Session plan

- Introduction: Building Better Futures project and the Northern Irish context
- Evaluation of the Building Better Futures model
- Overview of Building Better Futures model
- Case study
- Evaluation Outcomes
- Discussion
Building Better Futures Project

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<tr>
<th>WHAT PROBLEM DID WE ADDRESS?</th>
<th>TRANSFORMATIONAL PARTNERSHIP</th>
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<tr>
<td>Shortcomings in the assessment of parenting capacity within child welfare have been a consistent feature in serious case reviews.</td>
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<td>We aimed to maximise the effectiveness of assessment and intervention in child protection in order to build capacity and transform practice within the HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland through co-production and collaborative learning.</td>
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Early Intervention Transformation Programme

30m investment including £10m from Atlantic Philanthropies

Opportunity to test out new ways of working across the Integrated Health and Social Care Trusts in Children’s Services

4 workstreams

1. Universal Services
2. Early Intervention
3. Targeted Interventions
4. Workforce development
Business case for BBF

- Develop and operationalise an existing evidence based model of assessment and intervention
- Introduce the model across Integrated Health and Social Care Trust Family Intervention Teams
- Children who benefit have reached the threshold for Social Services intervention and are at the beginning stage of this process
- Effective intervention is predicated on robust assessments
- This assessment will highlight earlier in the process children who cannot be safely supported at home
- This project will support the Care Proceedings pilot (based on Tri-borough Model) which aims to tackle delay and Home on Time
Implementation plan

- Organisational change
- Iterative development of the model with key practitioners
- Impact all social workers in Family Intervention Teams
- Involves significant alterations in working with families
- Support of Children's Services Directors
- Key staff – Heads of Service, Principal Practitioners, Senior Practitioners, Team Leaders, Trainers
BBF – Implementation & iterative development

Three phases of implementation and formative evaluation

1. Development of a prototype of the model in discussion with several cohorts of postgraduate social work students at QUB.

2. (2016/17) Appointment of Senior Practitioner in each HSCT; 50 cases. Training, support, learning sets. **Senior Practitioners**: ‘Pre’ and ‘post’ design: questionnaires, T1, T2, T3 interviews, completed assessment for each family. **Families**: Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews

Scope of the model

Assessing and enhancing parenting capacity

To be used flexibly:

Can be used in its totality for comprehensive view of parenting

Or

One or more of the dimensions of parenting can be the focus depending on needs of parent.
What model or framework are you currently using:
To assess parenting?
To enhance parenting?

Do you think these are fit for purpose?
Key principles of the model

- Child centred
- Ecological approach
- Partnership with parents
- Engagement of mothers and fathers
- Relationship based
- Strengths focused
- Mindful of Child’s safety, identity, stability and lived experience
- Multi-disciplinary and interagency context
- Focus on risk and need
Engaging parents

- Centrality of relationship
- Use of: Observation, Genogram, Eco-map, Interview, Standardised tests
- Understanding parents and understanding children’s needs
- Communication with the child

Key Questions for Parents at the Early Engagement Stage

What are we worried about?
What’s working well?
What needs to happen?
Overview of the model

Key Characteristics of Parenting

- Problem-Solving
- Communication
- Roles

- Guidance and discipline
- Emotional Responsiveness
- Emotional Involvement

- Key Characteristics of Parenting
Factors shaping parenting

• Contextual & historical factors
  • Past experience & current experience; social & economic circumstances

• Constitutional factors
  • Inherent characteristics, temperament, physical or mental illness, disability

• Behaviour patterns
  • Difficulties or strengths in parenting and the feelings that accompany them

• Parental belief systems
  • Constraining & enabling beliefs about self, parenting, children and their needs
Emotional problem-solving

How is child’s emotional distress resolved?
How do parents address loss and change in the child’s life?
How do parents resolve sibling disputes?
How are conflicts between the child and parents resolved?
How do parents resolve emotional issues in their relationship?
Is child inappropriately involved in family problem-solving?
Practical problem-solving

How are the arrangements for the physical care of the child resolved?

How are housing, financial and employment problems resolved?

How is social isolation prevented?

How are hazards in the environment avoided?
Emotional communication

- Is the child given opportunity to express their emotions?
- Do parents communicate emotional warmth?
- Is communication age-appropriate?
- To what extent are parents critical of the child?
- How do the parents communicate feelings to each other?
- What type of internal working model within the child does parental communication create or sustain?
Practical communication

How do the parents communicate about practical every day needs with one another?

How do parents communicate to the child regarding routines, expectations and the structure of everyday life?
Emotional responsiveness

Are parents sensitive to the child’s inner states?

What type of emotional climate exists in the home?

Are parents sensitive to each other’s emotions?

What insight do the parents have in relation to the child’s emotional needs?
Emotional involvement

Are parents under or over involved in the child’s life?
Is parental involvement consistent?
Are there any splits in the family? Any factions?
Does parental involvement with the child change in response to the life-cycle?
Are there any inappropriate alliances between family members?
Parenting capacity and roles

Emotional roles

Who provides nurture, comfort and support to the child?
Do the parents nurture, comfort, support each other?
Is the child required to provide emotional nurture to the parent(s)?
Parenting capacity and roles

Practical roles

Who provides the child with physical care, emotional sustenance, stimulation, protection from hazards?

Who teaches the child important life-skills?

Who in the family contributes to home maintenance?

Is the child expected to take on inappropriate roles?
Guidance and discipline

- Communication of expectations
- Sanctioning of negative behaviours.
- Are any of the following styles present: rigid, flexible, laissez-faire, chaotic?
- Do parents model appropriate behaviours?
- Are parental expectations of child’s behaviour clear?
- What type of reinforcement is used with the child and is it consistently applied?
- How do the parents help the child develop inner control?
Analysis

Eliciting strengths  Identifying concerns  Assessing impact on child

Action plan  Prospects for growth and change
Enhancing parenting capacity

Utilising the assessment as a platform for intervention in family life, and the enhancement of parenting: 6 key questions

1. How do we enhance the existing strengths
2. How do we mitigate areas of concern
3. How is growth and change promoted
4. How can social support be provided
5. How do we effect optimal developmental outcomes
6. In what ways can we enable parents and others to improve the child’s lived experiences.
# The Combined Framework

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<th>Parenting Dimensions</th>
<th>Strengths/Resilience/Coping</th>
<th>Areas of concern/risk in parenting</th>
<th>Impact on child/lived experience</th>
<th>Prospects for growth and change</th>
<th>Action plan (must include social support)</th>
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<td>Key attributes in parenting</td>
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<td>Problem-solving</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
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<td>Affective responsiveness</td>
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<td>Roles</td>
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<td>Behavioural control</td>
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What is your initial reaction to the Building Better Futures model?
What do you think are its strengths?
What do you think are its limitations?
Case example

DAIRINE MOONEY, SENIOR PRACTITIONER, WESTERN HSC TRUST
Evaluation outcomes
Outcomes based accountability

Quarterly report cards

- How much did we do?
- How well did we do it?
- Was anyone better off?
But also:
reduced substance misuse; improved family relations; engagement in universal or targeted services
The Building Better Futures Model appears easy to grasp and understand.

The Building Better Futures Model appears useful for understanding parenting capacity.
THE BUILDING BETTER FUTURES MODEL PROVIDES A COHERENT UNDERSTANDING OF PARENTAL NEEDS.

THE BBF MODEL IS HELPFUL FOR IDENTIFYING THE RESOURCES REQUIRED TO ENHANCE PARENTING.
THE BBF MODEL HAS THE POTENTIAL TO EFFECT POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR THE CHILDREN AND FAMILY.

THE BUILDING BETTER FUTURES MODEL PROVIDES A COHERENT UNDERSTANDING OF CHILDREN'S NEEDS.
Key messages from evaluation: challenges

- Fit with practice realities: e.g. roll out of Signs of Safety and ACE awareness; The Family Model (Falkov) Think Child, Think Family.
- Language and terminology.
- Producing user friendly versions.
- Therapeutic role alongside statutory duty
- Enhancing parenting.
- Time and training.
Fit of BBF with Signs of Safety

**Signs of Safety** - an overarching approach, or orientation, to practice.


Complementary theory-base, tools and techniques.

When working within a Signs of Safety approach Building Better Futures provides a framework for understanding parents’ prior experiences, strengths and weaknesses in parenting, the impact of this on the child and to develop an action plan to enhance parenting - all important for effective safety planning.
Key messages from evaluation: strengths

**Increased social worker confidence (5)**
- ‘I like that it gives a very clear structure and is a comprehensive assessment so you can be confident you covered all aspects’
- ‘encourages me to think differently and be more curious’

**Better and more helpful assessments (38)**
- ‘clear evidence to support and inform decision making’.
- ‘Assists in identifying the areas of need and the most appropriate intervention to achieve change’
- Better understanding of parents social history... how this impacts on their parenting and how to improve their parenting’

**More focused practice (15)**
- ‘It gives a clear, consistent approach to assessment and a structure to a visit’
- ‘focus(es) child protection plans. This means that children aren't drifting through the system and remaining open to social services for any longer than required’
- ‘Faster and more effective decision making’
Strengths continued

Parental engagement & partnership (8)
- ‘feel included and part of making the change’
- ‘a more transparent way of treating cases and encourages openness’

Parental insight & facilitated change (18)
- ‘mother has taken a more active role in protective parenting and has a better understanding of how her behaviour was impacting the child’

Encourages a focus on children (19)
- ‘I do like that we have to assess the impact on children at every stage thus keeping the children the focus of the assessment’

Strengths focused (8)
- ‘helps parents focus on themselves as a resource / their abilities etc.’
- ‘model enables social workers to highlight the positive aspects of parenting as well as risks’
Conclusions

There is an overriding confidence in the model to:

(a) Address the requisite areas of parenting, both emotional and practical;
(b) Provide ‘added-value’ to parenting capacity assessment and intervention over and above existing frameworks
(c) Contribute to the early identification of risk, need and required resources;
(d) Enhance the reporting of concerns (verbally and through written reports) in meetings and in court;
(e) Stimulate the development of comprehensive protection plans and strategies of early, effective intervention to meet need, reduce risk, and prevent harm;
(f) Foster accessible, transparent and helpful interventions to enhance parenting capacity;
(g) Afford clarity in parenting capacity assessment and intervention;
(h) Strengthen the completion of UNOCINI and other relevant agency recording forms; and
(i) Facilitate openness and partnership with parents while positively promoting the optimal inclusion of fathers.
What parents have said

I just feel that she gets the situation, she gets me.

‘X was the first social worker who listened.’

She made me feel that I was a person

She’s never made me feel like she looks down at me
What senior practitioners said

I feel more confident in the recommendations I make as I feel I have a much clearer picture.

I have a greater empathy for my families as I now better understand how they have come to this place in their lives.

This model has enabled me to do the type of work I came into social work to do.

I understand better the impact on the child.

it felt like it was going back to old fashioned social work practice.
Sustainability

- Promotion by Senior Practitioners, Team Leaders, Principal Practitioners, Heads of Service
- On-going training and support by Social Services Training Teams
- Development of user friendly support /resource materials to support implementation
- Mainstreamed in professional education – Universities, Continuous Professional Development
- Cascade training repeated on a comprehensive regional basis
- HSCB will include BBF in commissioning targets
- Outcomes based accountability approach to measurement
What are the key challenges in your practice context?

In what ways might BBF be useful or relevant in your context?
Key Sources
