

EARLY HELP SERVICE

Strengthening Families 2018

History of Strengthening Families

Strengthening Families is a direct response by Salford City Council to the growing number of women repeatedly losing their children to the care system ,due to a range of issues such as domestic abuse, poor parenting, crime, drug and alcohol abuse.

Evidence (Salford)

A significant numbers of repeat pregnancies in parents who have had children removed:

- Over a 5 year period (Salford LA 2005-2012) 228 mothers and 644 children were involved in repeat removal cases
- Over same period 65% of all looked after children were from mothers who had had more than 1 child taken into care
- Average of 17 months between first time mothers appearing in court with an infant and second time she appears with another infant
- The hardest to reach families were resistance to accessing support or advice , therefore safeguarding concerns left unresolved following removal of child
- No support prior to 20 weeks gestation, which identified missed opportunity
- Health inequalities, - families not accessing health services consistently

“In 2012-13 councils spent an average of £137 a day, or just over £50,000 for the whole year, supporting each child they looked after.”

Source: Audit Commission analysis of statistics published by the Department for Education (DfE) on the number of and expenditure on looked after children

What is Strengthening Families?

Strengthening Families is an **intensive specialist programme** for pregnant women/families who are pre 20 weeks gestation and are **at risk of their unborn child being removed** from their care and have had previous children removed AND parents who have already had children removed and remain currently non-pregnant.

- Intensive support is offered through the Strengthening Families Practitioners, the programme has a dedicated **Midwife, Parenting Practitioner, Family Support Workers and a Manager**.
- Depending on need this support can be a programme of **bespoke 1:1 sessions, group work sessions** by attending the Health in Pregnancy and Parenting (HIPP) course or **both**.
- The programme aims to reduce the number of children going into care and **prevent** mothers from getting into the **cycle of repeat removals**.
- Strengthening Families allows vulnerable families to be identified and receive the **earliest possible help**, ensuring babies have **healthier outcomes** and are **safeguarded pre and post birth**.
- The programme provides support for **first five years** of the child's life, ensuring children are School Ready.
- The programme also supports mothers and fathers for **two years** where children have been removed around healthy lifestyles.

Strengthening Families

Design principles:

- Place the **child's outcomes** and **safeguarding** at the centre
- Promote **secure attachment, good parenting** and reflective functioning
- **Whole family approach**: child's welfare not separated from mother's and father's issues
- Focus on adults as parents and help address their problems
- Holistic and **intensive high dose interventions** for first 5 years
- Break **intergenerational cycles** of harm and trauma

What does this look like on the ground.....

Strengthening families

The Strengthening Families way:

- **Alleviate fears:** Strengthening Families allows vulnerable families to be identified and receive the earliest possible help, ensuring babies have healthier outcomes and are safeguarded pre and post birth.
 - Non judgemental, **tailored 1:1 support:** Depending on need this support can be a programme of bespoke 1:1 sessions, group parenting sessions (e.g. HIPP) or both.
 - Also **social support** with housing, debts, work.
 - Confidence handling a newborn: **Intensive support** is offered through the midwife, Parenting Practitioner and Family Support Workers.
- Awareness of support: The programme provides support for the first five years of the child's life. This is primarily coordinated by a Family Support Worker who coordinates help from numerous agencies e.g. children's centres, health visitors, housing, skills and work providers.

Background to Strengthening Families

- **What did we do to get to where we are now.....**
- Design
- **Drive**
- Lead
- **Influence**
- Amend
- **Asked for help**
- Shouted loudly
- Got frustrated
- **Cried**

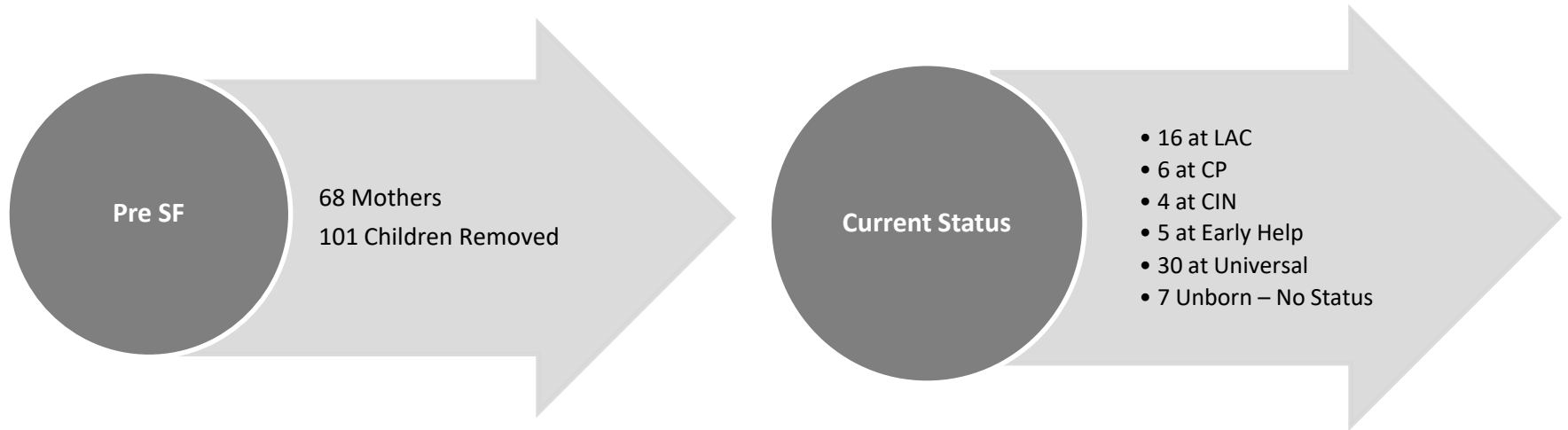
- Why.....Because I knew something about families.....

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

The story so far for our tracked Strengthening Families Cases

The historical data of the tracked cohort in comparison to the current circumstances with the support of the programme.

Family History vs. Current Status



Note: Cases that have been excluded in the above count relate to those children that have been Adopted, placed on a Special Guardianship Order (SGO), where there has been a failed/terminated pregnancy or the child is deceased.

Strengthening Families

Success and outcomes

- Above slide suggest we are reducing children going into care...ultimate aim....
- Engagement
- 2nd child
- Relationships
- Surprising
- Dads
- Media coverage
- Department of Education

What has our programme learnt and heard

Systematically interviewed and consulted throughout the programmes inception and parents describe our work as :

- Empowering
 - Confidence building
 - Always being there
 - Reassurance
 - Honesty
 - Know where I stand
-
- But what we have actually done is asked, listened and talked to families
 - We have also heard and learnt that.....