

## The Stronger Families Team Summary

The Stronger Families Team is an intensive, evidence-based team within Derbyshire Childrens Services, firmly rooted in Derbyshire's "Stronger Families, Safer Children" operating model. This is a strengths-based model that attends to risks and worries in a balanced way. It is child focused and rooted in evidence-based practice. The SFSC model and the three key approaches (systemic, person centred and social pedagogy) equip practitioners, Managers, and partner agencies with 'tools' to support good practice. However, the model is more than just a 'toolkit'. At its core is a value set and a commitment to a way of 'thinking, being and doing' that encourages all to be respectful, inclusive, transparent and curious; while ensuring that children, young people and families are kept safe, free from harm and able to achieve their full potential.

As a service we centre our involvement around the FAMILY Model.

The service works with a reduced number of families at any one time to enable us to work more intensively with those families. We aim to support families for between three to six months, although the actual length of support varies depending on the complexity of the family system, their circumstances and need. The purpose of the work is to identify with families what needs to change and what we can do together to create sustainable change. Our work is about engaging with the whole system around the family and working with wider family members and other supporters to pull in the resources that are already available to the family. Additionally, we will support the family to strengthen what they already know.

The Stronger Families Team work with families through different avenues to support them to achieve positive outcomes. This is through

- Crisis and de-escalation which is a short time limited intervention promotes not removing child(ren) but support family and networks to enable child to remain at home or within the wider network in situations of crisis through stabilisation.
- Risk of care identified whereby work with family and wider networks is undertaken to reduce risks, increase safety and improve relationships to allow for the child (ren) to remain at home or within their network.
- Reunification which enables the return of children to the family or wider networks when this is considered safe to do so and part of their care plan.

The Stronger Families Team is founded on the idea that most families want to stay together but can't work things out for themselves at this time. The team members all share a similar outlook and approach to the work undertaken with families, including a fundamental commitment to keeping children safely with their families wherever possible, and the belief that judgements made about families must always be made within a context of emotional intelligence and empathy. We recognise that the family are the experts in their own situation and therefore we collaborate with the family during each stage of the model.

In the Stronger Families Team, we invest time and effort into building a relationship with families. This can mean that at the beginning of our work we try to demonstrate our usefulness to a family and support them in ways they find helpful to build a relationship promoting positive involvement. It is important to focus on the quality of the relationship and notice if/when we have the families trust so that conversations are more genuine, open and agreeable to challenge from both sides.

As well as direct involvement we invest in indirect involvement through case consultations and case formulations. A case formulation is the gathering and understanding of information and a case

consultation is a reflective space to support the allocated worker with idea and tools to undertake involvement with the family to build on their strengths.