

You are here: > [Home](#) > [News](#) > [Health and Social Care](#) > Positive progress for the Family Safeguarding Team

Three months on from its formal launch, Peterborough's new Family Safeguarding Service is reporting positive progress.

Family Safeguarding is a new approach to child protection, originally piloted in Hertfordshire. Peterborough City Council is adopting the approach having successfully bid for £2.6million in funding last year.

The Family Safeguarding Teams focus on working in partnership with families where the child or children is at risk due to the behaviour of an adult(s). It tackles the 'toxic trio' of domestic abuse, substance abuse and mental health issues. 'Motivational interviewing' techniques focus on each adult's strengths, supporting them to make changes that will benefit the children in the household.

Family Safeguarding in Peterborough is now being delivered by six teams, following the recruitment and training of the first six of 12 adult workers who will work alongside the children's social workers. Every member of the team has now been trained in motivational interviewing and the new tools in place to support families. An important move has been to reduce child social workers' caseloads from 20-25 down to around 15. This way they can focus more deeply on each family and intensify the level of support.

The impact of the new approach will be measured by following two 'cohorts' of families. The first of these involves 113 adults and 160 children. With their agreement, Family Safeguarding will work with the police, health, drug and alcohol services to assess the level of involvement they have with those in the cohort, before and after the team's intervention.

Another key measure is the number of children on a Child Protection Plan. Since the introduction of Family Safeguarding Teams in July 2017 this figure has dropped by 7 per cent, as the teams build better relationships with the adults in the household and feel more confident about being able to manage the risks adults pose to the child's safety.

Nicola Curley, assistant director for children's social care at Peterborough City Council said: "The approach is already showing positive signs. The drop in the number of children on protection plans is a real indication of how it's working. By supporting the adults in the family we're creating trust - a direct contrast to the traditional child protection approach which can be quite adversarial. We know that reducing risk for children and therefore coming off child protection plans achieve better outcomes for them, and so this is a key focus of the work for the Safeguarding Team.

"The Hertfordshire pilot saw this number drop by 29 per cent, and we're hopeful that we can reach the same kind of level in Peterborough. We're also anticipating that, in time, the number of children that come into care will also reduce.

"Importantly, building these family relationships and achieving better outcomes is more rewarding for our social workers too. We hope that this will improve job satisfaction and in turn, retention. As the approach becomes more established, it's likely to help us attract new social workers to the team from other locations."

The Family Safeguarding Teams have received praise from Chairs of Child Protection Conferences, who have already noted more detailed reporting and greater insight from social workers as to each family situation and risk to children.