

Transforming child protection in Gwynedd



Why was this project created?

Legislation and policy drivers are focussed on collaboration with families and co-production. The underlying principle is about 'What matters' to children and families; whereas if there is risk of abuse or harm statutory duties to intervene take precedent. Conflict and taking control over the private lives of families places staff in the most challenging context to continue to work collaboratively. Consequently, existing models of practice fail to scale to this work. Many success stories of collaborative working derive from early intervention or preventative work. The sector's experience of making collaboration work at that sharpest edge of statutory intervention is poor at this early stage.

The Effective Child Protection Framework

'Effective Child Protection' is a practice framework developed to address the question of 'how do we know if our child protection work is effective?'

It has been designed by Gwynedd Council by experienced child protection practitioners. It aims to meet the real life practice needs of the social care workforce in the most demanding service arena of protecting children from harm and abuse.

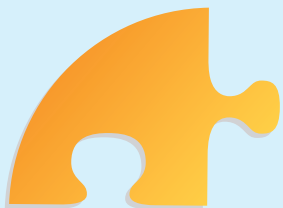
Child protection is about change. Child protection is effective when the changes necessary to reduce the factors linked to significant harm are achieved. Therefore when talking about change, clarity is needed as well as a positive working relationship to assist families with change.

What we hope to achieve

- An optimised workforce in Gwynedd capable of delivering Effective Child Protection through better conversations, focussed child protection plans, good practice in risk assessment, defined change outcomes and steps toward change measured in practice.
- A fully developed framework including forms, processes, tools and procedures; training material including e-learning products for scalability.
- Evaluation report and recommendations for Gwynedd, regional and national implementation of whole or parts of product developed.

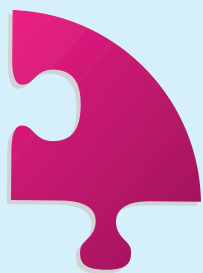
What are the 4 components of the framework?

Conversations - effective communication through practicing 'collaborative conversations'



- How staff apply skilful approaches to engaging with; motivating; and having difficult conversations with people.
- Increasing children and family's ownership of the change(s) required.

Thresholds - consistent decision making when assessing risk



- Ensuring staff use the Risk Model to test the threshold of likelihood of significant harm.
- Building on our current practice and integrating this into other elements of the model (i.e. conversations, change, and measure).

Change - a clear focus on the change that is needed to prevent harm



- That staff focus on specific areas of change to keep children safe.
- Improved engagement with families and other agencies in Core Groups and Conferences.

Measure - measuring our progress towards outcomes



- How staff measure the progress of their interventions.
- Measuring each step towards achieving the change that will keep children safe.

Case Conferences and Core Groups

When we reviewed our case work we saw that it was not always clear what needed to be done differently so that children could be kept safe. This seemed lost in the noise of case work and the proliferation of tasks, services and actions. Our experiences from Case Conferences also suggested this.

Core Groups were very busy, but did not always have clarity about the areas that needed to change so that the concerns were considered to have been sufficiently addressed. Within some Case Conferences, representatives from agencies found it difficult to agree on or clarify the most important areas that needed to change. This resulted in a lack of focus and some families not being fully engaged in the child protection plan.

A new style of chairing was practiced in some Conferences. It aimed to conclude Case Conferences where there was a decision for registration with clarity about the three (or more or less) areas of change that would need to be attended to by the Core Group. The Conference would clarify what evidence indicated that things were not currently 'good enough' and what evidence would hopefully be seen post intervention to demonstrate things were 'good enough' in that area of concern. The Core Group is therefore tasked with a very specific area of focus. It is of course also allowed for the Core Groups to undertake other tasks or recommendations, but the key areas of change were to be the main focus.

What support is in place for practitioners?

Practice Mentor

We have received resources from Welsh Government to support this project for two years. One of the key investments is in the role of a practice mentor. The mentor will support individual staff and teams as they implement the framework. The role will promote the active learning of staff members through 1:1 sessions and group based intervention as they use these new approaches and the tools developed. We hope to learn from these experiences to further refine the model and deepen our understanding of practice.

Training

The four elements of Effective Child Protection is supported by three specific training programmes. These include the national Collaborative Conversations training programme as well as two locally developed training events. A training needs analysis has been carried out with Children's team managers across the Authority. Training sessions are available to staff and will be delivered as part of the project's implementation phases, from the pilot area to the whole service.

These are:

- Collaborative Conversations
- Risk Model
- Effective Child Protection.

New forms / templates

The project will produce several new forms and the modification of other forms. This will ensure that the focus on change and measurement scales are included within core documents. The following forms have been modified and agreed, and are operational in the pilot area. They are now live on the WCCIS system for Gwynedd Council staff.

- Social Work Report to Initial Case Conference
- Social Work Report to Review Case Conference
- Core Group minutes

Work is ongoing on the format of the Child Protection Plan.

For further details, please contact Dafydd Paul or Wendy Roberts via



ecp@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

or visit

www.effectivechildprotection.wales

