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# Children's MARS Resilience and Safeguarding in Practice Event



13 November 2023



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# Children's MARS Resilience and Safeguarding in Practice Event 2023

## Welcome and Opening Remarks

Helen Davis

Ann-Marie Matson

Darren Wildbore

**CHILDREN'S MULTI-AGENCY RESILIENCE & SAFEGUARDING BOARD**





North Lincolnshire  
One Family Approach

Media removed - Video snapshot of previous  
conference



North Lincolnshire  
**CHILDREN'S  
MULTI-AGENCY  
RESILIENCE &  
SAFEGUARDING  
BOARD**

North Lincolnshire – THIS IS US



North Lincolnshire – THIS IS US





North Lincolnshire – THIS IS US





North Lincolnshire – THIS IS US

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# Children's MARS Resilience and Safeguarding in Practice Event 2023

## Listening, Learning, Reviewing and Adapting

Reflections on the Children's MARS Annual Report 2022/23

Edwina Harrison

Dave Basker

**CHILDREN'S MULTI-AGENCY RESILIENCE & SAFEGUARDING BOARD**



# Children's MARS Annual Report 2022/23 and independent scrutiny

- Annual report was published on 29 September 2023
- In the context of the Children's MARS Scrutiny and Assurance Framework, there is an ongoing commitment to independent scrutiny to ensure constructive challenge and evaluation to drive forward continuous improvements in practice leading to better outcomes
- Annual report ultimately demonstrates the effectiveness of the local arrangements, some of which has been determined through independent scrutiny activity



**Listening, Learning, Reviewing and Adapting**



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# Independent Scrutiny Activity 2022/23

Child Sexual  
Exploitation Practice  
Learning Line of Sight  
event

Child Criminal  
Exploitation Practice  
Learning Line of Sight  
event

Thematic assurance  
activity i.e. Front  
Door and PIT STOP

Teenage Relationship  
Abuse Practice  
Learning Line of Sight  
event

Independent scrutiny  
of the identification  
and notification of  
serious cases

Independent scrutiny  
review of the local  
arrangements

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# Headlines from Child Exploitation line of sight events

- The One Family Approach was evident in that practice was relational, strengths based and creative
- There is strong evidence of proactive multi agency working and practitioners worked collaboratively as a team including complimenting practice, encouraging each other and challenging when needed
- There are positive examples of multi-agency communication and information sharing
- Practitioners worked constructively and creatively with families - interventions are done 'with' and 'alongside' the family
- There is a strong focus on relationship building both between professionals and the young person, and between family members in the child's life
- Practitioners demonstrated a passion for practice and helping children and discussion was not centred on processes
- v
- Staff are tenacious and flexible in their roles and there is a willingness to keep reviewing and changing the plan where required
- The families were empowered to tell professionals what they want and to come up with their own solutions
- The views and needs of the child and family were in the centre of planning
- There is a real focus on the child's voice and lived experience, using a non-judgmental loving approach
- Acknowledging the complexities and challenges in cases of child exploitation, the practitioners were caring, compassionate and empathetic
- A focus on promoting and supporting young people's talents, interests and aspirations was evident and this should be continued
- Evidence of creating 'fire exits' and opportunities for young people by building on their aspirations

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# Headlines from Front Door/PIT STOP thematic events

## Front Door

- Decisions about risk and need are well understood and consistently applied, so that children get the right help at the right time

## PIT STOP

- Overwhelmingly positive partnership approach to preventing need for escalating and ensuring that children and families receive a direct offer of help at the lowest level
- Senior leaders welcome scrutiny and challenge and use this to reflect on current service delivery and make improvements to frontline practice

**Listening, Learning, Reviewing and Adapting**





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# Headlines from Teenage Relationship line of sight event

- Practitioners knew the family, were aware of the dynamics and there was consideration of the whole family in planning processes
- Appropriate risk assessments were undertaken in the school setting and work was done with the young people around healthy relationships
- Appropriate agencies have continued to work with the young person and staff have received relevant training / have access to toolkits resulting in them being confident about supporting the young people
- Practitioners were tenacious and were willing to deal with difficult subjects and have difficult conversations
- Professionals were quick to recognise Adverse Childhood Experiences and the need to do things differently when working with past trauma
- Evidence of professional curiosity
- The communication and joint working between adults and children's services was strong
- The use of fewest best interventions was evident i.e. family support were doing the hidden harm work instead of referring to DELTA

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# Headlines from review of serious cases

Review demonstrated that:

- there is a clear process for identifying potential cases
- there are opportunities for ongoing dialogue about issues to ensure a consistent understanding across leaders and managers
- decision making is robust



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# Headlines from review of local arrangements

This year's independent scrutiny of the local arrangements included:

- desktop research
- facilitation of multi-agency leaders(s) and practitioner(s) forums
- meeting with the Children's MARS team
- observation of the Children's MARS Board
- observation of a review child protection conference and follow up afterwards

There was a specific focus on:

- the impact of the ROTH approach
- impacts associated with the Shine a Light areas of focus
- evidence of schools and wider agencies involvement

Overall, I summarised that:

*'The Children's MARS Board sets the tone and culture across the partnership. Respectful challenge is accepted as normal and constructive and is intended to make a positive difference to the lives of children and families. The difference between the levels, from the Children's MARS Board to the multi-agency front line is understood, and creative approaches are used to communicate across agencies and levels. The move to locate teams within communities offers an increased opportunity to understand the lived experience of children and families and to make a positive impact on their safety and wellbeing'*

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# Headlines from review of local arrangements

One Family Approach is recognised and understood in theory and practice

Links to other partnerships is evident i.e. Community Safety Partnership and Violence Reduction Unit

Relationships with adult safeguarding are good from a strategic and front line perspective

Clarity as to the rationale for the shine a light areas of focus and evidence of impact

Risk Outside the Home Approach embedded

Child Exploitation and Missing profile in place

Comprehensive resources on the website and useful communications

Strengths based culture and opportunities for multi agency learning throughout the local arrangements

Feedback from training is good

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# Headlines from review of local arrangements

Determination to provide support at the earliest possible opportunity continues

Local arrangements assists with equipping schools and colleges to address vulnerability

Strong governance arrangements in place, led by the board which has a rotational chair

Quality of supporting documents which provides the confidence in the work which underpins to board

Comprehensive suite of performance information across the scope of system

Evidence that different needs are being addressed (and diversity) i.e. via child protection conference

Opportunity for support and challenge resulting in escalation processes being rarely required

Use of independent scrutiny is clear and focussed

System wider ownership of the agenda demonstrating that 'safeguarding is everyone's business'

**Listening, Learning, Reviewing and Adapting**

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**Ongoing focus on listening, learning,  
reviewing and adapting.....**





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# Children's MARS Resilience and Safeguarding in Practice Event 2023

## Real Lives

Listening to and learning from children and families' voice

**CHILDREN'S MULTI-AGENCY RESILIENCE & SAFEGUARDING BOARD**





# Real Lives Claire's story

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Media removed – Claire's Story





## Real Lives

### Claire's story

- ✓ Learning from experiences
- ✓ Taking self-responsibility
- ✓ Recognising and making use of 'fire exits'
- ✓ Right people, right place, right time
- ✓ Importance of trusted relationships
- ✓ The value of consistent, flexible and creative support
- ✓ Understanding strengths and building resilience
- ✓ Aspirational and inspirational



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# Children's MARS Resilience and Safeguarding in Practice Event 2023

## Keynote: Professional Curiosity

Ruth Pearson

**CHILDREN'S MULTI-AGENCY RESILIENCE & SAFEGUARDING BOARD**



# Content

- ▶ Background
  - National Serious Case/Child Practice Reviews, Community Care Inform Disguised Compliance’;
  - LSCB/Ps guidance
- ▶ ‘Disguised Compliance’ – and lying/deception/pretending!
- ▶ Gaining a fuller picture
- ▶ Challenge and decision making

# Disguised Compliance – What do we mean?

- ▶ Reder, Duncan & Gray (1993)
  - Identified patterns of ‘closure’ or ‘flight’ when families attempted to reduce their contact with the external world in an attempt to ‘regain control by shutting out professionals’
  - Often when professionals took a more controlling stance, this was diffused by apparent cooperation of the family, the effect of which was to ‘neutralise the professionals’ authority and return the relationship to closure and the previous status quo’

**Nb** –based on learning from SCRs (Part 8)

# What do we mean?

- ▶ Some parents may give the appearance of cooperating to avoid raising suspicions and to minimise agency engagement and intervention (Barnsley MBC)
- ▶ Families resistant to change but have short periods of co-operation to seek to draw attention away from concerns (Brandon, et al 2008)
- ▶ Partial/ambivalent/selective co-operation



# What do we mean?

- ▶ Non-effective compliance (Stoke LSCB)
- ▶ ‘giving the appearance of cooperating to avoid raising suspicions and to minimise intervention’ (Cwm Taf LSCP)

# Warnings about the phrase

- ▶ A number of questions about the use of the phrase 'disguised compliance' – some about use of language some about impact on assessments
- ▶ Still useful for us as a warning to be cautious and exercise Professional Curiosity
- ▶ Not helpful to use the phrase in our reports etc – we need to be clear about what our expectations are from the parent to meet the needs of the child and what might be the reality
- ▶ **Nb** Hart (2017) 'It's called pretending'!

# What is the effect?

‘Apparent or disguised cooperation from parents often prevented or delayed understanding of the severity of harm to children and cases drifted’

Biennial Review of SCRs Brandon et al 2008

‘This can mean that social workers and other practitioners may be unaware of what is happening in a child’s life and the risks they face may be unknown to authorities’ (Bradford SCP 7 minute briefing)

# What is the effect?

Arthur Labinjo– Hughes – ‘campaign of cruelty’; 130 areas of injury; referrals re bruising; ‘manipulated the system’ – allowed to play in garden for SWk visit to substantiate claim of injury  
‘strong reliance on self-reporting’ (CSPRP, 2022)

Star Hobson– catastrophic injuries, string of many other injuries; 5 referrals; 1 complaint closed as dismissed as ‘malicious’ & workers ‘fobbed off’

‘FS & SB acted to prevent professionals & family members from coming into contact with Star’

(CSPRP, 2022)

# How do we start our assessment?

Ask the parents



# Some parents may not tell the truth!



Think of a situation where you have been untruthful, lied, 'economical with the truth' – and got away with it!

- ▶ How did you get away with it?

# Some confessions!

- ▶ 'WhatsApp to friend, I can't come out, I've got a tummy bug'
- ▶ 'It was lovely to meet you!'
- ▶ 'Oh, there's a scratch on the car?'
- ▶ 'The tooth fairy forgot as she was at an AGM'
- ▶ 'You look great in that outfit!'
- ▶ 'Oh, how lovely, thank you – just what I wanted!'
- ▶ ....New purchase just put in the wardrobe'

# What we know about 'lying' or deceit Ekman (2009)

- ▶ Lying and/or deceit?
- ▶ A liar can chose not to lie!
- ▶ Two primary ways to lie
  - Conceal – leaving out true information
  - Falsify – presenting false information as if it was true
  - Where there is a choice about *how* – liars usually prefer to conceal – passive not active
- ▶ *But the liar loses the choice when challenged*
- ▶ Best way to conceal emotion is mask – either physical or another emotion

- ▶ Smile is the most common mask – throughout life social smiles falsely present feelings not felt but useful/required
- ▶ Also – acknowledge the feeling but lie about the cause – *I'm angry because you are accusing me of not looking after my kids!*, *I'm crying because I love my kids so much and you are accusing me of abusing them*
- ▶ Tell the truth with a 'twist' *oh, yeah, I'm drinking 3 bottles of vodka a day!*
- ▶ Telling partial truth – *he does come round sometimes but never stays over*



# Clues to deceit

- ▶ Two kinds of clues to deceit
  - ‘Leakage’ – liar mistakenly reveals the truth
  - ‘Deception clue’ – liar’s behaviour suggests they are lying without revealing the truth

# Why lies fail

- ▶ Cannot anticipate all questions that may be asked
- ▶ Have trouble remembering the line they previously stated – new questions cannot consistently be answered quickly
- ▶ *Detection apprehension* – especially when
  - Target has a reputation for being hard to fool
  - Target starts out as being suspicious
  - Liar has little practice & no record of success
  - Punishment for lying greater than for content of lie

# Why lies succeed

- ▶ Lack of detection apprehension
- ▶ ‘Natural Liars / Storytellers’ – been getting away with it since childhood – highly skilled
  - Actors, salesmen, spies, politicians!
- ▶ Can anticipate questions & prepare answers
- ▶ Detail not checked or repeated

# We can never rely purely on parental self-report

- ▶ 'The couple were open and honest about their relationship'
- ▶ 'Mum didn't attend because the children were ill'
- ▶ 'The Health Visitor cancelled the appointment'

No! – this is what the parent *said* not necessarily the true situation

# We can never rely purely on what we are presented with

- ▶ Arthur Labinjo– Hughes seeming ‘happy and playful’ and it seemed ‘happy household’
- ▶ Daniel Pelka was well dressed and there were no concerns about his siblings (Coventry LSCB) – (and mother was well dressed – and her nails were done beautifully!)
- ▶ Daniel Pelka’s home was clean & tidy – with a bowl of fruit on the table
- ▶ ‘There was a pot of snowdrops on the windowsill’



# Learning from this

Professionals working with families need to ensure they do not become over-reliant on parental self reporting.

(Sidebotham et al 2016)

# So – How do we know?

- ▶ No significant change at reviews despite significant input
- ▶ Parents/carers agreeing with professionals regarding required changes but putting little effort into making changes work
- ▶ Change does occur but as a result of external agencies/resources, not the parent/carers' efforts
- ▶ Change in one area of functioning is not matched by change in other areas
- ▶ Parents/carers will engage with certain aspects of the plan only
- ▶ Parent/carers align themselves with certain professionals
- ▶ Child's report conflicting with parents'

(Peterborough, Stoke, Barnsley LSCBs)

# What can we do?

- ▶ Change
  - Focus on change for the child brought about by change from the parent

# Change

## Failure to address neglect:

‘non-compliance and disguised compliance by parents were common features of cases reviewed. Although some multi-agency groups developed clear strategies to manage such behaviour, this was not evident in all cases. *Where parents were not engaging in plans, and outcomes for children were not improving, professionals did not consistently challenge parents*’

‘drift and delay have serious consequences for children resulting in them continuing to be exposed to neglect’

(Ofsted Neglect 2014, p 6)

# What else can we do?

## ► Plans or expectation

- Plans based on child's developmental needs and how parents are going to prioritise the child's needs –use *Clear* language – not just 'attend'; 'improve'; 'adequate'; 'appropriate' – 'meaningful engagement'!!!
- This gives us better clarity on how to assess progress and change for the child
- Are they doing it or just 'ticking the boxes'?



# What else can we do?

- ▶ Focus on the child
  - Parental behaviours may be designed to prevent professionals gaining a true picture of the child
  - When did we last see this child & how?
  - Link parenting behaviour with parenting capacity i.e. domestic abuse; drug/alcohol misuse
- ▶ Experience of the child
  - Do we have a true picture of the 'lived experience of the child' – if not what, or who, is preventing this
  - What tools do we have to work with children

## My Family

Claire



I Dont Like it wen Mum and dave ar in  
he bedroom with speshal pop and Tom has to  
look after us Tom cant work the cooker

# What else can we do?

- ▶ Working with all members of the family
  - Who else has contact this child/family/parent? Are we ignoring risks/ positives i.e. men; birth fathers – need to include them in assessment (cf SCR Cumbria, adoption)
  - Extended family, neighbours; don't ignore 'malicious' information
  - cf Arthur L-H & Star H – grandparents, partner, babysitter made referrals. In case of Star – one complaint closed as 'malicious' based on dislike of mum's partner

# What else can we do?

## ► Observation

- How easy is it for a relationship to be fabricated? What do we observe and for how long?
- Nb – cctv of Daniel Pelka being collected from school
- Announced & unannounced visits
- Do we see the whole house or just the ‘viewing area’?

# What else can we do?

- ▶ Multi-Agency working
  - Key to identification of patterns
  - Each piece of the jigsaw
  - Parents should know account will be checked
- ▶ Chronologies
  - 'thinking chronologically' – patterns: what appointments have they kept; ability to challenge – are they doing it?
  - If there is some change, is this sustained or spasmodic?

# What else can we do?

- ▶ Strengths-based working or 'over optimism'
- ▶ Evidence-based assessments
  - Remember what research tells us about i.e. vulnerable women & domestic abuse; dependent drug/alcohol misuse –
  - Given what we know – does this seem likely?
- ▶ Use of the child protection process
  - Consider thresholds; does lack of co-operation raise or lower my concerns?; Should lack of engagement mean that the case is closed?



# Professional Curiosity

- ▶ Look
  - Does what you see contradict or support what you are being told?
  - How do family members interact?
- ▶ Ask
  - Do not presume you know what is happening in the home – ask
- ▶ Listen
  - Are you being told anything that needs further clarification
- ▶ Clarify
  - Are other professionals being told the same thing?
- ▶ Share information
  - – in a timely manner!

Professional Curiosity Guidance for Practitioners, Cumbria Safeguarding Adults Board

Nb – lots more on each on this guidance!

# ‘Lying’ and deception (pretending!)

- ▶ Why do we believe parents?
- ▶ Many people are very good at it (most of us do – and get away with it!)
- ▶ Do we want to believe that all is well?
- ▶ How do we question?
- ▶ They know what questions we are going to ask and can prepare the answers – just like any good actor!
- ▶ People prefer to conceal than to actually lie
  - So what do we say?

# Authority

Professional authority involves both confidence and competence;

- ▶ Effective working with parents requires professional curiosity and challenge, without which analysis may lack rigour and depth.

Triennial Review of SCRs 2016

# How do we challenge?

- ▶ Authoritative, negotiated child protection practice
- ▶ Assertiveness & persistence – not passive or aggressive/confrontational style
- ▶ ‘Rehearse’ phrases for a difficult conversation

# How do we challenge?

- ▶ 'Respectful uncertainty'
  - 'eyes wide open'; 'safe uncertainty & authoritative doubt needs to be a state of mind not a weakness
  - This is the way we always work – made clear in multi-agency group and to family

# ‘Respectful Uncertainty’

## ► Consider:

- Listen and take some time to think
- Ask to repeat back statement not sure about, and to give more detail
- Repeat back statement or paraphrase
- ‘I need to think about what you have said..’
- ‘I have a problem, in that.....’
- ‘I need to tell you that that does not fit with ...’
- ‘That is one possible answer to the problem, but I have to consider all the other ways of looking at it..’
- Can you tell me how that fits with what we also know?



# Detours! – and counter responses

- ▶ Put Off – insist/suggest concern is discussed now but keep it brief; arrange another specific time
- ▶ Distracting – take brief note, say what you might be able to do, return to the point
- ▶ Denying – briefly disagree with denial and/or restate your concern, do not engage with argument
- ▶ Joking – ignore or briefly disagree and return to point
- ▶ Poor Me – don't feel guilty, wait until person composed, acknowledge difficulty, return to point, arrange another time

# Remember lessons from 'lying/deception/pretending'

- ▶ How to phrase the question
- ▶ Ask other questions
- ▶ Make sure you have a full picture of concerns
- ▶ Make sure they know you will check/talk to each other
- ▶ Ask to repeat
- ▶ Remember the detail
- ▶ When we first engage with parents, make clear that we will be more concerned if it later appears that they have not been truthful

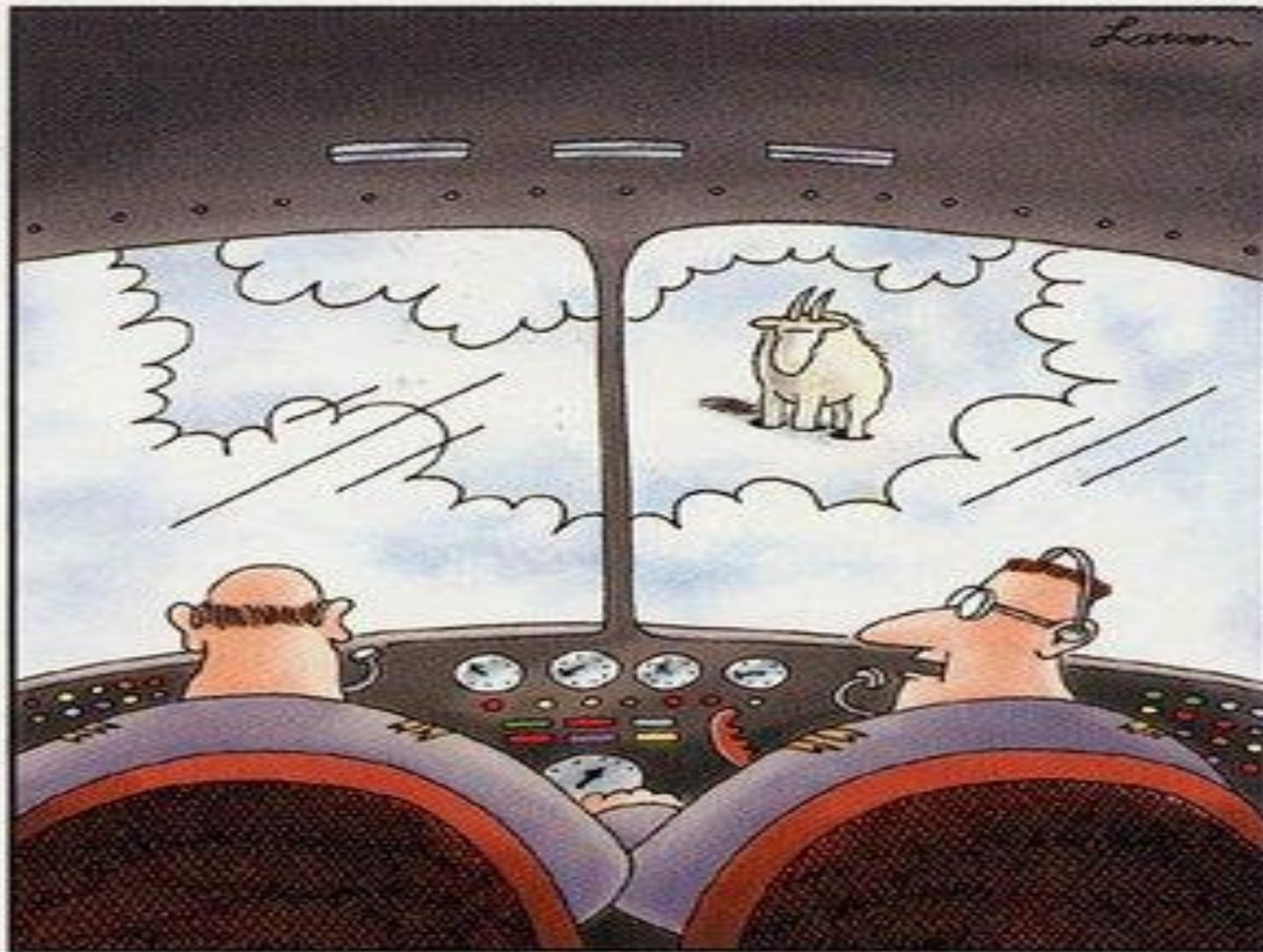
# Asking questions

- ▶ Nature of the question –
  - Not ‘closed’ – i.e. yes/no answer/no description ‘How much are you drinking?????’
  - ‘Open’ general/needing description:  
*‘tell me about ...’; ‘help me understand what..’; ‘when you say that things are fine, how would you describe that?’*
  - Gain more specific information – *‘when you say that you help with his homework, what does that mean? What does that look like?’*
- ▶ ‘Follow-up’ questions?
- ▶ Is there something you think I should know that you have not told me? (*remember people prefer to conceal than to actually tell a lie*)
- ▶ Tell me what’s gone well & not so well.
- ▶ How likely was the answer?
- ▶ How convincing were they?

Now what should I do?

# Decision Making – taking this forward

- ▶ Importance of feelings & hypothesis
  - Consider our ‘gut feeling/ reaction’ – but be careful that we are not being deceived by very good actors!
  - Why are we worried/not worried? What information are we basing this on?
  - Think about our ‘unconscious bias’ – a smile, home conditions, presentation (don’t fit our picture of abusive/neglectful parent)
  - Remember – sometimes ‘gut decides – then the brain justifies’ – Confirmation Bias



"Say ... what's a mountain goat doing way up here in a cloud bank?"



# System 1 / System 2 Thinking

- ▶ System 1 Thinking –
  - quick thinking in stressful situations
  - consider information that is directly at hand – WYSIATI – ‘What You See Is All There Is’ – the prism through which we see a case
  - susceptible to first impressions – ‘halo’ effect
  - resorts to short cuts and ‘educated guesses’
  - more intuitive and emotional – ‘gut feeling’
- ▶ System 2 Thinking –
  - slower and more reflective thinking
  - allocates attention to the mental activities that demand effort, such as complex computations and conscious, reasoned choices about what to think and what to do

Kahneman (2012)



# Gut reaction & feelings

- ▶ Our view of any family is a hypothesis – this needs to be tested – continually!
- ▶ We need reflective space to consider:
  - What are we being told?
  - What sense do we make of this?
  - What else am I basing my view on?
  - Who else might have information?
  - Do we still think the same thing?
  - Does this change?

Nb – it is not a weakness to change your mind!!!!!!

# Decision Making

- ▶ Supervision/ case discussion
  - ‘reflective space and critical challenge’ to discuss meaning of *all* information – chronology, observation, what the child is saying, ‘gut reaction’
  - Am I being influence by emotion, fear or individual bias?
- ▶ Multi–agency setting
  - Use your assertiveness skills to challenge others’ opinions
    - you might be the one who has got it right!

# Key points

- ▶ Change
- ▶ Patterns
- ▶ Lived experience of the child
- ▶ 'eyes wide open'
- ▶ Confidence to challenge
- ▶ Will impact on assessment
- ▶ Multi-agency working
- ▶ *Good Luck!*



# Ruth Pearson training

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# Lunch Break

## 12:15 to 1:00

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# Children's MARS Resilience and Safeguarding in Practice Event 2023

## Keynote: Intersectionality and Safeguarding Practices

Professor Claudia Bernard

**CHILDREN'S MULTI-AGENCY RESILIENCE & SAFEGUARDING BOARD**



# Intersectionality and Safeguarding

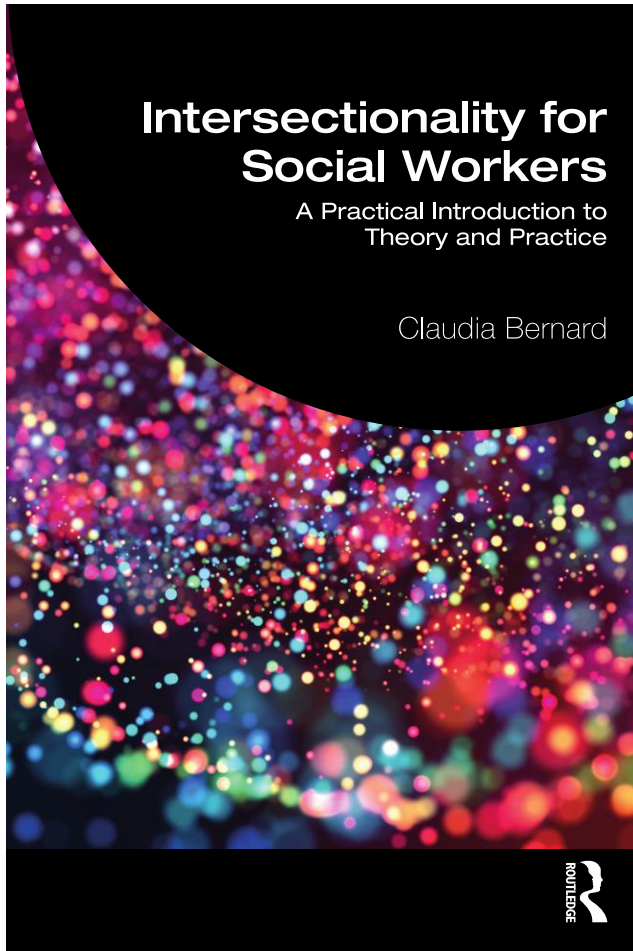
Professor Claudia Bernard  
@DrCBernard

**Goldsmiths**  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

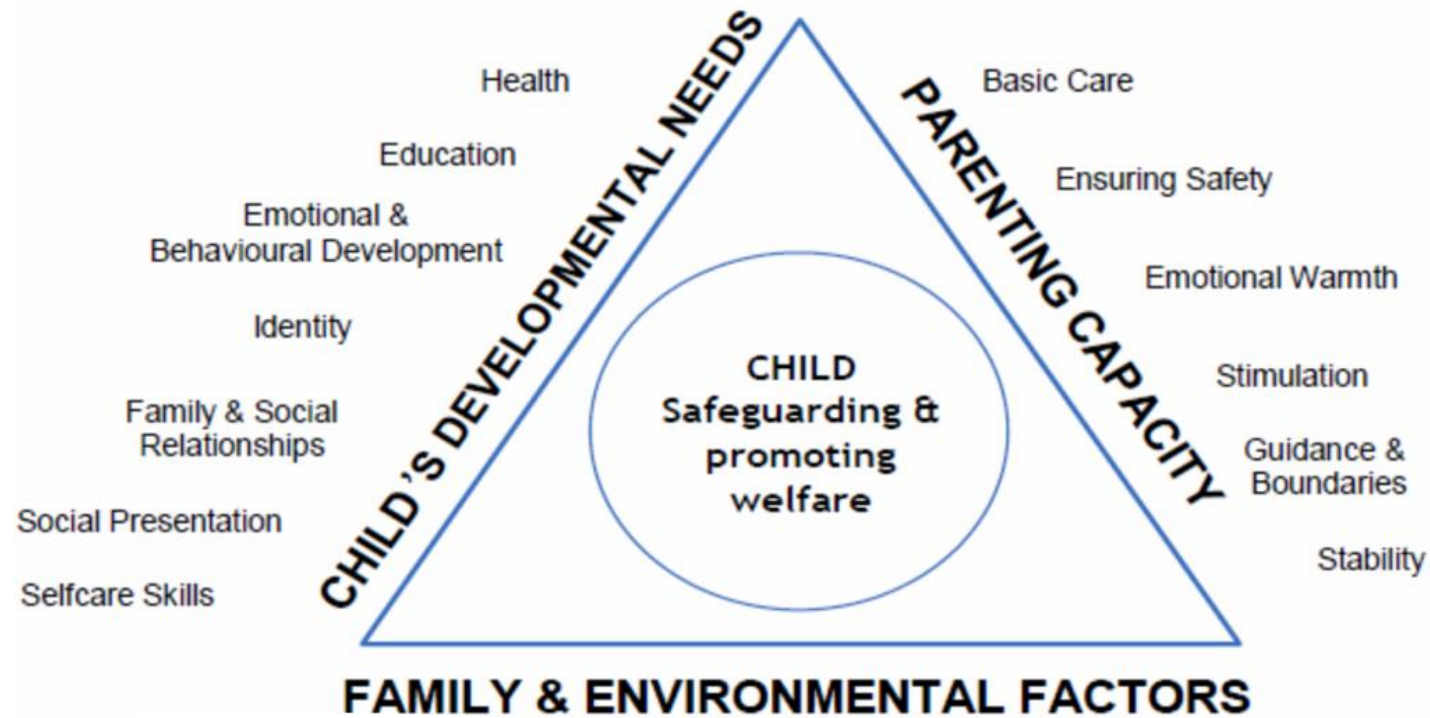
# Outline

- In what ways can intersectionality help us to understand multiple forms of inequalities in safeguarding?
- How do senior leaders in North Lincolnshire step into the space to strategically foster the culture of the organisation for practice with racially minoritised communities?
- How might safeguarding practitioners, managers and senior leaders use intersectionality as a tool to build strategic partnerships?

# What is Intersectionality?



- Intersectionality is a lens for understanding how race and ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic status, sexual identity, (dis)ability, citizenship status, and other forms of difference shape and influence lived experiences.
- An appreciation of multiple social identities
- An examination of power and inequality
- A recognition of changing social contexts.



## Intersectionality and Safeguarding

- Intersectionality aligns well with the Assessment Framework as it offers social workers a frame for assessing the intersectional nature of the factors associated with the three dimensions of the triangle to understand the lived experiences of children and families (**Bernard, 2022, p35**).
- Intersectionality thus lends itself to the Assessment Framework as it can provide the critical tools that are needed to make sense of the factors for contextual safeguarding and relationship-based practice.

In what ways can intersectionality help us to understand multiple forms of inequalities in safeguarding?

### **Identifying children and families who would benefit from early help:**

- Children who are disabled
- Children at risk of sexual or criminal exploitation
- Children at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- Substance misuse/alcohol misuse/domestic abuse

### **For assessments to be helpful:**

- Intersectionality helps to take account of the, family circumstances and the wider community context in which they are living.



# Intersectionality and Safeguarding

- Children living in economically deprived neighbourhoods have increased exposure to multiple stressors; serious youth violence, county lines; going missing from home and care; heightened risk of criminal and sexual exploitation.
- Intersectionality helps us to understand how intrafamilial and extrafamilial factors intersect to put racially minoritized children at greater risk of developing mental health problems.
- There are barriers and challenges for black and ethnic minority disabled children and their families who experience multiple forms of inequalities
- In some communities, disabilities may be blamed on spirit possession and witchcraft- branding and disabled children may thus be particularly vulnerable to maltreatment resulting from these accusations.

# Intersectionality and Safeguarding

***Intersectionality provides a lens to consider some key issues emerging in an analysis of 14 SCRs involving Black children (Bernard & Harris 2019)***

- Anxieties about engaging with the intersecting effects of racism and cultural issues, present barriers to appropriate interventions for black and minority ethnic children.
- A lack of professional curiosity in understanding the salience of race in the children's lives.
- How intrafamilial and extrafamilial factors intersect to impact the safeguarding needs of black and minority ethnic children
- The powerful influence of race on black children's interaction with the CP system is rarely explored sufficiently so the lessons for learning and improvement in addressing cultural, racial and religious experiences are not emphasised.

# Intersectionality and Safeguarding

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***Bernard, C. & Harris, P. (2019) Serious Case Reviews: The Lived Experiences of Black Children. Child and Family Social Work. 24 (2): 256-263***

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Employed content analysis to examine the extent that race and cultural factors are considered in 14 Serious Case Reviews involving black children between 2010-2018.

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The sample consisted of 14 SCRs of children ranging in age from 4 months to 17 years and included both males and females.

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The SCRs reviewed were from across England and covered different categories of abuse, including children that were on a child protection plan or other statutory order, children living with their families, and children who were looked after.

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# Intersectionality and Safeguarding

## *Understanding of the child's views, feelings and vulnerabilities:*

- Failure to understand the risks and vulnerability of older children;
- The vulnerability of black boys not understood;
- Assumptions made resulting in black boys not being seen as in need of protection.
- Child M, a 14-year old boy who had gone missing – viewed as “streetwise” rather than vulnerable

# Intersectionality and Safeguarding

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## ***Consideration of culture, religion and socio- economic factors:***

The variability in the recording of children's race and ethnicity in the SCRs.

The racialised and cultural lived experiences of the children, are an underdeveloped area in the majority of the SCRs examined in this paper.

## ***Child Rachel:***

*'This family's culture, ethnicity and language was a significant factor for the professional interventions with the mother and her children. However, for the short period of time that this SCR covers, no professional knew with any certainty what the cultural background was for the family or the actual language and related dialect which they used' (Lock, 2011 p9).*

# Intersectionality and Safeguarding

The role of race in interactions between parents, children and professionals:

- The SCR of Child M, age 14, is significant in questioning the impact of ethnicity and gender in the service response when he went missing
- The SCR of Rachel raises concerns about a 'cultural deficit', approach; a lower threshold 'of concern and intervention' is not applied for ethnic minority families (*Lock 2011, p15*).



## Intersectionality and Safeguarding

### ***Abuse within the cultural context of faith:***

- A recurring theme in a number of the SCRs reviewed is the role of religious beliefs in framing the familial environment for the children involved.
- Khyrah Ishaq (mother's male partner's beliefs in spirit possession), Shanay Walker (her guardians - paternal aunt & grandmother) - drew on the guidance and support of "spiritual guardians" from their church to implement a strict parenting style.

# Intersectionality and Safeguarding

## ***Intersectional gives us tools to engage critically with key issues:***

- Black children over-policed and under-supported;
- Adultification – The subtle and unconscious race-based bias that contributes to the treatment of black children in the child welfare and justice systems (***Bernard 2019***);
- Black children are often perceived as less innocent than white children and thus less in need of protection;
- Child Q - a vulnerable child is seen as “the risk” rather than being “at risk”;
- Child Q was failed by one of the safeguarding partnership - the police;
- Safeguarding strategies and practices can pathologise; criminalise and harm children from oppressed communities (*Johnston, A & Akay. L. (2022) The Radical Safeguarding Workbook*);
- **TRUST:** How can we build safer contexts when some services pose a risk to children; they are part of the problem not the solution?

# Intersectionality and Safeguarding

- Practice that is rooted in intersectionality can centre professional curiosity for thinking outside the box, which is necessary for engaging in reflective inquiry and dialogues that are about challenging uncomfortable truths.
- Intersectionality remind us to challenge inequality, reflect on our practice and address our own positions of power and privilege.

# Intersectionality and Safeguarding

***Intersectionality recognises and problematises deeply embedded assumptions and ideas:***

- Structural and institutional racism that is both within child welfare systems and part of society at large contributes to the problems that bring racially minoritized children and young people to child welfare; criminal justice system, and contributes to the overrepresentation of black children in the child welfare system;
- Understand the impact of trauma as a result of long-established racism and multiple and intersecting systems of oppression (*Bernard 2022*).

# Intersectionality and Safeguarding

## ***Intersectionality emphasises the need to:***

- Ask new questions about racialised experiences in the safeguarding arena
- Understand the impact of multiple intersecting inequalities;
- Develop critical and conscious awareness of the institutional cultures and organisational structures of safeguarding;
- Understand that safeguarding racially minoritised children and ensuring that they thrive, requires sustained commitment and action to tackling systemic racism that intersect with multiple categories of oppression;
- Cultivate trauma-informed support to reduce and address the impact of individual and community-level adversities on racially minoritised children.

# Intersectionality and Safeguarding

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An intersectional lens enables us to be attentive to gendered biases in social work, where there is a tendency to hold mothers responsible and render fathers invisible when there are safeguarding concerns.

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Intersectionality helps to cultivate a deeper appreciation of how mother-blaming discourses pervade child protection practice.

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Intersectionality enables us to have nuanced understandings of racialised beliefs and to question stereotypical images about black men (such as absent fathers, feckless or aggressive) which contributes to how black fathers are thought about and responded to in the safeguarding arena.



## Intersectionality and Safeguarding

### Key Points

- Intersectionality shifts attention away from individualising social problems and encourages an appreciation of how structural inequalities impact the lived experiences of diverse groups of children and families.
- An intersectional framework offers some tools to enable nuanced conversations about power, race, gender, and class oppression in situations where there are concerns about the safety and welfare of vulnerable children.
- Intersectionality creates a critical framework that can facilitate strengths-based orientation to help engage resistant families in child protection work
- Intersectional approaches provide us with the possibilities to develop critical reflexivity for understanding unconscious complicity
- Intersectionality helps to have transformative discussions for considering how we might do things differently in our safeguarding practices
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# Intersectionality and Safeguarding

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A culturally responsive workforce is needed to better serve children disproportionately impacted by material social conditions and systemic racism.

Bold conversations about race are often avoided, because it will give rise to strong feelings and difficult emotions: shame, hurt, anger, guilt and anxiety.

## ***Reflective Questions:***

How do practitioners/managers approach topics of race and racism in their practice: are these explicitly addressed or are practitioners/managers race-evasive in their day-to-day practice with racially minoritized children and young people?

How do you on an individual and organisational level embrace discomfort to have trust and confidence conversations about the goals and focus of antiracist practice?

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# Children's MARS Resilience and Safeguarding in Practice Event 2023

## Integrated Children and Families Offer: Helping Children and Families in North Lincolnshire

Tom Hewis  
Rebecca Pease

**CHILDREN'S MULTI-AGENCY RESILIENCE & SAFEGUARDING BOARD**



# What does integration mean to a family?

- Joined up
- Fewer access points
- Conversations not referrals
- No need to repeat my story
- My information follows me
- Embedded in my community
- Professionals understand what's available, what others do
- Getting information is easy
- Easy to get info and to take part



# Sounds a lot like the One Family Approach...

**Our updated ambition:**

**Children to thrive in their families, achieve in their schools  
and flourish in their communities**

- Building resilience
- Trust and consistency through relationships
- Strengths-based
- Connecting people to their community offer
- Tackling unequal outcomes through inclusion and opportunities
- Targeting our resource
- Non-stigmatising family help
- Focused on need and the seldom heard







# Family Hubs

## West Street Launch 14 October



Next steps  
Ashby Family Hub  
Winterton and Barton  
offer



# Parent, Carer (and Child) Panel

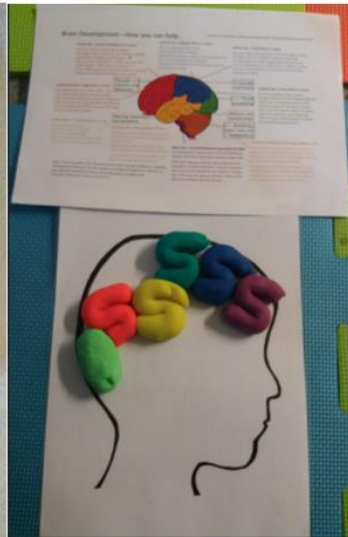




# Start for Life: Parent-Infant Relationships / Perinatal Mental Health Pathway

‘Funded Family Hub workstreams to support **Parent Infant Emotional Well-being (PIEW)** and **Perinatal Mental Health (PNMH)** early intervention work with parents and infants in the first 1001 days, promoting sensitive, attuned, and responsive caregiving. The integrated team will offer evidence-based and practice-informed therapeutic interventions to strengthen the parent-infant/child relationship; laying the positive foundation for health and well-being that will influence future outcomes’

- The team
- The integrated approach
- The impact
- Early intervention and prevention



7. What (if any) are the main changes you have noticed in your actions)

Feelings toward my interactions have improved significantly since the first cycle and I am more confident in how I communicate with my family. I can approach playtime and day-to-day actions with my family in a healthy way which is evidenced in the VIG sessions. I was not aware of how many of the skills I have been practicing regularly as a 'norm'. By seeing it I am more aware and find myself working on my skills and feeling happier about how I interact with my family and others.

# Urban Myths

- 'Integration of services only works if they are commissioned/financed together'
- 'Integration means another services employees will take our jobs or deliver for cheaper'
- 'Integration is co-location'
- 'Differing health backgrounds – some based on medical training and some based on social care training – are barriers to professionals coming together'
- 'Short-term funding doesn't work'
- 'Always a focus on performance monitoring over investigating the actual changes that have emerged from integration initiatives'
- 'When it comes to integrating public services, the “how” is just as important as the “why”, and strong leadership is important'



# Our call for action

- Challenge the myths
- Create a culture of neighbourhoods and communities
- Understand service users, meaningful co-production and involvement in decision making
- Build relationships from the ground up, build trust
- Harness community power/ local informal support
- Community networks and partnerships
- Accountability, communication and data sharing
- Integration begins with common purpose, clear roles and responsibilities and a shared vision
- Integration thrives with mutual respect, joint planning and celebrating success
- The right care, in the right place, at the right time – no wrong front door
- Permission to be brave, step across boundaries, do what's right



**“We are communicating better ...  
but we are still not out of the woods.”**

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# Children's MARS Resilience and Safeguarding in Practice Event 2023

## Closing Remarks

Councillor Julie Reed