



Strategic Partnership Boards
SAFETY SAFEGUARDING WELLBEING



Bitesize video guide: Thresholds and practice for working with children and families in Waltham Forest

Hello, my name is **Brenda** and I'm the Child Protection Officer from Leytonstone School. As a Safeguarding Lead in a school, I'm really pleased to have this local guidance and protocol. It will help practitioners to understand how to effectively utilise thresholds, to support families, to access the right support at the right time. Here are some key principles of the new Thresholds Guidance, Right Conversation, Right Action, Right Time:

- Build a shared understanding of our Think Family vision, our theory of change and the role of different agencies in delivering good outcomes for all children in Waltham Forest.
- Support practitioners to use their professional skills to have a quality conversation that build relationships and identifies the strengths and needs of families in the context of their community, environment and of their own experience.
- Provide a number of potential indicators of need across a broad spectrum, that can be used to enhance understanding of risk and to support information sharing between agencies to help improve children's outcomes.
- Provides clear and simple information on how to respond with the right conversation, right action, at the right time.

We had a family with complex needs that we knew would not meet the threshold for social care.

We were very concerned about the child's behaviour and disengagement in school and his mother had shared similar worries. As a result of this, with mum's consent, a referral was made to Early Help and CAMHs which led to a team around the family meeting to discuss the all the issues.

The meeting enabled all the agencies and the mother to explore the issues and clearly identify the areas of need. They were able to organise a support package that supported mum and school-based staff to regulate his behaviour in school and at home.

The mother was referred to attend a parenting course, which helped her to develop alternative ways to manage her child's behaviour in the home and was mirrored what was expected of him in school.

The joint working of agencies addressed the needs for this family by having the right conversation, which resulted in the right actions at the right time, preventing escalation to social care.

Hello, my name is **June** and I am the Named Nurse for Safeguarding children from Barts Health at Whipps Cross Hospital. As the Named Nurse for Safeguarding children, I'm working in a busy hospital where it can be challenging to have the Right Conversation, at the right time, to establish the right action. Staff can often find it difficult talking to a young person when they come to the Emergency Department with mental health problems. If a young person comes in feeling low in mood staff have said that they lack confidence in caring for these people and talking to them about their problems. Barts Health have now developed a training package known as 'We can talk' and staff are feeling more confident in knowing how to talk to these children to support them with their emotional health.

However basic principles can help us all in our support of families. These are your messages that I will be taking back to my team at Whipps Cross Hospital, I hope that will also help you.

Firstly, when we work with whole families in their networks & communities

we work as change agents with the whole family in a joined-up way. We use our professional skills to draw on family strengths and support family members to help each other.

With regard to having Quality conversations,

the starting point for every practitioner concerned about a child should be a quality conversation with every member of the family and with other professionals. Practitioners are change agents that use professional skills to build relationships and family skills that improve outcomes.

And finally, when supporting families to help themselves and each other

All our interventions with families must be focused on using our professional skills to develop our families' own skills, capacity and relationships.

It's all about the right conversation, the right action at the right time

Hello, my name is **Asma** and I'm the Deputy Manager and DSL/SENDSCO form Sunbeam Sugar Plum Tree Nursery

The Think Family vision is for all families in Waltham Forest to be independent, resilient, well and safe. We are striving to deliver this ambition to our families within our Children's Centres and PVIs.

We supported a family who was living in poor living conditions in a rented property, which was affecting the family's overall safety and well-being. The family consisted of two young children aged 2 and 4 years old who was identified with SEND needs. We referred the family to the Early Help Service who helped the family understand their rights regarding their housing. The landlord then made urgent repairs immediately. The nursery SENCO requested the development of an Education Health and Care Plan to support the child's SEND needs and ensured receiving an appropriate school placement and support in school. The SENCO supported the family and the child in the transition process by visiting the school alongside the family and child. The family were supported with an application for disability living allowance which was successful, and the 2-year child received 15 hours early education.

Whatever the circumstances or their level of need, children should always have access to support from families, their networks and communities and universal services such as schools, PVIs, children's centres, the police and the volunteer community sector. For most children, these will provide all the opportunities they need to reach their potential. However, there are times when children's needs mean they require more support to improve their outcomes, either due to the increasing complexity of their own needs, or the impact of external factors in their life.

To support vulnerable children and young people to achieve the Think Family vision, we believe we must take a whole family approach. Everyone that works with children and families has a role whether they provide an offer of support in the community, or in a universal, targeted or statutory service.

Understanding the roles and responsibilities of the different agencies within the Children's Services System is critical to ensuring that children get the right action at the

right level at the right time, and also to ensuring that we make the best use of resources to improve outcomes.

Hello, my name is **Pearl**, and I'm a Senior Early Help Social Worker from the MASH

As a Senior Social Worker in MASH, I spent a lot of time looking at the referrals for help, support and protection. Sometimes it can be very difficult to establish the right response from the information we receive. I always find having a conversation with practitioners can really help to establish the right action at the right time. For example, I received a referral from A&E stating that they were concerned about the patient as this was their third presentation with alcohol misuse. As the family consisted of a 7yr old, 13yr old and a 15yr old as well as mum and dad it was difficult to determine who they were speaking about. I contacted the referrer (a staff nurse) by phone who clarified the situation. I was then able to put the appropriate services in to support the family as well as give advice about future referrals and the importance of putting the vital information on the referral form.

In Waltham Forest, we use the London Child Protection Procedures and the iTHRIVE conceptual framework. This helps guide us to understand need and the level of offer in response to that need.

The threshold guidance will provide a foundation of knowledge for all practitioners, but it is the **quality conversations** that will build relationships and make a difference to children's outcomes. These are conversations between practitioners and families, practitioners and their line managers, designated safeguarding leads, Early Help coordinators and with the MASH team.

If we don't develop sufficient understanding of needs, strengths and risks through **quality conversations** with colleagues and with families, we can make unnecessary referrals. These clog up the children's services system and divert resources away from the children who need them most.

This can also create frustration between agencies, professionals and families. That's why this part of the guide is absolutely critical.