

Excellence and Evidence - Making the Difference Conferences June 2010

Early Intervention for Safeguarding

Intervention

Key messages from C4Eo research reviews

Putting it into practice

Key concepts and issues in earlier intervention

These include:

- whether earlier intervention is conceptualised as preventive, protective or therapeutic;
- how far the inter-relatedness of disadvantaging factors can be taken into account;
- the accuracy of risk assessment (including concepts such as sensitivity and specificity) and the difference between average risk for groups of people and actual risk for an individual or family;
- the acceptability of interventions to participants, and distinguishing between support and intervention;
- issues relating to duration and timing; *and*
- ethical concerns including labelling and stigma and the potential for earlier intervention to have a negative impact, either on individuals or on the equitable distribution of resources.

June Statham and Marjorie Smith Thomas Coram Research Unit,
Institute of Education, University of London
Research Report DCSF-RR205

Research messages

Front-line staff in agencies providing universal services are central to the early identification and provision of effective services to complex families who are characterised as *hard to reach and hard to change*. It is therefore *essential* that front-line staff receive appropriate training in assessment skills and are aware of the importance of asking focused questions around the issues that may contribute to maltreatment.

With complex cases solution-focused approaches, though promising, must be preceded by a full psycho-social history, to avoid the dangers of the 'start again' syndrome

Briefing 1: [Effective interventions where there are concerns about, or evidence of, a child suffering significant harm](#) November 2009

The attitudes and behaviour of individual practitioners have a major effect on whether families engage

Children in families that did not have a detailed assessment completed were four times more likely than their counterparts to experience recurrence. This suggests that receiving prompt and adequate services and assessment are important for preventing recurrence of maltreatment.

Gathering information for assessments is not enough – it needs to be *organised and analysed* – and information from a number of sources and about individuals other than mothers must be included in the analysis.

Direct observation of parent–child interaction is essential in complex cases. More concerted effort to ensure children’s voices are captured is also needed.

[Effective practice to protect children living in 'highly resistant' families knowledge review](#) - Published March 2010

In practice

early engagement

assessment

‘start again’ syndrome –history taking and
analysis

‘nil by mouth’