

# Multi-Agency Child Protection Conferences

## A New Approach



# Aims and Outcomes

- **Aim:** To have a working knowledge of the new CP Conference Model in consultation in Bexley.
- **Learning Outcomes:**
- How professionals can enhance the Voice of the Child and parents in the Conference process
- Improved understanding of Risk and Strengths
- Understanding of outcome based plans

Presented by

# Safeguarding Team

## Child Protection

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# Context

Recommendation from an audit commissioned by the LSCB in March 2014;

“Bexley currently operates a very traditional model of CPCs and many Local Authorities have moved forward with other models that Bexley may wish to consider”.

# Families' Experiences

Audit undertaken by LSCB March 2014;

- Feedback was relatively positive.
- Professionals need to understand how intimidating it is to be so 'outnumbered' in a formal meeting;
- Parents felt they lacked the necessary information about what would happen;
- Parents feel unprepared and one explicitly complained about not having the paperwork on their case in advance;
- Families want a more respectful, open, helpful, challenging, but less judgmental form of social work.

# Professional Experience

- Positive generally but reports often late or not produced at all
- Professionals seem unclear of their role at times in their contribution to assessing risk
- Need more multi agency information about what has already been done

# Research suggests conferences should

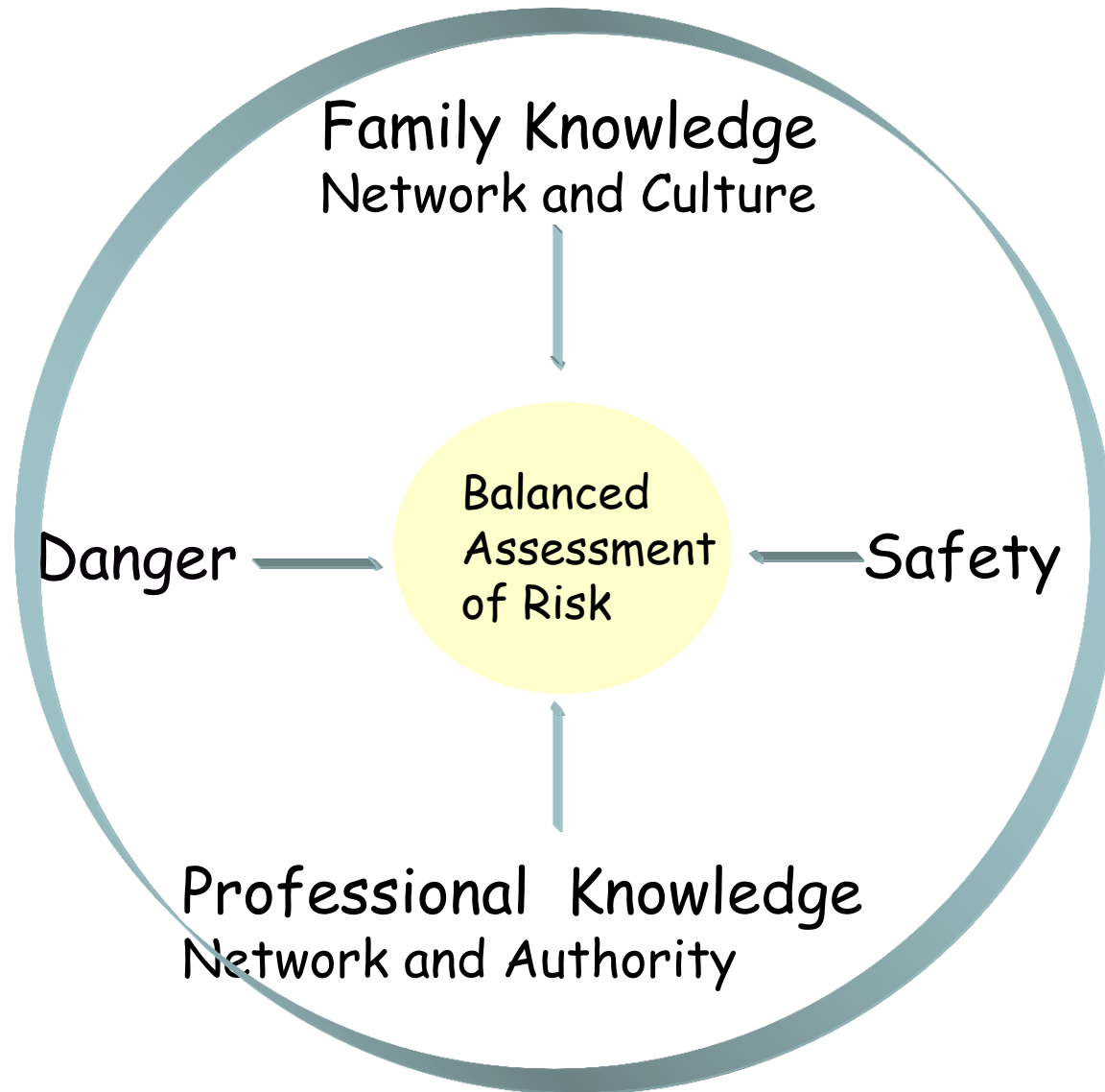
- Have a greater focus on planning
- Hear the child's voice
- Enable families to present their views
- Ensure all views are grounded in evidence
- Promote discussion and explore dissent
- Place a strong emphasis on relationships
- Reduce power inequalities
- Build on strengths

# Strengthening Families Framework

- Based on work by Andrew Turnell – Signs of Safety
- More similarities with than differences from the traditional business meeting format of Child Protection Conferences...
  - Reports
  - Pre-meetings with families
  - Multi-agency meeting with parents attending
  - Decision about harm
  - Protection plan
- ...but designed to help families participate more easily, to help all participants assess risk better and for all to be more engaged in the development of a CP plan.
- Strengths based and outcome focused



# Comprehensive Risk Assessment



# Key differences

- Building safety for children at risk of harm
- Visible and transparent analysis of the information presented to the meeting
- Analysis of risks as well as safety/protective factors
- Engages professionals and parents as part of the solution
- Uses a safety scale
- Seeks cooperation thus highlights lack of cooperation
- The plan is owned by the conference and is not the work of the chair – improved working together in core group
- Clearer about outcomes which indicate effective safeguarding – better chance of change or timely decision making.

# Strengthening Families Framework

## Danger/Harm

- Detail re: incident(s) Bringing the family to the attention of the agency.
- Pattern/family history

## GENOGRAM/ECOMAP

## Safety

- Strengths demonstrated as protection over time
- Pattern/history of exceptions

## Risk Statements

- Risk to child(ren)
- Context of risk

## (Grey Area)

## Safety Statement/ Outcomes

- Description of the child's care experience in positive terms

## Complicating Factors

- Condition/behaviours that contribute to greater difficulty for the family
- Presence of research based risk factors

## Outline Plan

1. Keyworker
2. Visiting frequency
3. Outcomes
4. Core Group - who?
5. Core Group dates
6. Safety bottom lines
7. Review CPC date

## Strengths/Protective Factors

- Assets, resources, capacities within family, individual/community
- Presence of research based protective factors

Lohrbach, S. & Sawyer, R (2004) *Creating a constructive practice: family and professional partnership in high-risk child protection case conferences*. *Protecting Children*, 19(2): 26-35.

# Roles

## The role of Conference Chairs;

- Active
- Facilitative
- Directive
- Challenging
- Enabling

## Expectations of professionals;

- Clearer focus on analysis of risks
- Engagement in the protection plan

# Key elements

- Chair meets family first – completes genogram
- Layout of room
- Style of chairing (facilitative)
- Family can be helped to complete genogram
- Succinct presentation of information NB reports shared prior to the meeting
- Family gets opportunity to respond
- Clear and transparent focus on risk, danger, harm, complicating factors and safety
- Risk statement
- Plan – focus on bringing about change
- Decision

# Potential benefits/challenges

- Shifts the balance of power
- Significant change in the approach of chairs
- Importance of multi-agency ownership and engagement
- Should have a system wide impact
- The focus must be on risks
- Requires professionals to synthesise and analyse information
- Develops intervention plans rather than monitoring plans – requires different skill set



What do you need to know?