

# The Dartington Project

Revisions to the running of  
Children's Panels

# Introduction

- The Dartington Project is a partnership between Dartington Social Research Unit and Warwickshire Children's Services.
- It aims to safely reduce the numbers of children needing to become looked after by investing in evidence-based programmes which divert them from becoming accommodated.

# Outline of the Project

- Dartington Social Research Unit (SRU) is working with Warwickshire, Gloucestershire and Sandwell MBC on this project
- It commenced in the summer of 2011 and will run for a total of 3 years
- A steering group has been set up which includes, Safeguarding, Early Intervention, Health, Business Intelligence
- There are sub-groups to consider communication, Children's Panels and learning and development from the programme.

# Progress so far(1)

- A “Matching Needs and Services” exercise was undertaken on 100 children which identified the main needs of children in our LAC population
- This has helped to identify that we will be investing in Functional Family Therapy as our Evidence-Based Programme for 10-16 year olds to divert children at the edge of care from becoming looked after.
- We will also be offering “Triple P- level 4” to families where children aged 10+ are at the edge of care.
- The evaluation will involve carefully comparing the progress and outcomes of two groups of children, one of which has been looked after and the second, has received the FFT programme.
- The research design will be a random control trial, by far the most powerful way of evaluating impact, and has been approved both by ethics committee of both the Social Research Unit and by Warwickshire

# Progress so far (2)

- We have also undertaken a “Going Home” exercise which has identified the key factors in children’s circumstances which indicates that they may be able to return home
- From this exercise, 15 children are being considered by managers as to whether they can return home.

# The decision to divert a child from accommodation (1).

- Following the 'Edge of Care' meeting called by the Practice Leader when separation from the family home is judged to be a real possibility.
- Multi-agency meeting to include professionals working with child and an Early Intervention manager.

# The decision to divert a child from accommodation (2)

- *What more can be done to ensure that we reduce or remove significant impairments to the child's development and ensure that s/he can safely remain with their family?*

# The decision to divert a child from accommodation (3)

- Where the decision is that the child should remain at home and work should continue with the family, a Child in Need Plan will need to be completed.
- Resources are available to support this incl FIP, Triple P level 4



# The decision to divert a child from accommodation(4)

- Where a decision is made to look after a young person aged 10-16 you should consider the criteria for FFT as an alternative to accommodation.

# Referral to FFT(1)

- An Operations Manager has agreed that the risk to this young person is not so specific and severe that they must leave their home for reasons of their safety
- An Operations Manager has agreed that the young person meets the criteria for FFT and that there is no reason why they should not be referred to the programme
- The young person and their family have read and understand the leaflet on Functional Family Therapy, or that it has been explained to them, and that they agree to be referred to the programme if a place is available and allocated to them

# Referral to FFT (2)

- The allocated worker, or another relevant person, will then find out if a place on the programme will be available.
- This will be done by firstly checking that the young person meets the criteria for the programme,
- then whether the programme has the capacity to accept the referral and begin contact with the family almost immediately.
- The young person will then be randomly allocated either to the programme or to becoming looked after.

# Revisions to Children's Panels.

- As this project directly relates to children becoming looked after, Children's Panels will become a key vehicle for monitoring the effectiveness of the EBP on keeping the child out of accommodation and being able to return home in a timely manner.
- The project has looked at how to streamline processes to avoid duplication.

# What's New?-Edge of Care Meetings

- The minutes of the Edge of Care meetings that are held where there is a real possibility of a child becoming looked after, will be sent to Children's Panels. This aims to:
- Review and raise with the Operations Manager any observations on the plan for a particular child/young person, and provide advice on the best way forward - in some cases the Panel may also ask for further progress reports
- Ensure that for each child/young person that is looked after, permanency is achieved as quickly as possible
- Identify broad issues of demand, resources or practice and ensure that these are placed appropriately within the Partnership (*for example within the Sufficiency Duty Strategy*) for detailed discussion and resolution.

# What's New?-Membership

- The Panel's membership will be multi-agency:
- Social Care Operations Managers,
- Area Leads from the Virtual School
- Designated health professional for LAC,
- Fostering Practice Leader,
- Adoption Manager
- Early Intervention Manager,
- Children's Reviewing Manager,
- Primary Mental Health Practitioner and
- Integrated Youth Support staff
- **with each representative being in a position to share information known to that agency/service about the child/young person or family, and empowered to commit resources to effecting the decision reached.**

# What's New?-Care Planning

- All Panels will give a high priority to discussing cases of children who have just become looked after.
- The Care Plan needs to address :
- the transition for the child into their new placement, where this has not already occurred.
- A timely decision on permanency needs to be taken. Where that is to return home, the Care Plan needs to address:
- How the child can retain continuity (of territory and role as well as contact) within the family
- What work will continue with the family to address the problems that caused the separation
- How continuity of education can be maintained, any hobbies or interests of the child can be pursued and how religious belief or other elements of personal identity can be developed

# What's New?- Twin Track Planning

- Children's Panel will endorse a twin track plan which needs to be presented to the second looked after review.
- There may be cases where sufficient progress has not been made by the second review, but could be envisaged within a time-scale appropriate to the child/young person that would still allow a return home.



# What's New? Role of IRO

- LAC reviews also have a crucial role in ensuring that the agreed plan for a looked after child is progressed in a timely fashion appropriate to the needs of, and ensuring the best outcomes for the child.
- Where the IROs have concerns, these should be raised with the allocated social worker or Practice leader, including if necessary the Operations Manager and/or Service Manager.
- The IRO Service, in conjunction with operational staff, will agree 'exemplar' Care Plan for each group of children identified in the Matching Needs and Services review undertaken in 2011 and standards against which cases of children looked after might be referred back to later Panel meetings. Both the exemplar care plans and standards for referral back will be informed by research.

# What's New?-Information Framework.

- The Business Intelligence Unit will develop an information framework, available to each Children's Panel and to Operations Managers, that tracks the progress for each child from the point of the first 'Edge of Care' Meeting.
- These staff will from time to time attend Panel meetings and facilitate an information based discussion on consistency across the County.
- They will also formally report regularly to the Steering Group of the Looked After Children's Project and information will be shared more widely within the management groups within the Safeguarding and Early Intervention Services.
- To ensure that the information is focused and accessible, a limited number of data will be tracked for each child, by Children's Panel. The information will also allow comparison between Panels on key data and against baseline data on children's needs within their area (for example child poverty).