stop doing things, and then if they don't comply threaten them that 'we will escalate'
- It is important that we don't assume that we understand the needs of children better than their parents and wider family – they are the experts in relation to their own family
- Our training in Motivational Interviewing helps us to know that asserting power in the hope that this will influence lasting change is usually pointless - "It is of very little value to correct wrong-thinking in an individual, in fact it is a recipe for disaster." *(Steve Rollnick)*

If we are taking a strengths-based approach in our practice:

- We will be providing encouragement, instilling confidence, and offering hope to families, whilst being open and honest about what concerns us
- The existence of factors that might cause harm to children does not mean that children will be harmed, which is why terms relating to risk are often unhelpful in child protection practice
- We shouldn't be entirely preoccupied with what the family can't do, and nor should we assume that past history and behaviour will be repeated and can't change
- It is not essential that we understand and know about every aspect of a family's life in order to assess their needs, so we should not be 'fishing' for information and problems in families that should be none of our concern
- Our practice should not start from the position that we are building a case of evidence against the family, and therefore we should guard against exaggerating the impact of an incident or behaviour to 'cover our backs'
- We should always reflect carefully about whether we really do need to 'keep the case open for monitoring' and think about how this will feel for a family

If we are purposeful and respectful in our practice:

- Whilst we will focus on the needs of the child/ren, we will also consider the needs of the parents/wider family; and ensure that plans lead to the provision of actual help, support, and services to meet identified needs
- Families will expect us to be honest about our worries and concerns, and help them work towards long term change or improvement for their family
- When we are aspirational for families about what can be achieved with the right help, we will give them hope that things can be better
- We should avoid focussing only on 'risks', obsessing about thresholds, and overusing the words 'danger' or 'safety' unless the child's life and safety are actually in jeopardy
- Avoid blaming victims for their circumstances – talking about risk-taking behaviour, persistently choosing violent partners, or making 'lifestyle choices' etc. and not should not seek to blame parents for neglect when their children are beyond their control or being exploited by criminals
- We should be conscious about any language and behaviour that 'others' the families that we work with, particularly when they are less fortunate than we are
- If we have achieved the outcome in court of permission to place a child away from their family into care or adoption, that should never mean that we have 'won' our case

If we are restorative:

- We will be seeking to repair harm, find resolution, and make plans for things to be better
- Parents' avoidance is not always 'failure to engage' or to accept help, but may be because of fear, or hoping it will all go away if they ignore it – we must try and understand what is going on
- We are sometimes faced with anger and threats in our work, but we need to try and avoid blame, counter-accusations, issuing ultimatums, arguing, and retaliating
- Even though we may be afraid as a result of someone's behaviour or reputation, that should not be a reason to ignore or exclude them from the discussion and plans (typically fathers)
- Rather than give people a list of tasks or instructions – we should offer them help and support
- A lapse should not always be seen as an opportunity to change the plan
- Victims of domestic abuse should not be described as 'failing to protect their children' by remaining in a relationship – that may be the safest option for mother and children

If we are empathic & compassionate:

- We recognise and understand how past trauma may have impacted on a parent or a child and provide help with this
- It will be important to develop skills in identifying any motivation to change that can be built on and convert into actions
- In our practice we will recognise when systemic disadvantage is impacting on a family's capacity to change and to meet all the needs of the children
- We know that the past is not the only predictor of future behaviour and that people can change
- The response to someone disagreeing with you should not be 'to write them off' simply because they don't agree with you
- If a member of a child's family hasn't taken sides with you against the parent, that is not a reason to exclude them – work hard to understand their point of view

If we uphold the law and we have humility:

- We understand the difference between s17 & s47, use this appropriately, and seek consent to share information or act, unless doing so is likely to put a child in danger or compromise a police investigation
- Even if we've worked hard to help and support a family, we recognise that it is the family that have made positive changes and that helping families is a team endeavour
- It is important that we are aware of and address inequality and discrimination, and the power imbalances that may impact on our working relationships with families
- Whilst we may welcome being thanked, we should not expect gratitude from families for doing our job, and should avoid putting ourselves in the role of hero or saviour



Does culture really eat strategy for breakfast?

“Culture – no matter how defined – is singularly persistent”

What is culture?in simple terms it's the way we do things here

Shared values, assumptions, and beliefs that determine how people behave

If you want to change the organisational culture you need to focus on the values, beliefs, language and behaviours



Leading culture change

