

Child Protection using a Strengths based Approach

The Essex Version.

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Learning from serious case reviews

- Among Lord Lamings' findings was that 'there had been an 'over-emphasis on process and targets', resulting in a 'loss of confidence' among social workers, who were overstretched and undertrained' and that 'progress was being "hampered" by an 'over-complicated... tick-box assessment and recording system...the emphasis on data-entry and record keeping has meant that less and less time is actually spent building relationships with family members that in itself is the key to detecting child abuse:



Learning from research.

- An initial hypothesis is formulated on the basis of incomplete information, and is assessed and accepted too quickly. Practitioners become committed to this hypothesis and do not seek out information that may disconfirm or refute it.
- Attention is focused on the most visible or pressing problems; case history and less “obvious” details are insufficiently explored.
- Insufficient weight is given to information from family, friends and neighbours.
- There is insufficient full engagement with parents (mothers/fathers/other family carers) to assess risk.
- Ten pitfalls and how to avoid them What research tells us



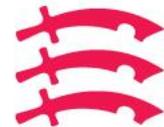
Background

- 40 years of public enquiries into child deaths (1973-4)
- Desire to move away from an overuse of policy and procedure which results in rigid practice
- To on-the-ground human practice that makes a constructive difference for professionals and families, and creates meaningful safety for children in high-risk cases



The principles

- ***Collaborative working relationships;*** between professionals and family members, and between professionals themselves
- ***Thinking critically;*** all processes that support and inform practice, foster a questioning approach or a *spirit of inquiry* as the core professional stance of the child protection practitioner
- ***Rigor, skillfulness and greater depth of practice;*** by locating it in on-the-ground good practice with complex and challenging cases

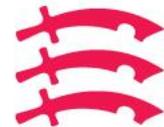


Comprehensive Risk Assessment



Importance of risk assessment

- Child protection risk assessment is often criticized for being too judgmental, too forensic and too intrusive
- We all need to make professional judgments and be forensic – the process has to be intrusive so that we can fully understand the risk children are being exposed to but we need to involve parents in this process.
- We all need to be clear about what the risks and concerns are, what needs to happen or change to reduce the risk to the child and improve their safety
- **The best child protection practice is always collaborative – we need to involve parents in the assessment, look at the strengths within the family**



Our approach..

At its simplest; The conference contains ***four domains*** for inquiry:

1. **What are we worried about now?** (*current*)
2. **What is working well?** (*Existing strengths and safety*)
3. **Grey Areas/Complicating Factors** (*Areas where there is disagreement about the risk or can increase the risk*)
4. **What need to change – The Plan**



The Grid.....

What are we worried about now?		WHATS WORKING WELL	GREY AREAS COMPLICATING FACTORS	What needs to change? THE PLAN
CONCERNS	IMPACT ON THE CHILD/REN			

Using the board to shape your thinking....

- From the case study look at what you would like to explore under the following.
 - What are we worried about now
 - Remember to identify your concerns and the impact they have on the child
 - What's going well
 - Grey areas and complicating factors



CP Conferences

- Empowers parents through increasing their involvement
- Importance of multi-agency ownership and engagement
- The focus on the child as well as on risks
- Develops intervention plans rather than monitoring plans – requires different skill set



Safety Scale

Where are we on a scale of 0 to 10?

Where 10 means there is enough safety for there to be no further child protection concerns and 0 means it is very dangerous and there is a high possibility that the child will be harmed.

Parents will be asked to contribute their views on the safety scale first.



It ends with a Plan.
So you need to turn this.....

- Mum and Dad continue to work with services to address their alcohol use, to keep Billy and Angie safe



Into something like this.....

- No-one will drink any alcohol in the family home
- No alcohol will be kept at the family home
- If anyone arrives at the family home and they have been drinking then Mum will ask them to leave and they will not be allowed in
- Even if this is someone we love they will still not be allowed in or to take Billy and Angie out
- If Dad turns up and he has been drinking and will not leave then Mum will call the police.



And this.....

- If Mum drinks any alcohol at home, even if it is a little bit then Billy will call Nan who will come over and stay with the children and Mum will have to leave
- Even if Billy thinks Mum has been drinking he can still call Nan and no one will tell him off even if Mum hasn't.
- Nan agrees that she will call Mum twice a day to check that she has not been drinking, once before Mum is due to pick the children up from school and once in the evening.
- If Mum has been drinking then Nan agrees that she will pick the children up from school and take them home and Mum agrees to go elsewhere



The Plan

- Plan should be the families plan that addresses the concerns - professionals help to build it.
- Plan needs to address the risks in order to improve safety for the child
- Plans are 3 month or 6 months long.
- The “meat” of the plan is decided at the core group.
- Any plan needs to be SMART.



What has it achieved in terms of changing practice

- **Moving from conveyor-belt practice-** characterized by responsiveness to efficiency drivers, getting cases through the system, meeting targets, speedy casework resolution and general compliance with policy and practice guidelines.
- **To reflective practice-** characterized by critical reflection on issues, quality practice decision-making and interventions, depth of analysis, engagement with families and responsiveness to their needs while maintaining a child protection focus, mobilising supports and resources and access to critical supervision.

Chapman and Field (2007)



For further training

- Contact the ESCB website on;

www.escb.co.uk

- for information regarding SBA and Core group training.
- Training regarding SMART planning
- Child in Need processes
- And much much more.....

