



Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership

The Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership Strategy to Develop and Improve Norfolk’s Approach to Family & Community Networking

Everybody Has Somebody

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 In May 2022, the government published Josh MacAlister’s [*Independent Review of Children’s Social Care*](#), an in-depth analysis of the needs, experiences and outcomes of children supported by social care. Within this MacAlister argues that “**...it is loving relationships that hold the solutions for children and families overcoming adversity. While relationships are rich and organic, children’s social care can be rigid and linear. Rather than drawing on and supporting family and community, the system too often tries to replace organic bonds and relationships with professionals and services.**” MacAlister put forward the need for a national “reset”, manifesting in a government consultation on [*Children’s Social Care: Stable Homes, Built on Love*](#) which concluded February 2023.
- 1.2 Norfolk is well placed to respond to the challenges posed in these national developments. Dating back to our involvement with the Signs of Safety England Innovation Project (EiP), phases 1 and 2, we have been developing practice in family networking since 2018. This includes: thinking about and engaging the wider family from the outset and in all practice; thinking beyond blood relatives and extending the idea of family to include other significant people who can play a positive role; and ensuring family networks are empowered to support one another.

As one of ten local areas involved in EiP, Norfolk embraced the Family Finding¹ approach developed by Kevin Campbell. This was a central tenet of Phase 2 and Norfolk led the way in not only training but proactively championing family networking. The Family Networking Approach has four principles:

1. Everyone has a network, and we can find out about that network and the strengths within it if we ask.
2. Networks help develop and maintain a sense of belonging and identity. This approach is to strengthen the network around families.
3. Connected networks result in positive outcomes, boost health, attainment and achievement outcomes through promoting trusted adults and strong relationships.
4. The network can help with planning and decision making. You can facilitate this opportunity and work together to bring about change.

¹ [About 1 — Family Finding](#)

- 1.3 Norfolk County Council now has a dedicated Family Group Conferencing and Family Network Service in place to provide ongoing support for this way of working.
- 1.4 The importance of family and friends is also one of the eight domains in the Flourish framework, developed by the NSCP's 'sister' board, the Children and Young People's Strategic Alliance (CYPSA). The Flourish Outcomes Framework is included in full as Appendix 1. This framework enables Norfolk's partners to articulate our shared ambition to make Norfolk a place where all children and young people can flourish:



Within the context of national and local developments and with partner's commitment to evidencing how they are implementing Flourish principles, the NSCP is focusing on how family and friends are intrinsic to keeping children safe and secure.

- 1.5 The NSCP is also responsible for not only commissioning local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) but also disseminating the learning from national CSPRs. Recently, local learning from Cases AK and AL (published January 2023 and December 2022, respectively) as well as the national reviews into the Myth of Invisible Men (September 2021) and the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson (May 2022) highlighted the need to 'Think Family' with learning around listening to wider family concerns, being curious and involving fathers/co-parents in risk assessment and planning.
- 1.6 In July 2023, the NSCP's three statutory partners agreed to make family and community networking a local priority. This priority will be led by health colleagues from the Integrated Care Board. The adoption of this priority comes at an exciting time with the launch of the Norfolk Family Hub approach and the development of our Fathers Good Practice Guidance. By making this a priority, we can not only address

any gaps in provision but also build on good practice already in place. This strategy sets out our high level aims and objectives to improve and develop our approach to family and community networking.

- 1.7 This strategy has been written to take account of Norfolk County Council's Family Group Conference and Family Networking Advisory Service 2022 – 23 annual report which was presented to the NSCP Partnership Group in October 2023.



2022-2023 FGC and
Family Networking A

2 Definition

- 2.1 For the purposes of this strategy, we are defining family networking as follows:

The act of mapping and mobilising the child/ren's members of the family and friendship group and enabling them to play an active and ongoing role in supporting the child/ren to be safe and flourish so that they can achieve the best possible outcomes in all aspects of their lives.

- a. The definition of community is:
- a) a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common.
 - b) the condition of sharing or having certain attitudes and interests in common.

Community, by its definition means bringing people together for a shared purpose. In the context of safeguarding children and building their resilience, we are extending our definition of family networking to communities to harness the social support and connect people outside of immediate family circles.

3 Principles

- 3.1 The NSCP adheres to the following principles in the development and implementation of this strategy:
- We will maintain a clear focus children and understanding their lived experience in their social contexts
 - We will ensure that we understand the wider family dynamics, including the role of men and fathers, and drivers for parental behaviour so that we support parents and carers to build sustainable and supportive networks
 - We will achieve whole system leadership in awareness raising and promoting the family and community networking approach in professional standards within their organisations.
 - We will outline clear lines of accountability, roles and responsibility to support the networking approach
 - We will agree a shared, multi-agency approach to monitor and measure the impact of family and community networking

- We will demonstrate commitment to equalities and diversity acknowledging that some children/families/communities are at more risk due to their diverse needs
- We will be culturally competent in this area of work

4 Strategic Aims and Objectives

The NSCP's aspiration is to ensure that all Norfolk children have the support and resources of a healthy family and community network to not only give them a sense of belonging but also provides a safe, secure base which nurtures their sense of identity and place in the world. Our aims and objectives fall under four main headlines:

- Communication
- Collaboration
- Father Inclusive Practice
- Restoration

4.1 Communication: We will communicate the importance of recognising, supporting, building and reinforcing the natural networks that keep Norfolk's children and young people safe and enable them to flourish. Referencing what we have learned from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and responses to the Covid pandemic, we will ensure that all Norfolk residents and children's workforce understand the role they play in the networking approach, whether that is being part of a wider network for families who are having a tough time or a professional responsible for ensuring that interventions include the child's natural and organic support system. This requires adults – parents/carers, extended family friends and practitioners - to treat each child as an individual and better understand their lived experience in the family and community context. Supporting and motivating families to map out and mobilise these networks will be a key communication campaign.

Objectives and high-level actions:

- Establish key messages to underpin the importance of family and community networking, including target audiences and a variety of communication assets to be developed and promoted over time to reinforce the messages at all stages of a child/family's journey
- Develop tools to measure impact of communication campaign(s)
- Single agency reporting on how they have used communications within their workforce to develop skills and improve practice to support family and community networking
- Use existing stakeholder engagement groups to develop and promote communication campaign(s)

4.2 Collaboration: We will establish a better understanding of any gaps in support systems, particularly with more vulnerable families/cohorts, to improve our practice. The workforce and the children, families and communities they serve, will work together to identify 'pinch points' where they may face particular challenges that require additional support and/or are at higher risk of feelings of isolation. This will include developing a more holistic understanding of how issues impact on a family's ability to seek and receive help from their natural networks and how the safeguarding system helps or hinders them. Issues to include:

- domestic abuse
- substance misuse
- parental mental health
- parental experience of (ACEs)
- intergenerational neglect

- incarceration
- transitional points
- impact of poverty
- children/family members who have complex medical health needs and or learning difficulties and disabilities

Objectives and high-level actions:

- Stakeholder engagement groups involved in development and implementation of this strategy with a focus on identifying best practice and gaps
- Establishing a Networking Champions role for service users and professionals to further develop opportunities to work collaboratively
- Learning from other local areas on how they involve families and communities in safeguarding solutions and building organic support networks
- Enabling service users to lead on initiatives to engage with and promote the networking approach within their communities
- Ensuring that mobilisation of family networks is evident across all work undertaken in safeguarding and preventative work

4.3 Father Inclusive Practice: We will act on learning from the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review, *The Myth of Invisible Men*, and dedicate project management resources to improve practice in engaging with men and fathers.

This project will aim to develop and promote father inclusive practices in all organisations and across the partnership. The work will focus on greater appreciation of fathers and their roles and influence within the lives of children in all safeguarding practices and will prioritise this as mainstream and core practice of the whole partnership workforce rather than additional area of work requiring specialist knowledge and expertise.

Objectives and high-level actions:

- Develop ante- and post-natal health provision to fully include fathers and to include extra support to those who need it and increase their ability to early identify risk factors
- Ensure a greater integration of children's and adult service provision, especially adult mental health and substance misuse services
- Ensure that children's social care lead on the development of practice that improves the engagement and assessment of men involved in children in need, child protection and children in care services
- Promote father inclusive practices in all partner agencies and across the partnership
- Investment in the voice of the father
- Increase visibility of positive and inclusive messages and information to fathers

4.4 Restoration: We recognise that family dynamics are complex and that safeguarding concerns are likely to highlight dysfunction and/or negative behaviour patterns; it is imperative that effective family and community networking processes are mindful of potential adverse impacts of this approach and systems are in place to repair any ruptures in relationships. We will work with families and communities to monitor both the positive and negative impacts of this approach and commit to being trauma informed and resilience oriented as part of the process to support all participants through difficult conversations and towards resolution.

Objectives and high-level actions:

- Work with partners to monitor impact of family network approach on families and develop data system and case studies
- Develop restorative approach skills with families and professionals
- Research and analysis of best practice in working with families who are experiencing conflict and what support they need to keep the child/ren's best interests as a shared focus

This strategy has implications across the safeguarding system and is particularly relevant to the other NSCP priorities: neglect and vulnerable adolescents. The strategy leads will work together to develop any joint actions and/or share outcomes of their strategy implementation plans to further develop the aims and objectives here.

5 Measuring Impact

- 5.1 This strategy will be underpinned by a detailed action plan to monitor progress against the objectives, including key milestones. As an NSCP priority, mechanisms are in place to ensure that the strategy implementation is timely and monitored for impact.
- 5.2 The NSCP's senior analyst will develop a data profile to establish quantitative and qualitative measures that are SMART and enable us to monitor progress against the aims and objectives.
- 5.3 The NSCP data set is supported by the Flourish Outcomes Monitoring Framework, a set of quantitative and qualitative indicative measures which look across the eight Flourish domains to help answer the question "Are children and young people in Norfolk Flourishing?"

6 Leadership and Governance

- 6.1 As a priority area, Norfolk's Family & Community Networking Strategy will be governed by a discrete multi-agency NSCP subgroup, chaired by Norfolk & Waveney Integrated Care Board's Designated Nurse and Designated Doctor.
- 6.2 The Family & Community Networking Strategic Implementation Group (FCNSIG) has clear Terms of Reference and representation from strategic leaders from across the partnership. FCNSIG reports to the NSCP Partnership Group.

Appendix 1 Flourish Outcomes Framework

Family & Friends Children and young people are safe, connected and supported through positive relationships and networks	Learning Children and young people are achieving their full potential and developing skills which prepare them for life	Opportunity Children and young people develop as well-rounded individuals through access to a wide range of opportunities which nurture their interests and talents	Understood Children and young people feel listened to, understood and part of decision-making processes	Resilience Children and young people have the confidence and skills to make their own decisions and take on life's challenges	Individual Children and young people are respected as individuals, confident in their own identity and appreciate and value their own and others' uniqueness	Safe & Secure Children and young people are supported to understand risk and make safe decisions by the actions adults and young people themselves take to keep them safe and secure	Healthy Children and young people have the support, knowledge and opportunity to lead their happiest and healthiest lives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As many CYP as possible are able to live safely with family Where CYP are not able to live with their family, they have the support they need to build a stable foundation of positive relationships CYP have positive childhood experiences in their homes, schools and communities CYP have the support they need from their parents and carers CYP have positive role models and trusted adults in their lives CYP have the skills and opportunities to develop positive friendships and relationships which support them throughout their lives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CYP establish a great early years foundation for learning and see the benefit in becoming lifelong learners CYP enjoy learning and developing skills and feel positive about what they can achieve CYP have good engagement with learning in and out of school, including attendance and extra-curricular opportunities CYP make the best possible progress in learning and education CYP are supported by families, professionals and communities at all stages of their development YP are equipped with the skills and confidence to live as independently as possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CYP have improved equity of opportunity through the removal of barriers including improved economic, geographical and digital inclusion CYP have a wide range of education, employment, training, social and community activities available to them All CYP, at every age and regardless of disability or additional needs, have access to opportunities that suit their needs and ambitions CYP have the emotional, personal and practical support they need to make the most of the opportunities available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CYP are active, respected and included members of their communities as individuals and collectively All CYP voices are influential in all decisions made about their lives CYP feel adults respect their views and opinions and promote CYP influence CYP know their rights, how to make their views known and are confident to speak up CYP are confident that all strategies and services for CYP have their needs and ambitions at their heart CYP are confident that their voice will make a difference and can see the impact they are making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CYP can understand and make good decisions and are empowered to do so CYP know what independence entails and are able to transition in the best way for them CYP are supported to try new things, have a variety of experiences and be curious and aspirational CYP understand life can be complicated and know asking for help is OK CYP can recognise when they need help and have choice and control over the support they receive CYP have a range of options for support and advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CYP are understood and valued as individuals and in their social groups CYP understand and value each other CYP and others on their behalf are able to tackle prejudice and discrimination CYP have safe spaces to explore, develop and become confident in their identity as they grow CYP's self-expression is prioritised, promoted and respected CYP have a range of opportunities to influence the wider world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CYP are free from exploitation, abuse and neglect Fewer CYP enter/re-enter the criminal justice system CYP are safe and secure in all settings, including where they live CYP feel that families, professionals and communities understand and carry out their role in keeping them safe CYP trust the people and systems that are there to help keep them safe, know where to go for help and feel confident and able to do so CYP know what to do to keep each other safe CYP are supported to understand and take appropriate risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CYP have the best achievable physical, mental and sexual health CYP know how to get healthy and keep healthy and are confident in their own self care CYP have choice in how they access health services, including the best possible virtual health experience CYP are supported at the earliest possible stage, reducing crises CYP know when and where to go for help with physical and mental health and have confidence and trust to do so