Safeguarding Family Group Conference (SFGC) Study

Kempe Conference

October 2023

Lorna Stabler, Bekkah Bernheim, Jo Day, Donald Forester, Sarah Green, Iain Lang, Helene Prestat, David Wilkins, Katrina Wyatt

What is a 'safeguarding' Family Group Conference?

- Three LAs in London drew on learning and experience from other LAs to design and their alternative pathway to bring about change and reflect systemic approaches.

- This led to the 'safeguarding' Family Group Conference:

    - An offer of a Family Group Conference *instead of* an Initial Child Protection Conferences.

    - The same FGC model – with preparation, information sharing, family time, sharing the plan, and review

    - Decision making, referrals and oversight might differ – i.e. timeframe, who makes referrals, who follows up on the plan

What is the idea?

In an initial pilot, we explored with practitioners what they felt had changed where different meeting practices had been used. Practitioners reported feeling that:

- There was a **reduction shame and blame** in meetings for families and professionals

- Parents were **participating more in decisions** about how to keep their child safe

- Parents and their wider support group were **feeling empowered**

- The **child's voice** was more central to decision-making

- Professionals were feeling **less concerned about risk** by knowing a fuller picture of the family's life

- They wanted descriptions of good practice to help teams consider how to involve families in meetings

Implementation in new Local Authorities

Research-practice partnership

- Initial LAs sharing learning

- Drawing on expertise in **children's social care** and **co-production with parents and children with lived experience of social work** from CASCADE *(Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre)* and **implementation science** from Exeter Medical School

Mixed methods realist evaluation

- Build an explanation of *how* a programme works in different settings with different populations through the development and testing of a programme theory.

- Using a framework to understand the implementation setting and approach.

We implemented the same program in two locations. For some reason, we had very different results.

University of Exeter — Medical School · CARDIFF UNIVERSITY PRIFYSGOL CAERDYDD · CASCADE Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre · THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA · City of Westminster · h&f hammersmith & fulham

RAMESESPROJECT.ORG

Our research questions

Implementation

How to achieve <u>uptake</u> and <u>embedding</u> of an FGC into the Child Protection (CP) pathway as an alternative to an Initial Child Protection Conference?

- Interviews with practitioners
- Observations of learning workshops

Important outcomes

What <u>outcomes</u> are of interest to families and professionals?

- Engagement with families
- Review of literature

Experiences of families

<u>Which families</u> under <u>which circumstances</u> will improve on these outcomes following diversion to an alternative SFGC pathway?

- Observations and interviews
- Embedded researcher

Local Authority motivations for taking part

Working differently with families	• A different offer at the point of child protection investigation • Lack of options for families where ICPC is unlikely to create change • Could bring the wider family network into the conversation and support plan earlier
Aligning to desired practice	• Might fit better with some practice models, such as restorative practice and systemic practice • Fits with expanding the offer of FGCs across the Local Authority
Reducing CP rates	• Could reduce the need for children to be on Child Protection plans • Could shift some resource and focus to early intervention and prevention

University of Exeter Medical School

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY PRIFYSGOL CAERDYDD

CASCADE Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre Canolfan Ymchwil a Datblygu Gofal Cymdeithasol Plant

THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

City of Westminster

h&f hammersmith & fulham
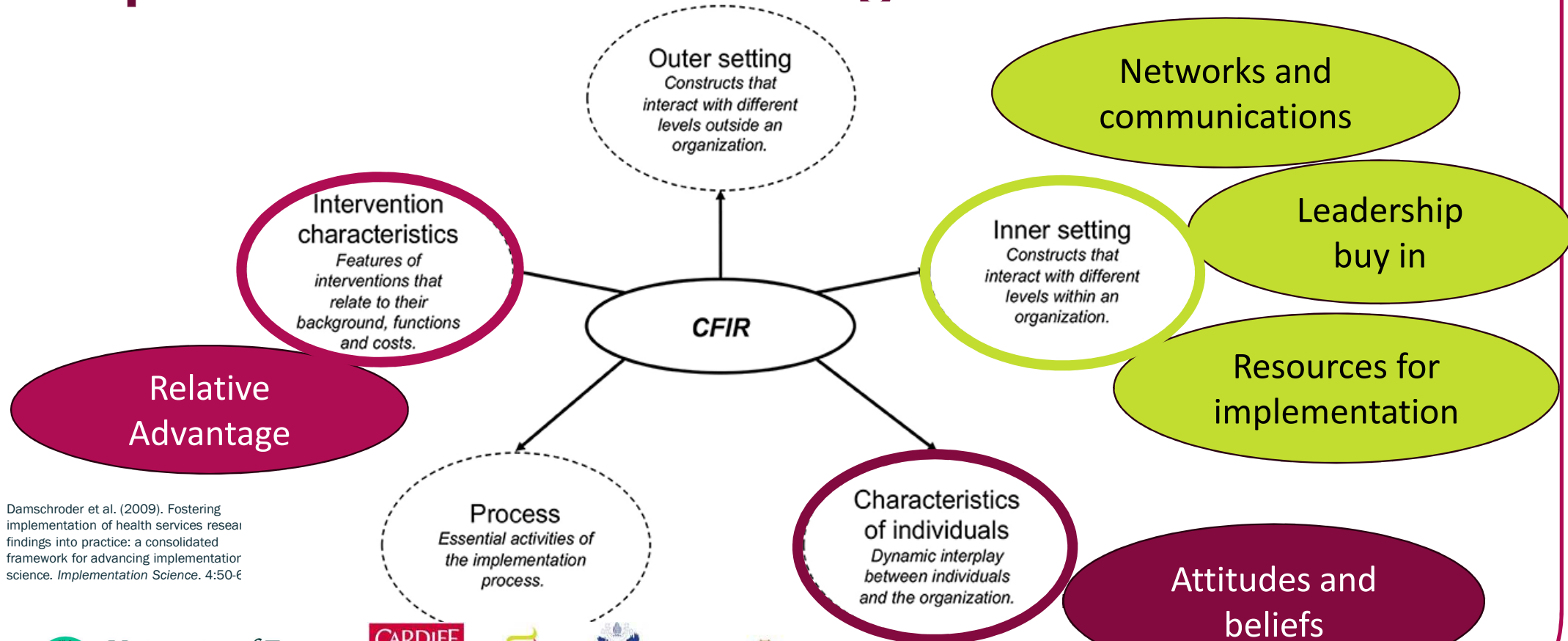
Approach to WP1

Aim: To understand what enables/hinders implementation of the new SFGC pathway over time and what might make a receptive/unreceptive context for implementing SFGCs both within a Local Authority and across Local Authorities

Approach: Qualitative research approach informed by a framework from Implementation Science - the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) and initial programme theory.

- Documents

- Observing support meetings/learning workshops

- Telephone/online structured interviews with 3-4 practitioners from participating Local Authorities

- Stakeholder engagement with people with lived and learned experience of social work

Implementation evaluation findings

Outer setting
Constructs that interact with different levels outside an organization.

Networks and communications

Intervention characteristics
Features of interventions that relate to their background, functions and costs.

Inner setting
Constructs that interact with different levels within an organization.

Leadership buy in

CFIR

Relative Advantage

Resources for implementation

Damschroder et al. (2009). Fostering implementation of health services research findings into practice: a consolidated framework for advancing implementation science. *Implementation Science.* 4:50-6

Process
Essential activities of the implementation process.

Characteristics of individuals
Dynamic interplay between individuals and the organization.

Attitudes and beliefs

University of Exeter
Medical School

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY
PRIFYSGOL CAERDYⅮD

CASCADE
Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre
Canolfan Ymchwil a Datblygu Gofal Cymdeithasol Plant

THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

City of Westminster

h&f
hammersmith & fulham

Other influences

Risk: Highlighted in the stakeholder engagement work earlier in the study a concern that able to manage risk on the SFGC pathway and confidence that risk is contained

Anxiety: Anxiety as a barrier to implementing and linked to risk

LA Size: Barriers as too big / small - links to available resources to make the changes

Inspections: Impact of inspections and external policy

Transformation?

- Merkel-Holguin (2004) - Are entrenched and powerful systems ready to support a practice model as empowering as family group conferencing?' (pp. 156–157).

  - Our findings so far indicate that creating change within Child Protection can be challenging – time constraints, lack of infrastructure for innovation, inspections, professional anxiety.

  - Involves a shift from seeing family network as 'risky' to seeing them as a source of safety and trusting family to take the lead.

  - Need to consider the right way to include families in service design.

Next Steps

- Two LAs are now piloting the new pathway

- We will invite families and practitioners to participate in the research focusing on:
    - How the new offer works for them
    - If the impact lasts
    - What could be improved

- Offering support to new sites that wish to pilot their own model

Questions and staying in touch

- Get updates from our study website

  https://sites.exeter.ac.uk/fgcstudy/

- Get in touch FGCstudy@exeter.ac.uk