

Southwark Signs of Safety Child Protection Conferences

LB Southwark

4th December 2019

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Key Principles

- Signs of Safety was developed in the 1990's in Western Australia by Dr Andrew Turnell, and uses strengths based 'Solution Focused' techniques to increase co-operation and promote partnership working with parents, young people, children and families. The model continues to evolve.
- Provides a framework for risk assessment and case planning that is meaningful for professionals as well as parents and children.
- Simple model that practitioners can use to elicit, in common language, the professionals' and family members' views regarding concerns or dangers, existing strength, safety and future safety.
- Assessments are something which is done with families – not to them.
- Questioning: Is important and vital to gaining key information. It should be evidenced based and continually searching for detail.
- Strengths within Signs of Safety does not mean safety, in order to gather safety within a family, it requires a thorough analysis of the situation.

Signs of Safety Conferences

Signs of Safety is a systemic strength based approach which seeks to ensure an inclusive approach to both understanding children's lives and planning for their safety

SofS methodology is an established way of working with families which is used in numerous LAs nationally and was implemented in Southwark in 2013

There is strong evidence that SofS has improved the focus of conferences, especially in regard to working inclusively with families

What it does:

- Integrates risk assessment with planning by incorporating future focus.
- Structure enables analysis throughout – no sharing of information done by anyone without making it clear whether it is an area they think is going well or are worried about.
- Parents understand what is expected of them
- Everyone uses the same shared language
- Support is targeted and relevant
- Open and transparent decision making
- Provides more specific details about concerns for children
- Can be used with families even where there is disagreement about the issues – can be used to work towards a shared goal

Families First Child Protection Conferences

Putting Children and Families
at the heart of Decision Making

What a Family Group Conference does

An opportunity for extended family to become involved in planning and decision making

Promotes a change to build partnerships and effective working relationships between family and professionals

Designed to empower children/young people and family members

Families have the ability to make rational and sound decisions about their future and the future of the children involved

The widening and strengthening of the family and friends support network is as important as addressing the concerns

Given the right environment and the correct information, families instinctively know what is best for the children

Placing FGC values into Child Protection

The challenge is to ensure that statutory and professional processes are aligned with family plans. Too often these plans are made in parallel rather than integrated together.

There had been careful consideration of how to develop the national learning from areas where FGCs have been embedded (Leeds - Ofsted rated Outstanding 2018 and Hertfordshire - Ofsted rated Good with Outstanding features 2018) into local practice within Southwark.

The Families First Model places the two fundamental FGC values of 'preparation' and 'private family time' and has embedded these within the child protection conference

Why we are piloting this model

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Possible outcomes

- We have held 4 Initial Families First Conferences. Feedback so far from 3 out of the 4 held:
- All the parents, friends and family confirm that they are supportive of the new model.
- One commented “I feel that it’s a very good idea to give family’s time to talk things through”.
- 85% of professionals stated that this conference style has helped improve their understanding of the family
- 92% of professionals stated this model has increased the capacity to develop a comprehensive plan

Possible outcomes

Some feedback from the model in Hertfordshire:

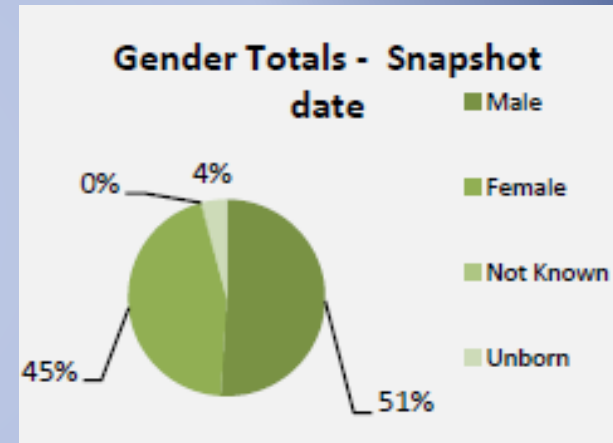
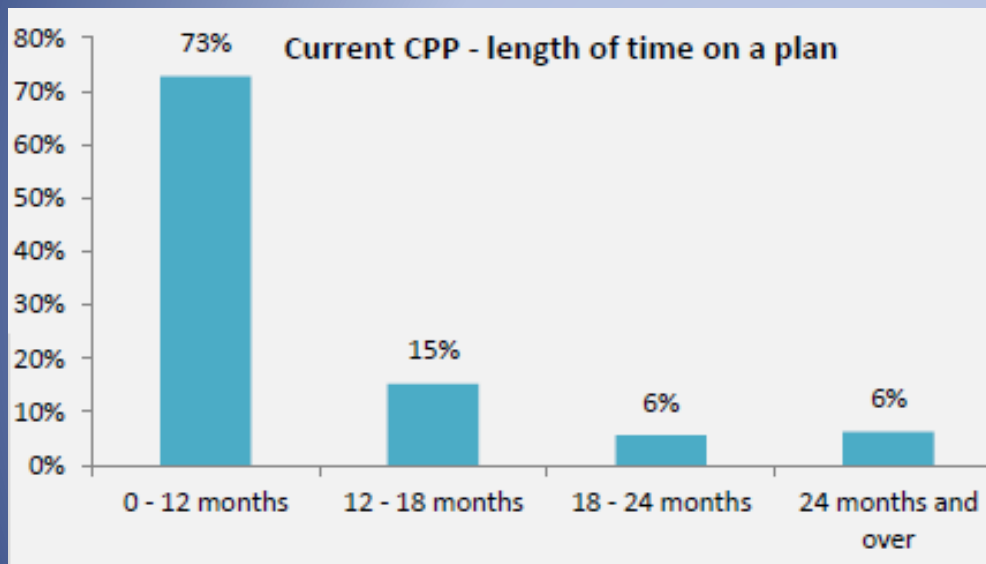
44% of parents said it would have helped to have their family involved from the outset of the s.47

75% of the family network said they would have supported the family earlier

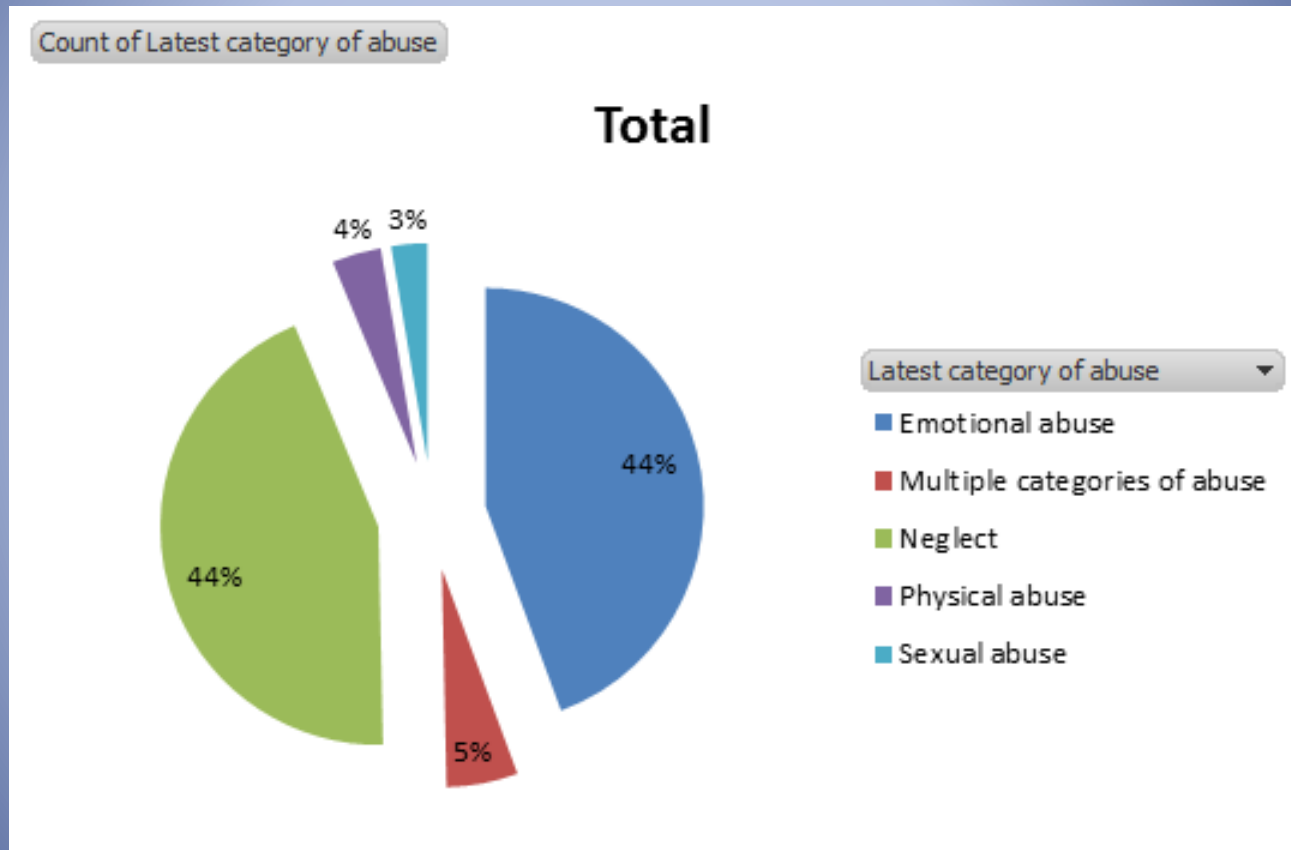
85% of professionals said the network members had information that helped them improve their understanding of the family.

CP Plans

LBS currently have 302 children subject to CP plan:



CP Plans – Category



GP involvement

CP Conference & GP engagement data:		
Period between Jan & Oct 2019		
GP attendance	Number of CPCs	%
Absent	369	74.8%
GP Attended (& provided report)	5	1.0%
GP Provided Report	104	21.1%
GP Sent Apology (No Report)	9	1.8%
Logs not completed	6	1.2%
Total (Number of CPCs)	493	100.0%

GP involvement

Invite sent?	Number of CPCs	%
Yes	309	62.7%
By SW (GPs may not have been contacted)	30	6.1%
No	154	31.2%
Total	493	100.0%
GP attended and or provided report (out of invites sent)	109	35.3%

Sharing Reports

- Professionals will need to share reports with parents in advance of the conference, AND
- Send written reports in advance to the Quality Assurance Unit, at a minimum:
 - i) 48 hours for Initials &
 - ii) 5 days for Reviews
- Timescale above is for both sharing and sending reports
- Email: Qaucp.Admin@southwark.gov.uk
- Tel. 020 7525 3308