Strengthening Families: Child Protection Conferences
• A Child Protection Conference is arranged when a child is thought to be at risk of significant harm, following a social work assessment (s47, Children Act 1989)

• Makes a plan to help parents improve things so the child is safer
The purpose of a CP conference:

- To bring together professionals and family members to hear and analyse information about the children and their parents or carers
- Identify strengths and protective factors
- Identify concerns
- Identify what needs to change
- Make a plan
- Consider whether there is a risk of significant harm
Significant Harm

• “harm” means ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development

• including, for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another (this was added in 2005)
The National Picture for England:

- 43,100 children with a CP plan at end of March 2013
- Big increase from 29,000 in March 2009
- 30% are age 1-4
- Neglect 41%
- Emotional abuse 32%
- Physical abuse 12%
- Sexual abuse 5%
- More than one of these 10%
In Greenwich:

- 288 children with CP plans at end of April 2014
- Down from 475 in February 2013
- 31% are age 1-4
- Neglect 39%
- Emotional Abuse 37%
- Physical Abuse & Emotional Abuse 3.5%
- Sexual Abuse 2%
- More than one 22.5%
Key issues identified in recent Deep-Dive looking into neglect

- Physical conditions in the home.
- Physical presentation of the children
- Issues related to schooling which included poor school attendance, frequent lateness, behaviour issues, physical presentation, and poor progress in learning.
- Children with additional health issues or developmental delay where their health needs were not being addressed.
- Cont…
• Poor health in terms of underweight/ overweight/ tooth decay and lack of progress in resolving the health issues.
• Emotional health of the children including their capacity to relate to others and to regulate their emotions and behaviour.
• Physical abuse and neglect.
Definition of Neglect

• The persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

• Cont…
• Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:
  – provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
  – protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
  – ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers);
  – or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
  – It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.
Strengthening Families CP Conferences

• Traditional CP conference model has not changed since 1970s
• Originally a professionals meeting - didn’t include parents
• Old model tended to focus on the detail of the ‘story’ and not the child’s experience, the protective factors or the risk of harm
Strengthening Families CP Conferences

- Old model intimidating for parents – a test of cooperation
- Parents not involved in decisions or plans – process ‘done to’ them and they found it difficult to have their say
Strengthening Families CP Conferences

• Build on families’ strengths, what they do well, what safety they do provide
• Make it easier for parents to be involved
• Clearer for everyone
• Clear about what needs to happen and why, and what is expected of parents and professionals
• Put the child’s voice at the centre of the conference
Strengthening Families CP Conferences – key principles:

• Clear, simple language – avoiding professional jargon
• Preparation for family – no surprises
• Detail only useful if it helps make things clear
• Focus on the child: what you see, what you don’t see
  what they tell you, what they don’t say
  what their life is like
Preparing for a Conference

• Agency report – the same for every agency
• Follows the same format as the conference, asking the same sort of questions
• Complete report in plenty of time
• Share with the family in plenty of time
• Send to CP admin at least 2 days before
Preparing for a Conference – Exercise

• Think about a family you work with now where neglect is an issue.
• What do you want to say?
• Is it going to be hard to say this to the parent?
• What support do you need?
Risk / Safety Statement Exercise:

Think about a family you work with now. In small groups, put together a statement:
I am worried that if nothing changes …
I will no longer be worried when …
Use the children’s names; what will things be like for them?
Safety Scale

• Tool to help the conference to be clear about how safe or unsafe a child is thought to be
• Everyone at the conference is asked to give their view – including the parents, the Chair, and the child if they are present (or if they have been asked by their advocate or social worker)

• 10: child is protected; no concerns about safety
• 0: child is at risk immediately; urgent action needed
Further reading

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013
•  http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/documents/Working%20TogetherFINAL.pdf

NSPCC Summary of Working Together

London Child Protection Procedures
•  http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/procedures/london_child_protection_procedures_chapters.html
Thank you!

If you have any further questions or comments then please contact:

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