

Effective Child Protection

Project Evaluation

Executive Summary and Recommendations

March 2022

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Executive Summary

The rationale for this Executive Summary and Recommendations are outlined in the full report and its appendices.

I was asked to examine whether child protection in Gwynedd is more effective as a consequence of adopting the Effective Child Protection model?

The unequivocal answer to that question is **Yes**

In the interim evaluation, I noted my surprise at the simplicity and practicality of the Model and the impact on practice. I asked 'why hasn't anyone done this before?' I am increasingly impressed with the thinking behind it and the tenacity to drive this, despite Covid.

The introduction of Effective Child Protection (ECP) in Gwynedd involved major practice changes. It was supported by senior managers and has worked and continues to thrive. I am confident that it has provided a launch pad for developing skills and practice and that key elements could benefit many local authorities.

The model has 4 elements and refers to Practice Mentoring and the use of reflective practice to embed and reinforce improvements in practice.

Of the four elements, it is 'Change' and 'Measure' that this model brings as new embedded approaches to social work practice.

These are important and simple ideas that social work hasn't, until now, succeeded in turning into practical methods and tools. These make the greatest contribution to the ECP model and its impact on child protection.

The ECP Project is led by an experienced trainer and coach who has thought carefully about how people learn and adapt over time. The use of Practice Mentoring is critical to turning ideas or intentions into changes to front line practice. The Practice Mentor encourages reflection and it is logical that we see such importance placed on these skills.

Recommendations

- Reinforcing the adoption of Change and Measuring Steps as the single areas that makes the most difference.
- Continue to review the 'What Needs to Change' and 'Measurement' to ensure that they maintain an individual focus relating to individual families and their circumstances
- The project has been successful in helping many families to change and care for their children. Continue to develop and review a range of differing methods of encouraging and enabling change.
- Reinforcing and embedding mentoring to assist and reinforce the team manager's role and responsibilities. Mentoring has proved a key element in developing social worker's skills in reflection, communication and involvement of families.
- Developing advice for other local authorities regarding the use of separate components of ECP to fit with their existing system. The key components are 'Change' and 'Measure'. These could fit alongside existing processes.
- Using the Risk 2 'Reason for Decision' analysis in conferences to summarise conclusions.
- Using the grid from Risk 2 in conferences and core groups to enhance communication.
- Using Graded Care Profile and Home Conditions to inform 'Steps' and 'Change' statements.
- Continued promotion of the methods and results. Initially across North Wales and then to a wider audience.

I strongly reinforce the message from my interim report. *'However, it is a tribute to the problem-solving work that has been done to identify a solution, and the persistence to achieve.'*

The author of this report

Bruce Thornton

I am a registered social worker having qualified in 1971. My background has predominantly been in child care and I have held social work, management and training posts in local authorities.

I have also lectured on a professional social work course and I am a joint author of Community Care's Guide to the Children Act 1989.

Since 1992 I have been a freelance trainer and service developer in both Wales and England. I am the joint author of the Gwynedd Risk Model and have a particular interest in the development of child protection that has a practical application for local authorities.

I have introduced the Risk Model into numerous local authority Children's Services Departments and I am familiar with many child protection systems.

I understand the background of the Effective Child Protection project but I have not been involved in its development or implementation. However, I did undertake a part of the interim review into the project based on comparing and contrasting child protection conference reports from pre and post implementation.