

<b>Classification:</b>	<b>Decision Type:</b>
Open	Key

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date:</b> 13 July 2022
<b>Subject:</b>	Family Safeguarding Model	
<b>Report of</b>	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People	

## 1 Summary

- 1.1 This report has been written to seek approval from Cabinet to engage with the Centre for Family safeguarding in Hertfordshire and to collaborate with the local partnership, by establishing a local board to explore the opportunity and consider the feasibility of implementing the Hertfordshire Family Safeguarding model of Practice within Bury's safeguarding social work teams. The proposal would require additional investment of £1.081m, year 1 and £0.992m in year 2. This report provides an overview of this approach, the evidence base, outlines the costs, benefits, and outcomes of implementing Family Safeguarding.

## 2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Cabinet to approve Children's Services engaging Hertfordshire as Sector Led Improvement Partners, and to establish a partnership group with representation of local partners and the Centre for Family Safeguarding to work collaboratively to consider the feasibility of implementing a plan to deliver the Family Safeguarding model.
- 2.2 Cabinet to agree in principle the additional investment of £1.081m and £0.992m in the event that the board recommends moving to implementation.
- 2.3 Cabinet to agree in principle to progressing with the recruitment of staff

## 3 Reasons for recommendation(s)

- 3.1 Within Children's social care there is a requirement imposed upon us by the DfE to improve the quality of practice to children in need of help and protection, this is a key priority of our improvement plan and necessary to ensure that children are safeguarded and that support to families is effective, these are the pre-requisites of achieving improved outcomes for the children of Bury who are at risk of harm or are suffering harm.
- 3.2 Family Safeguarding has been identified within the independent review of Children's services 2022 as best practice. The model has been independently evaluated and has also been positively evaluated by the DfE's Innovation unit, who are now supporting the scale and spread of the model. see Appendix 2. Evidential evaluation indicates improved outcomes for children and parents by successfully reducing risk of harm to children; this leads to a reduction in entry to care, and cost avoidance by those

authorities that have fully implemented the model as outlined in the Business case appended to this report (Appendix 1). Details of the independent evaluation can be found at Appendix 2 & 3. Successful implementation of the model will result in cost avoidance to the Council. The Department for Education (DfE), Independent advisor and regional improvement lead support Bury in adopting this model because of its evidential base and because of the need to evidence improvement. The DfE have made available £140k grant funding to support with set up costs and have indicated that they would, via an improvement grant, fund the cost of Hertfordshire acting as Sector Led Improvement Partners to support implementation of the model which is estimated to take 10 months.

- 3.3 Other models have been considered and discounted, including further development of our existing model of practice Signs of Safety. The rationale for identifying Family Safeguarding as the preferred model of practice is its strong evidence base of delivering improved outcomes for children by reducing risk of harm.

## **4 The Family Safeguarding Model**

- 4.1 Family Safeguarding is a whole family approach to working with children and their families that supports parents to create sustained change for themselves and their family. It is a whole system innovation that changes professional attitudes to families, with a renewed focus on the values and principles of the Children Act 1989. The approach was originally developed in Hertfordshire to work with families where there are children:

- in need, who are experiencing significant impairment to health or development as a result of needs in their family.
- the subject of child protection plans, who are experiencing significant harm as a result of intra-familial abuse or neglect.
- who is the subject of family law proceedings or pre-proceedings.

- 4.1 The Family Safeguarding approach consists of a multi-agency team that delivers support and intervention to families at the higher levels of statutory social care intervention, where the children are deemed to be at risk of harm or are suffering harm, where there is evidence of the complex trio of parental substance misuse, mental health issues and domestic abuse (DA) and where it is safe for children the family would be supported in this way, essentially children subject to longer term child in need (CIN) plans, children subject to child protection (CP) plans, children subject to Public Law Outline processes, (we currently have 200 children subject to CP plans, and 247 children supported by CIN plans within the safeguarding team) It is within this cohort of families where the offer is targeted and sits with statutory guidance of the Children Act and Working together.

- 4.2 The model brings together a partnership including children's services, police, health (including mental health), probation, and substance misuse services. Key elements include specialist workers with domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health expertise joining teams; training in Motivational Interviewing as a framework for practice for all staff; a move to group supervision discussions; and structured tools to support direct work. In addition, there are practice-enabling factors, such as reduced caseloads and assessment workbooks.

- 4.3 Universal services and targeted services, identified as necessary would continue to be delivered, monitored, and coordinated within existing Child in Need or Child Protection Process as appropriate would remain.

## 5 Key Features

- 5.1 Family Safeguarding is an evidence-based whole system approach to child protection with a vision to keep more children living at home with their families, where it is safe to do so. The model was developed in 2015 by Hertfordshire County Council and currently 20 out of 152 of all local authorities in England, have adopted the model.
- 5.2 With Family Safeguarding, it is acknowledged that the issues facing families are complex and that no single professional group has the expertise to solve these alone. The partnership establishes co-located multi-disciplinary teams that consist of adult specialist workers collaborating with children and families' social workers, providing help and support in relation to parental problems associated with domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental ill-health. Motivational Interviewing is used as a unified model of practice that improves family engagement, encourages, and supports lasting change.
- 5.3 The adult specialist workers are employed by the relevant partnership agency in the area and receive professional supervision by a lead specialist worker or a nominated senior manager in the partner agency. They undertake direct work with adults in the family to help them create lasting change through a family programme which is recorded in a digital workbook. Group supervision sessions summarise the work undertaken by the team and discuss the family's progress. Actions are agreed by the social work team manager; this is also recorded in the workbook. Motivational Interviewing is used by all Family Safeguarding staff when working with families and within teams to build on strengths, encourage autonomy, provide support and encouragement, and sustain lasting change
- 5.4 A typical Family Safeguarding team:



- 5.5 There model consists of 7 features of practice which are based on findings drawn from the evaluation of round one of the DfE's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme:
- Using a Clear, strengths-based practice framework to empower families to overcome problems
  - Using systemic approaches to social work practice to understand what families need and how to help them make sustainable changes
  - Enabling staff to do skilled direct work through providing tools to upskill the workforce
  - Multi-disciplinary skill sets working together by bringing together expertise to help parents and children
  - Undertaking group case discussion to jointly develop plans and provide reflective analysis
  - High intensity and consistency of practitioner to build trusting relationships with families
  - Having a whole family focus which supports the needs of the whole family including parents

## 6 Evidence Base

- 6.1 There is a clear evidence base in respect of Family Safeguarding that shows a range of benefits for organisations that are working with families affected by domestic abuse, parental mental ill-health, and/or parental drug and alcohol misuse.
- 6.2 Family Safeguarding has a proven track record in keeping more children at home safe with their parents. This not only delivers better outcomes for children and their families but also frees up Social Workers and other professionals involved to undertake work that has a greater impact for those who need it. The cost avoidance and savings associated with reduced numbers of child protection plans and numbers of children being taken into care is outlined within the business case.
- 6.3 In relation to the cohort of adults supported Berkshire reported:
- 100% reduction in emergency crisis contact/use of front door mental health services, coupled with an increase in more progressive planned mental health contact
  - Reductions in visits to A&E for both adults and children.
  - Reductions in Police call outs in response to Domestic Abuse from 25.5% in Peterborough to 66,7% in west Berkshire.
  - Improved school attendance
- 6.4 Lancashire County Council is the closest LA to implement the model, at the end of 21/22 the end of the first year of implementation they had reduced the number of children looked after from 95-76 per 10k and identified £1.8 million in cost avoidance.
- 6.5 The detailed charts within the business case predict a 30% reduction in LAC and 45% reduction in Child Protection.
- 6.6 Staff recruitment and retention is a challenge and a priority for Children's Services, with reliance upon agency staff being high at around 40%. The higher costs associated with agency staffing have driven budget pressures and the churn of staff adversely

impacts effective support to children and families. Evaluation of the Family Safeguarding model suggests that there is the potential for positive impact upon the workforce. Authorities reported anecdotal evidence that vacancies were more readily filled as staff were attracted by the model:

- 78% reported that they were very satisfied with their job
  - 78-83% reported that the model enabled them to undertake more direct work with families.
  - In the 2018 and 2019 focus groups, experienced social workers in each authority said, unprompted by the evaluators, that Family Safeguarding is the best model in which they have worked.
  - Many of the parents and carers consulted for the evaluation said they had found Family Safeguarding processes to be more participatory, supportive, and empowering than their previous experiences of social services. They have welcomed motivational interviewing and the multi-agency nature of the support.
  - Almost without exception, the parents and carers told the evaluators that their quality of life had improved as a result of Family Safeguarding.
- 6.7 Sustaining these benefits requires an ongoing commitment from both leadership and staff delivering the service. It is intended that the service will implement Family Safeguarding with complete fidelity to the model to ensure that we avoid any pitfalls and achieve maximum benefits from the transformation. Hertfordshire acting as Sector Led Improvement Partners would support us with mentoring and support via the Centre for Family Safeguarding Practice.

## **7 Financial Considerations**

- 7.1 If Bury was to achieve only the lowest level of reductions achieved by adopting authorities, it would amount to an annual cost avoidance of £1.097m by year 3 and an accumulated cost avoidance of £4.872m over 5 years.
- 7.2 The Senior Leadership Team has higher ambitions, and we are targeting a higher level of cost avoidance of £3.291m by year 3 and an accumulated cost avoidance of £14.615m over 5 years.
- 7.3 The initial costs for implementing family safeguarding may include:
- Motivational Interviewing Training (circa £6,000 per cohort of sixteen core staff identified plus additional dependent on size of LA for leadership/partnership sessions) £0.018m
  - Resources for Family Safeguarding Practice to support effective implementation and fidelity to the model.
  - Costs of ICT, resources and recruitment, and implementation are estimated at £0.071m applicable to year 1 only
  - Costs to be supported with the Sector Led Improvement grant from DfE for Ofsted rated Requires Improvement and Inadequate authorities. The DfE grant confirmed to support this is £0.140m in Year 1
- 7.4 Ongoing operational costs:

- Approval in principle is sought to recruit adult Practitioners to establish the multi-agency team, comprised of Recovery workers, DA support workers (IDVAs) DA officer (probation officer) and mental health practitioners, cost are estimated at £0.655m per year Hertfordshire acting as Sector Led Improvement Partners and via support from the Hertfordshire Centre for Family Safeguarding would support with the scoping of the teams. Children's Safeguarding staff capacity to implement and deliver family safeguarding practice are estimated at £0.337m, this is calculated by mapping current demand for services against caseloads with the investment required to fund this for years 1 and 2. Costs beyond this will be met though savings and cost avoidance achieved through operating this model.

7.5 Current estimates included above (7.3 & 7.4) indicate costs in Year 1 £1.081m and Year 2 £0.992m, with Year 3 onwards including only ongoing costs of staff at £0.992m per year.

---

### Report Author and Contact Details:

*Name:* Jeanette Richards  
*Position:* Director of Children's Services  
*Department:* Children and Young People  
*E-mail:* j.richards@bury.gov.uk

---

## 8 Links with the Corporate Priorities:

- 8.1 Our vision for Children's Services links to the Let's Do It Strategy and the values and principals outlined in the attached appendix.
- 8.2 With the support of the wider council and its partners we have set out a plan of transformation which is ambitious and seeks to improve the lived experience of children and therefore their outcomes during childhood and beyond, in order to achieve this a focus upon an effective offer of help and support to those families who face complex issues is required.
- 8.3 Adopting a model of social work practice that is evidence based, restorative and which enables and facilitates change is a strategic priority within the plan and is central to the improvement and sustainability of improved delivery of services to our community that improve outcomes for children.
- 8.4 Family Safeguarding is proven to achieve better outcomes for children and their families. Following implementation of this innovative practice, fewer children will be taken into care or placed on child protection plans. In evaluations Family Safeguarding has been shown to result in up to 45% fewer children on a child protection plan and up to 30% fewer children needing to come into care. In addition, there has been up to a 66% reduction in repeat call outs to police in respect of domestic violence incidents.

---

## 9 Equality Impact and Considerations:

- 9.1 The model is designed to deliver improved safety, health and wealth of children and deliver improved health outcomes for parents. It mitigates the ongoing risk of harm to children.
- 9.2 A full equality impact assessment has been drafted and awaits quality assurance in order that we deliver inclusive and equitable outcomes for staff and service users will be central to the operation of the expanded service The proposed restructure will deliver:
- Longer term financial benefits
  - Compliance with our Statutory duties
  - Reduction in children coming into the care of the Local Authority
  - Families remaining together at home where it is safe to do so
  - Families receiving the right help and support to meet their needs to improve the care and protection of their children. Families experiencing issues relating to domestic abuse, mental ill-health and/or substance misuse receive better and more timely support.
  - Professional collaboration across partnership organisations which provides a holistic joined up service for children and families.

## 10 Environmental Impact and Considerations:

N/a

## 11 Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
<p>Doing nothing is not considered to be a viable option as in order to improve outcomes for children a joined-up approach is required. Remaining with the status quo will fail to address issues of high cost and comparatively poor outcomes for children and families where domestic abuse, mental health and parental substance/ alcohol misuse are an issue as are high levels of statutory demand across partners.</p>	<p>Develop an evidenced based model of practice</p>

## 12 Legal Implications:

- 12.1 The report proposes a move to a new family safeguarding model, this model has been implemented in other Authorities, this report contains details of the evidence base supporting the model. The model is compliant with the council's duties to children and young people.

12.2 If Members agree to this further work will be required to develop the detail of the staffing model. All employment matters will be dealt with in accordance with the legal framework and the council's policies and procedures.

---

### 13 Financial Implications:

13.1 The financial modelling of this approach identifies that from year three it produces savings in excess of its costs at the lowest level of assumption of £105k but at the higher level of aspiration the value could be as high as £2.3m.

13.2 Funding of this will initially be charged to the Children's Services reserve created in 2021/22 following the OFSTED inspection. From year 3 when it fully covers its costs and starts to deliver savings the costs and savings will fall to baseline budgets. It is recognised that this model not only brings reduced activity in Council services but also to other partners and that the staffing required as part of this model may be identified from within other partners establishments. Therefore, ongoing dialogue will be had with partners as to whether this can be a multi-agency funded team, thereby reducing the costs that fall to the Council.

#### Background papers:

- **Appendix 1 – The Family Safeguarding Model Business Case**
- **Appendix 2 - The Hertfordshire Family Safeguarding Evaluation 2017**
- **Appendix 3 – The Hertfordshire Family Safeguarding Evaluation 2020**
- **Appendix 4 – The Theory of Change; Family Safeguarding Model**
- **Appendix 5 – Environmental Impact Assessment**

**Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.**

Term	Meaning
CIN	Child in Need
CP	Child Protection
DA	Domestic Abuse
DfE	Department for Education
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Advisor
IT	Information Technology
LA	Local Authority
LAC	Looked after Child