SOUTHWARK MENTAL HEALTH
FAMILY STRATEGY

A Review of Progress to Date and Next Steps for 2012-2015
CONTENTS

- Introduction Page 1
- Background Page 2
- Principles Page 3
- A Family Focused Approach in Services Page 5
- Achievements Page 6
- Engaging Parents Page 9
- Engaging Children Page 10
- Engaging with Troubled Families Page 12
- Being a Parent: Pre-conception, Pregnancy, Birth and the Postnatal Period Page 13
- Fathers Page 14
- Safeguarding Children Page 15
- What’s in place? Page 16
- Evaluation and Monitoring Page 17
- Next Steps Page 18
INTRODUCTION

The original family strategy acknowledged that many people who use mental health services are family members and have responsibilities as parents or carers. Historically, mental health services have struggled to recognise people as parents and support them in their parenting role. Mental health services need to understand the complexity that some people are both in a caring role as a parent, and also experience mental health problems. This 2012-15 strategy aims to highlight the importance of partnership working with parents and families, and also other services. The strategy also acknowledges the importance of partnership working with Children’s Services to promote children and young people’s learning well being and social development.

Key to this strategy is the vision that it is not enough to create specialist services for families and children whose lives are touched by mental ill health. A family approach needs to be embedded in mainstream mental health care. This is not just about issues relating to child protection and risk management but also about supporting parents and children to live full and hopeful lives.

The first Southwark Family Strategy was launched in 2007. The strategy has now been revised to incorporate the positive steps taken so far in Southwark and to capture the current national drivers: the Munro Report, national Think Family guidance from the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) and research by the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Young People’s Services (C4EO), and the Adult Care Reform Act.

Everyone engaged with mental health services should experience a whole family approach in accordance with improving adult and child health and wellbeing. In Southwark this work represents an attempt to develop a family orientated approach, strengthening the link with children’s services to support family life. By ‘family’ we mean anyone who is identified by the service user as their family. Although the family strategy focuses on the parent, there is an awareness that children may be cared for by other family members who may experience mental health issues.

Locally and nationally there is growing political commitment to supporting families, including those with multiple problems, and to improving child health and wellbeing. Taking a whole family approach may not require significant expenditure. It is usually about partnership working, using the existing resources more effectively and sharing information. Central to this is the development of a well trained work force that is attuned to family issues. We also believe in early intervention rather than the provision of costly crisis management.

Southwark is an inner city London borough, with a young population. There is a high percentage of single parent households, an increasing birth rate, a significant number of referrals to children’s social care, a high number of reported incidents of domestic violence children, children subject to child protection plans
and children who are looked after. All of these factors impact on the mental well being of Southwark families.

This multi-agency strategy has been developed with contributions from service users who themselves are parents, staff from Children and Families Social Services, clinicians from CAMHS, Midwifery and Acute Healthcare and Adult Mental Health Services and workers in the voluntary sector.

BACKGROUND

In recent years there have been a number of policy drivers promoting the principle that services should place greater emphasis on supporting parents in their parenting role:

*No Health Without Mental Health (2011)* (www.dh.gov.uk>Home>Publications) addresses mental health throughout the lifespan and explores how whole-family approaches can benefit the wellbeing of all family members

Key messages from the Munro Final Report (2011) [www.education.gov.uk/munroreview/] include how well-coordinated and preventative services will do more to reduce abuse and neglect than reactive services. Early help can improve the life chances of children, young people and the whole family.

*Think child, think parent, think family* guidance (SCIE 2011) [www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide30/] describes in its recommendations that services for families affected by parental mental distress should include: multi-agency support to improve outcomes for families, early screening and identification of needs, providing tailored interventions that take in account the combined needs of the family which should build on the family strengths to promote resilience.

Locally Southwark’s drivers include:

- Southwark Children and Young People’s Plan
- Southwark implementation of the Munro Review: including the development of Early Help and Intervention
- Lessons learned from Southwark Serious Case Reviews and the Child Death Overview Panel
- The Southwark joint service protocol to meet the needs of children whose parents have mental health problems
- The Fatherhood Institute and Family Rights Group Engaging Fathers in Child Protection. Southwark is a pilot project for this national work.
PRINCIPLES

The underlying principles of the Southwark Family Strategy 2012-15 are twofold. Firstly to recognise the aspirations of people with mental health problems to be parents either now or in the future and to ensure they are supported in this role. Secondly to recognise the strengths and needs of children and young people as they grow into adulthood.

The Strategy is based on a number of key themes:

- Parents have the primary responsibility for the outcomes of their children. They also have the right to effective support to help them meet their responsibilities
- Ensuring services have reliable ways of identifying the needs of children and their families
- All parents should be able to access support at key transitions in their children’s lives, with the greatest level of support and intervention for those who need it most
- Parenting can be joyful and this is also true for parents with mental health problems. Services should be non-stigmatising and should recognise the complexity and importance of the parenting task. Support should focus on assisting parents in partnership and not telling them how to do things
- Prevention and early intervention are the key themes. There should be a commitment to the early identification of families needs and a commitment to supporting families before a crisis emerges
- All agencies, from GPs to the education sector with parents, have a role in supporting positive parenting in order to build resilience and manage risk
- Partnership working with statutory and independent sector agencies and with children and families is critical in the delivery of parenting support.
- All services should value and act with reference to, the views of parents, children and young people and build on the family’s strengths
- Support services offered should be flexible enough to meet the needs of the whole family
- Parenting support should be sensitive to different cultures and ways of bringing up children
Social isolation, exclusion, stigma and discrimination are all potential barriers to families accessing support and it’s important that services help to facilitate engagement.

Services need to be sensitive to the needs of families and to their fullest range of configurations including: parents in same sex relationships, single parent families, parents who are separated from their families, fathers, young parents, and parents in prison, parents of black and ethnic minority heritage and parents of children with additional needs and or disabilities.

Improving access to mental health services for parents who are at risk of experiencing mental distress.

Ensuring services recognise their statutory role in safeguarding children and act accordingly.

Adult Mental Health services in Southwark will address these key areas through the following:

1) Providing parents with information about services to support them in their parenting role, information about how to support their children and how to access those services.

2) Taking full account of service users’ role and needs as parents by ensuring family information is gathered upon in assessment and in the development of care plans, to include the assessment record and subsequent delivery and review planning.

3) Improving liaison and multi-agency working with services for children and families in the borough. This will include CAMHS, social services, GPs, children’s centres, schools, voluntary sector organisations and other targeted services.

4) Ensuring that policies and procedures are in place to care for children at risk or in need. [www.londonscb.gov.uk](http://www.londonscb.gov.uk)

5) Creating environments within in-patient Adult Mental Health services that are safe and welcoming for children. Community services should facilitate home visits where appropriate.

6) Involving children with a safe space to be heard ensuring their wishes and feelings are heard directly. Engaging with children’s knowledge and expertise validates their position in family life and acknowledges the responsibilities they might be taking.

7) Developing services for children whose parents have mental health problems to enable them to understand issues and receive support as young carers.

8) Supporting service users through pre-conception advice, pregnancy, childbirth and the post natal period.

9) Taking into account cultural background and linking with local Black Minority Ethnic services.

10) Acknowledging the impact of other social, health and economic factors that may impinge on effectively parenting.
These objectives will be met by partnership working alongside existing services to provide a more family focused approach including targeted services that are currently providing innovative support for parents with mental health needs and their children. Examples in Southwark currently include: Family Action NEWPIN and Building Bridges and the Parental Mental Health In Children's Centre Service, commissioned by children's services.

A FAMILY FOCUSED APPROACH IN SERVICES

Until recently at least in many adult services, the dominant mental health paradigm focused primarily upon the individual treatment offered by a clinician to a patient.

Key to this strategy is a vision that a family approach needs to be embedded in mainstream mental health care. The family focused approach in Adult Mental Health services is informed by the aspirations relating to social inclusion and the Recovery Model. Social inclusion is about the ties that bind us to society through work, participating in communities and meaningful social networks. Being a parent includes service users in a network of nurseries, schools and other families. Being a parent brings challenges to all of us as well as those who experience mental health problems. It is however one of the most significant ways to bring meaning to life and promote participation in wider society. In the South London and Maudsley Trust (SLaM) a broad vision of recovery is one that involves:

“A process of changing one’s orientation and behavior from a negative focus on a troubling event, condition or circumstance to the positive restoration, rebuilding, reclaiming or taking control of one’s life” SLaM Social Inclusion Re-hab and Recovery Strategy 2007-10.
ACHIEVEMENTS:

This current family strategy builds upon work that has taken place across Southwark since 2006. Southwark through the partnership working of the Family Strategy Committee has developed an approach that has incorporated a range of initiatives:

**Newpin** works with parents who have children under five, where there is an identified mental health problem and/or significant difficulty in the parent/child relationship. Newpin targets families with identified multiple needs who are ready to be actively involved in making changes for themselves and their children. Newpin provides a centre-based service. Our informal drop-ins and Stay and Play sessions offer a living room where parents can socialise and support each other; along with an attached playroom to enable parents and children to play and learn together. The service offers a therapeutic parent support group; an attachment-based Mellow Parenting programme that has a children's group that works directly with the children on separation and behavioral issues; a Family Play programme that encourages the parent to relate positively with their child through play and to develop an understanding of the value of play for their children and the “About Boys” course which supports mothers of boys to understand them better and teach them strategies for boundaries and discipline. We do individual assessments and reviews; advocate with immigration, benefits agencies and housing whilst families are engaged with the service; and signposting to other useful services.

**Building Bridges** is a family support service that works with families where one parent or the child has a mental health diagnosis. The program offers home visits to families who are socially isolated and hard to reach and have complex problems. The program aims to bridge the gap between children’s services and adult services and it works from a family centered perspective to ensure that parents can recognise and meet their own needs and those of their children, enabling them all to reach their full potential.
Children can at times feel isolated, responsible and stigmatised if someone in their family has a mental health diagnosis. We work with the parents to understand their own or their child’s mental health diagnosis and help them to use age appropriate language to discuss the diagnosis in the family to relieve some of the anxiety stress and stigma. The service is tailored to the specific needs of each family and includes help with: establishing daily routines and developing parenting skills, emotional support, individual work with the children and parents, improving communication within the family, supporting access to other services, advocating on the families behalf and supporting children and parents with school attendance. We work with families who have a child protection plan or are children in need. In carrying out this work, we recognise that Southwark has residents with a range of cultural needs and we will attempt to respond to each individual’s special requirements.

Parental Mental Health in Children’s Centre Team. The Parental Mental Health Team is an innovative nurse led service that works specifically with parents who are experiencing mental distress and have children under the age of 5 in the borough in Southwark. The team provides an assessment of the parents’ current difficulties and considers the impact this maybe having on the family. The team can offer one to one work with parents offering emotional and practical support in the home and can link parents into their local children centre. The team also runs several therapeutic groups; this includes a 10-week therapeutic program for women and their families at risk of or experiencing post-natal depression. We also actively engage in multi-agency working with other services statutory and non statutory services such as secondary Adult Mental Health services, Home - start, Southwark CAMHs and Social Care. This is demonstrated in the therapeutic baby and toddler group that the team co-runs with Southwark CAMHs and is based on the Anna Freud Model. We are also available, and have provided, teaching sessions, advice and consultations to other health and child professionals such as health visitors, midwifes, education welfare officers and parent outreach workers in children centres.

Staff Training: Safeguarding training that incorporates a Think Family Approach. The Family Partnership Model training and Crossing Bridges training for Adult Mental Health and children and social care staff. There is parental participation in the Family Partnership Model training, which was commissioned by SLaM and delivered by the Centre for Child and Parent Support. A parent was involved in the design of the course and one of the two trainers is a parent who has used psychiatric services. The training objective is to increase staff awareness of child development and the tasks of parenting to enable them to work in genuine partnerships with parents using mental health services.

The Family Partnership Model training was chosen for evaluation as it is an evidence-based training package. The content is very much in line with the strategy’s philosophy about partnership working and was felt to capture the learning needs of staff to build their confidence and expertise in working
positively with parents and children. An evaluation led by SCIE, IOP and the Centre for Child and Parents Support has been completed regarding staff’s experiences of the training and its impact on their practice. Further analysis of its impact on practice would be desirable in the future in order to support the further roll out of the training. In the two training cohorts parents were invited to evaluate the impact of the training on their experiences of using services. We would hope to continue to further build parental evaluation within the training.

- Quotes from staff:

  “I will share this model with my parents/families to increase our work TOGETHER”

  Revisiting child development was great. I felt completely unprepared to think about parents & their children. This course has changed my practice, I think after working with a Dad for 2 years I am finally being helpful”

Parental Involvement Parents Groups and Film. Parents from the Parents group were instrumental to the development of the staff training film, Nobody says Congratulations. The film aims to show service users as parents in their own homes surrounded by the paraphernalia of family life. Through the stories of three parents with mental health problems, it provides explicit messages for staff in how parents want to be supported. At a recent Parents group a parent spoke about how empowering she had found taking part in the film, which has a focus on the positive impacts of having a child. She is now less isolated, feels more integrated and is standing as a parental governor.

In addition to the above developments, Southwark has worked both locally and with National Agencies:

- Southwark was an implementer site for SCIE National Guidance
- Two conferences have been held at Southwark Cathedral: in September 2007 the Family Strategy was launched and in January 2010 a Think Family Conference took place which provided an opportunity for staff and parents to comment on the work of the Strategy so far
- Shared reflection day with Integrated Child Support Services staff, which included input from a young carer with extensive experience of caring for a parent with mental health difficulties
- Joint funded Senior Manager between Adult Mental Health and Children’s Social Care, the aim of this role is to provide advice and consultation to both Children Social care and Adult Mental Health services and the wider network. This role is instrumental to the strategic development of the Family Focused approach
- Provision of the new Specialist Parenting Service and the Family Focus Team (see section ‘engaging with troubled families’).
ENGAGING WITH PARENTS

Without suitable support the impact of parental mental health for both the parent and the child can be significant. The stress of parenting can in itself impact on an adult’s mental health. There is clear evidence that a parents’ distress can have adverse effect on children’s well being. The importance of recognising the service user in their parenting role enables services to provide appropriate early help and thereby reduce risk to the whole family.

The work we have done in Southwark in setting up user led parents groups has provided evidence of parents’ fears and concerns, including discussing the realities of being a parent with mental health problems with professionals and asking for practical help. Mental distress does not stop parents from worrying about their children and therefore it is vital that staff think family.

As well as parental participation in the Family Strategy Group from its conception, parental involvement and feedback on Southwark services and the helpfulness of Southwark staff are obtained in a number of ways:

- Supporting parents from a variety of Southwark services to attend the two Southwark Family Strategy conferences, and providing Parent Only workshops at those conferences
- Holding Parental Focus Groups in 2008 addressing the questions: What’s worked well for you as a parent with mental health needs? What would improve your experiences? What would you want from a Parents’ Forum/Group. The findings were collated in a formal report and presented to the Southwark Family Strategy Group
- Running Parents Groups facilitated by parents who have themselves used mental health services, where a complementary therapist works alongside the groups, and there is lunch and always a crèche.

Key messages from parents include:

- Staff need to have an understanding of what it means to be a parent
- Parents really fear that children will be taken into care if parents talk openly about their distress and ask for support
- Wanting access to non-stigmatising and non-judgmental services that don’t focus on diagnostic labels, but on how parents experience distress, and how the impact of this on their families can be minimised
- Parents want to work in partnership with professionals so that interventions are provided in a timely manner, and parents are enabled to manage their health and the impact of treatment on their ability to parent
- There is a lack of information about services parents might be able to access
- The importance of appropriate services such as the Parents’ Groups
- The need for parental involvement in the development and delivery of the Family Partnership Model training for adult mental staff
These concerns have begun to be addressed through ongoing service developments such as the staff training film Nobody says Congratulations; Family Partnership Model Training with a parent trainer; holding regular Parents’ Groups with Southwark Mind; the Parental Mental Health Team in Children Centres; and Newpin and Building Bridges Family Action.

Quotes from parents:

There is no prevention support, you only get support when you are already in crisis then you get too much intervention, you get blamed for hitting crisis point

The Parents’ Group is a safe space to share. Unlike all other groups I have been to in the Parents’ Group everyone has been there and can understand. Please keep it going it is much needed

Mental health awareness should be available in primary school

A psychologist who didn’t judge me, enabled me to find out how other mums get through this

My good GP didn’t force me to take medication until I was ready, respected my expertise, we had a good partnership

Children need their own space to express themselves too

ENGAGING WITH CHILDREN

It is important to recognise the support children and young people may need when their parents experience mental distress, and what professionals might need to do to support the family. Children of parents with mental health issues can experience poor outcomes: children are at risk of harm, a high percentage of children go on to experience mental health problems themselves, and nearly one third of young carers care for a parent with a mental health problem. They are the least likely group to be offered a young carer’s assessment.

Children need to be helped to understand what’s going on in the family proportionate to their age and understanding. They can feel blamed and responsible. It is unclear who they ask or if anyone is supporting them and looking after their needs when their parent is unwell. Keeping the Family in Mind is a developmental project set up by Barnardo’s Liverpool Action with Young Carers in 2001. This project captured 10 messages from children and young people:

1. Introduce yourself. Tell us who you are and what your job is
2. Give us as much information as you can
3. Tell us what is wrong with our parents
4. Tell us what is going to happen next
5. Talk to us and listen to us. Remember it is not hard to speak to us we are not aliens
6. Ask us what we know and what we think. We live with our parents we know how they have been behaving
7. Tell us it’s not our fault. We can feel really guilty if our mum or dad is ill. We need to know we are not to blame
8. Please don’t ignore us. Remember we are part of the family and we live there too
9. Keep on talking to us and keeping us informed. We need to know what’s is happening
10. Tell us if there is anyone we can talk to. MAY BE IT COULD BE YOU.

To find out more about the work of the Keeping the family in Mind Project please contact Louise Wardale on 0151 708 7323 louise.wardale@barnardos.org.uk

We think that it is important that those working in Southwark should adopt these principles. The Family Strategy acknowledges the importance of staff recognising the supportive role that children and young people have in living with a parent who has a mental health problem, and valuing their perspective and understanding of their parent’s difficulties.

Practitioners will identify support for children, ensure children are accessing universal services and provide children with information which is age appropriate.

Southwark has a well established Young Carers Project which has a significant number of young carers whose parents have mental health problems. The project aims to provide a space for young carers to play, have fun, to meet other young people in similar positions and to receive support to talk about themselves and their responsibilities.

In addition the service works in partnership with other children and adult services to reinforce a Think Family approach, the service believes that it is important to engage with parents and has recently started a parental peer support group; the aim of which is to help parents to explore their children’s roles as Young Carer’s. Since the group started it has become apparent that almost half of the parents attending have mental health issues.

Children living with a parent with a mental health problem may also experience neglect or abuse and it is important that professionals working with families remain aware of this and report their concerns in line with the current procedures.
ENGAGING WITH TROUBLED FAMILIES

In June 2010, the Director of Children’s Services commissioned the Office of Public Management to review how Southwark was delivering on parenting services across the borough. The report recommended a ‘One Door’ point of entry to intensive family support including parenting programmes and highlighted the need to realign provision and referral pathways. The intention was to bring together previously dispersed parenting services into a single delivery unit for specialist and targeted support.

In November, 2010, the new Specialist Parenting Service, the Family Focus Team, was initially created from two parallel teams from the Youth Offending Service (YOS) (Family Intervention Project [FIP] and the Parenting Team) and, from 17th June, 2011, an additional two teams from the re-organisation of Children’s Specialist Services (Alternatives to Care and the Parenting Service) and the commissioned CSV Parent Mentoring project, also joined the new developing service.

Currently funded through the Early Intervention Grant, senior managers in Children’s Services are seeking further funding and collating proposals, which, dependant on their outcomes, will impact further on the type of service we are able to deliver. At the same time the local strategic partnership is undertaking a strategic needs analysis to understand more locally how we better support our most vulnerable families in Southwark in line with the Government’s ‘Working with Troubled Families’ initiative to better understand the family support necessary to support families with multiple and complex needs, who are often on the cusp of statutory services.

The role of the service is to provide an assessment of how to support the family as a whole and not just as individuals and, in partnership with families, organise a bespoke package of multi-agency interventions that is both practical and emotional support. The intention is for families to experience a smoother transition to and from statutory services and strengthen links to the wider Children’s Services system as well as universal services.
BEING A PARENT

PRE-CONCEPTION, PREGNANCY, BIRTH AND THE POSTNATAL PERIOD

For all women this period can be stressful and have an impact on mental well being. Services need to recognise that for some this may result in significant distress that may result in the woman requiring additional support from a wider network of services. The strategy recognises the work being done in Southwark to provide early help.

For those women already experiencing mental health problems, services need to be supportive, signposting and referring women to specialised services if required. A new care plan should be undertaken to reflect the needs of both the parent and child and additional services that are necessary should be sensitively co-ordinate. Through the Family Strategy work with women some important issues have been highlighted:

- Women on psychotropic medication need to be given the opportunity to discuss methods of contraception alongside other aspects of physical health
- The impact of psychotropic medication on fertility and the impact of such medication on an unborn child
- Women who have previous experiences of relapse or post-natal mental health problems have concerns about the impact of subsequent pregnancies on their mental health and their families
- Women who are considering starting or increasing a family need advice, guidance and reassurance.

The Recovery Model in mental health emphasises the importance of focusing on optimism and identifying an individual’s strengths. Therefore mental health services need to acknowledge that service users will want to have children and need to be able to think this through in a reflective and positive way with mental health professionals.

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) clinical guideline 45 Antenatal and postnatal mental health: clinical management and service guidance (2007) states:

*Mental disorders during pregnancy and the postnatal period can have serious consequences for the health and wellbeing of a mother and her baby, as well as for her partner and other family members.*

In vulnerable times in someone’s life large numbers of services come into play. This complexity requires sophisticated liaison and communication between services. In particular the roles of the perinatal mental health services and community mental health services need to be clear and well co-ordinated. Good practice is illustrated by the NICE guidelines:
Treatment and care should take into account the woman’s individual needs and preferences. Women with mental disorders during pregnancy or the postnatal period should have the opportunity to make informed decisions about their care and treatment in partnership with their healthcare professionals.

In Southwark a spectrum of services to meet the needs of women with mental health problems are provided; from giving advice and support relating to contraception and conception, to a range of services to support women through pregnancy and childbirth.

The Southwark Family Strategy aims to acknowledge the aspiration of both men and women with mental health problems to have a family by:

- providing expert advice and information about contraception, pregnancy and psychotropic medication
- supporting women if they have concerns about their pregnancy
- fostering staff attitudes which enable service users to discuss the possibility of raising a family and explore the implications for their mental health and parenting
- providing services that work together collaboratively to support women.

These are some examples of the services that are currently available in Southwark:

- SLaM, mental health specialist mother and baby in-patient services
- A SLaM perinatal mental health strategy, to the development of which service users from Southwark Mind contributed extensively
- Specialist Perinatal mental health services working with both King’s and Guy’s and St Thomas’ maternity services
- An intensive Health Visiting Project which Southwark mental health service users are able to access.
- The Children’s Social Care Pre-birth Team, providing assessments for pregnant women, referred to Social Care.

FATHERS

Since the start of the Southwark Family Strategy group there have been several attempts to engage fathers through: the Parents’ Groups, Newpin’s Fathers’ Development Worker and Father Only groups in the Keeping Well Post Birth Project. The level of engagement has not been high in any of these groups. Therefore, the experiences of fathers continue to remain hidden. It could be that fathers are and feel excluded from the whole parenting debate. Fathers may have a very different parenting experience, for example if they are not living with their children. Men within the mental health system can find it hard to ask for support, are likely to have less well defined networks than women and may use coping strategies like alcohol. All of these may further distance men from their roles as fathers. Professionals do not focus on, or may not recognise their needs as fathers, but more explicitly address treatment options.
The Southwark Family Strategy will continue to look for ways to both raise the profile of fathers and engage fathers in future developments. Including involvement with the work undertaken in Southwark by the Fatherhood Institute of Family Rights Group, engaging Father’s in child protection.

Recognising and supporting parenthood is a crucial way of promoting social inclusion and fostering positive investment in the future.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

“All those who come into contact with children and families in their everyday work, including practitioners who do not have a specific role in relation to safeguarding children, have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children”

All organisations that have contact with children and families have responsibilities under the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This means:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing the impairment of children’s health or development
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- Undertaking that role so as to enable those children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.

In Southwark since 2005/6 significant work supported by the Southwark Safeguarding Children Board, Children’s Services and SLaM, has been done to raise awareness of the duty of Adult Mental Health staff to safeguard children.

This work includes:

- A joint service protocol to meet the needs of children and unborn children whose parents or carers have mental health problems which provides explicit guidance to all staff about the identification of children in need, referral pathways and the importance of joint working
- Implementing the joint service protocol and through audit and supervision checking and providing evidence that the procedures are being followed
- Introducing a joint adult mental health safeguarding children’s manager post that works with children and social care. The aim of the role is to provide guidance and consultation to staff working in Southwark in relation to parental mental health and its possible impact on children. This includes liaison between mental health, children and families services, acute and midwifery and police to improve communication, increase understanding of each others roles and develop a common understanding of thresholds of concern.
- SLaM completes the Southwark section 11 (Children Act 2004) audit to provide assurance to the Southwark Safeguarding Children Board that a framework is in place to safeguard children.

- Staff completing the revised child in need screen in the documentation of all service users. This is reviewed as part of the Trust performance management targets.

- Providing mental health awareness training to staff working in children and families services.

- Incorporating an understanding of the needs of young carers within any safeguarding children training.

- Meeting the requirements of the Carers Strategy for Southwark.

- Organisations using the Human Resources criteria listed on the Southwark Safe Organisation Checklist.

- Practitioners seeking to meet the requirements for safeguarding children via the training provided.

**A brief overview of WHAT’S IN PLACE**

**Policies and Protocols:**

- SLaM website [www.slam.nhs.uk](http://www.slam.nhs.uk)
- SLaM completes the Southwark section 11 (Children Act 2004) audit to provide assurance to the Southwark Safeguarding Children board that a framework is in place to safeguard children.
- SLaM recruitment and Human Resources policies and procedures meet the requirements of the Southwark Safe Organisation Checklist.
- Joint Service Protocol to meet the needs of children and unborn children whose parents or carers have mental health problems.
- Joint Service Protocol to meet the needs of children and unborn children whose parents or carers have substance misuse problems.
- Joint Service Protocol to meet the needs of children and unborn children whose parents have disabilities.

These protocols are available to download from the SSCB website: [www.southwark.gov.uk/safeguardingchildren](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/safeguardingchildren)
Training

- Parents experiences film No One says Congratulations to be used within staff training
- Crossing Bridges training
- Family Partnership Model training for Adult Mental Health staff
- Safeguarding training is in place in the SLaM Induction, more advanced training is available and uptake is monitored. A child risk screen is available in the SLaM electronic patients journey (EPJ)
- Mental Health Awareness for Children Social Care
- Southwark Safeguarding Children Board training on Parental and Perinatal Mental Health and its possible impact on children

Services

- Adult Mental Health have a senior manager who leads on children and parent issues
- Southwark Council Family Information service.
- Service developments for parents and children including Building Bridges Newpin and the Parental Mental Health and Children’s Centre Team
- Young Carers Project Southwark
- FIT Project

EVALUATION AND MONITORING

The Family Strategy recognises the value of evaluation, research and user involvement, in order to understand whether the Family Strategy and its various components are enabling services to Think Family. The Family Strategy Group had developed a working relationship with the IOP, Centre for Child and Parents Support, SCIE, and other SCIE Implementation Sites and will continue to work in partnership with these organisations.

As an implementer site for SCIE’s national guidance, four key areas of Southwark are being highlighted as examples of innovative practice: the Parent and Toddler Therapeutic Group, the Family Partnership Model training and the joint advisor role between Adult Mental Health and children social care. The Southwark Family Strategy Group itself.

A service user approach to service evaluation is favored and the possibility of enlisting the support of SURE (Service Users Research and Evaluation) based at the Institute of Psychiatry will be considered to be an appropriate way of taking this forward. We are still looking at ways of making links to user focused monitoring initiatives throughout SLaM.
NEXT STEPS

In 2010-2011, SLaM has undergone a major reconfiguration of services; moving from borough based services to clinical academic groups, based on diagnostic clusters. These changes mean that will now be new managers and staff in Southwark who will need to engage with the Think Child, Think Parent, and Think Family approach. This strategy will be launched in 2012 and will be reviewed in 2015. By then, Southwark will be sharing the good practice highlighted in the Southwark Strategy with all the other boroughs in SLaM. Having undertaken some specific pieces of evaluation with the Institute of Psychiatry, the Southwark Family Strategy group will continue to work with the Institute in ongoing monitoring of the Strategy.

Important future areas of work will be to continue partnership working with the education sector and build on the good practice as demonstrated by projects like the Targeted Mental Health in schools initiative.

The strategy acknowledges that there are many other areas of a person’s life that seriously effects a parent’s mental health and children’s emotional health and well being, for example domestic violence. The Strategy is keen to ensure that there is ongoing and future work between service providers promoting a Think Family approach.

The Southwark Family Strategy Group will work with commissioners and senior managers to help generate Family Focused outcome measures.

The strategy recognises the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) as the assessment and referral tool for Children’s Services and will work to embed this. CAF is the mechanism for early identification of additional needs and the means of developing a shared understanding by the family and Practitioner of those needs. Its implementation will deliver a Family Focused approach.

In December 2011 the Department of Communities and Local Government at a Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) Event, described the development of an intensive whole family approach, that will turn around the lives of 120,000 most troubled families and this will be supported by the department’s new Troubled Families Team. There is an expectation that this will be supported by a number of national strategies including: Ending Gang and Youth Violence, Drugs, Mental Health, Carer and Housing Strategy and the forthcoming Alcohol Strategy. It will be essential for this family strategy to engage with such central government initiatives.

Parental participation will be underpinned with the development of the Parents Groups and Network. National guidance, e-learning and publicity for the Southwark Family Strategy work will be publicised on the SLaM and Southwark Council websites. The Southwark Family Strategy Group will continue to meet and build on the existing partnerships and networks which have served it well over the last five years.
For further information or to become involved please contact:

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