Independent Chairpersons Service and Chesterton & Madeley SSU

Final Analysis Report of the Newcastle Child Protection Pilot

Date August 2017

Staffordshire County Council

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1.   Executive Summary

1.1   On 1st March 2017 a three month pilot for Child Protection Conferences was launched based on the Three Houses Model, which is an information gathering tool that supports risk assessment.

1.2   The pilot was launched following an extensive audit by the two Business Managers of the Independent Chairperson's service of outline plans (decisions and recommendations) of Initial Child Protection Conferences held in 2015 and 2016. The analysis found a lack of SMART outcome focused plans which mirrored a 'theme' identified by Ofsted in numerous inspections of Local Authorities.

1.3   The aims of the pilot were:

- For parents, carers and children to feel engaged and empowered to participate in the process,

- For outline plans (decision & recommendations) and the conference minutes to be SMART

1.4   Originally the pilot only considered all Initial Child Protection Conferences and the first reviews of those initial conferences; however following a mid-point review on 11th April, it was unanimously agreed to use the model for all existing child protection conferences because of its inclusive approach and focused discussion in relation to risk.

1.5   A total of 17 Initial Child Protection Conferences, 7 Child Protection Review Conferences and 6 Dual Process Reviews were held under the new model. Dual Process Reviews consist of one meeting held in two parts for children subject to a child protection plan and who then become looked after.

1.6   Despite a number of challenges experienced during the pilot, the analysis wholeheartedly supports the roll out of this model for all child protection conferences across the County; this is also endorsed by Ofsted following their recent inspection in August 2017. However it is imperative that any roll out is carefully planned to ensure the workforce and partners are sufficiently trained and staff have the 'tools' to facilitate use of the model.

1.7   Claire Cartwright, Business Manager Safeguarding and Review, is the operational lead for the pilot and is the primary author of this report. Karen Mason and Yvonne Latham, Support Services Managers, have written the sections throughout the report which relate to business support.

2. Introduction & Background Context

2.1 The way in which child protection conferences have been convened in Staffordshire has remained unchanged for many years. It is important to acknowledge however, applying the same approach does not in any way suggest Staffordshire have conducted conferences ineffectively. Furthermore Staffordshire was graded as, '*good*' during the Ofsted inspections in 2014 and more recently in August 2017. As a forward thinking authority Staffordshire were receptive to exploring a revised model for child protection conferences. The rationale for the revision is set out below.

2.2 In recent years a number of Ofsted inspections of Local Authorities have identified concerns in relation to a lack of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) outcome focused plans for children who are Looked After and those who are subject to child protection planning. Furthermore parents also expressed concerns they did not understand what was expected of them during child protection planning on the basis the outline plan lacked clarity of expectations and were often vague.

2.3 In 2016 the two Business Managers of the Independent Chairperson's Service undertook a 'true for us' exercise and audited over 70 outline plans (decisions and recommendations) from Initial Child Protection Conferences convened in November 2015 and March 2016. The overall findings of both audits concurred with Ofsted's concerns. There were too many recommendations which were not SMART. Furthermore minutes of conferences were too lengthy and generally not informative. The audit identified some minutes were 30 pages in length.

2.4 In seeking to address this and more importantly, to ensure that parents, carers and children feel engaged and are empowered to fully participate in the process, a new conference model was piloted in the Chesterton and Madeley Safeguarding Units (SSU) from 1st March to 30th June 2017. This particular team was chosen on the basis of the high volume of child protection referrals; therefore providing a reflective representative sample that could be used comparatively across the organisation.

2.5 The new conference model is based on the Three Houses Model (Weld in Calder, 2008) which is an information gathering tool that supports risk assessment. Further details of this model are contained in the appendix.

2.6 The model creates the opportunity to thoroughly explore an individual's situation and is based upon a Maori model of health, resilience theory and solution focused theory. Use of the model requires a belief that people are capable of change and requires a strengths-based practice approach focusing not only upon strengths to build upon but also vulnerabilities that lead to increased danger and harm. The model is also designed to encourage transparency and inclusiveness when working with families thus moving away from a practice of, 'doing to' rather than, 'doing with' approach.

2.7 The pilot required a whole systems change approach to the way conferences were delivered in the Newcastle area. For example, the formal 'board room' type table was removed from the conference rooms. Instead the chairs in the room were set out in a

semi-circle and those chairing the conferences used flip charts on the wall to record key information conveyed during the conference. The primary aim of this was for parents / carers to experience the 'visual impact' of seeing the **worries**, **positives** and **changes** required clearly displayed in front of them throughout the duration of the conference.

2.8   Feedback sought from other Local Authorities confirmed that both families and professionals valued this approach on the basis of it having an immediate, direct impact particularly when the risks are identified. Information recorded on the flip charts was also colour coded for example; red was used to highlight **worries**, green to highlight the **positives** within the family and blue for the **changes.** The minutes of the conference were also coloured coded and mirrored the colours used on the flip charts, thus creating an immediate visual impact for the reader. The invite letters to parents and partner agencies specifically referenced the Three Houses Model and again was colour coded. An example of a redacted set of minutes is located in the appendix.

2.9   In conjunction with the audit activity cited above, the two Business Managers also undertook a process review for child protection business processes in partnership with business support services. This was on the basis there was a significant amount of 'processes' being undertaken in order to arrange, convene and process a child protection conference. The impact of the new model upon business support activity is discussed in 5.5.

2.10.   From the outset the pilot was aware of the need not only to focus on clearly identifying the risks in the outline plan, but to also identify the outcomes that needed to be achieved. However the pilot meant a complete change of mind set for the professionals involved. Therefore the priority was to focus on professionals developing their understanding of the risks first and foremost. It is pertinent to highlight that whilst the word 'outcome' is not specifically contained in the decision and recommendations/ outline plan, the expectations of both parents and professionals are evident. Required 'outcomes' will be contained in any proposed roll out of the model.

3. Development work to inform the pilot

3.1 The table below sets out activity undertaken to inform the pilot prior to the launch in March 2017.

January 2016	Audit undertaken of outline plans from Initial Child Protection Conferences Mark Chesterman, Birmingham University delivered a seminar on achieving SMART planning for children at the Independent Chairperson's Service Development Day Business Process Review for child protection processes commenced
April 2016	Joint development session between Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent City Council's Independent Chairperson's Services regarding SMART planning and child protection conference minutes
June 2016	Further audit undertaken of outline plans from Initial Child Protection Conferences Visit to Hackney Children's Services to discuss social pedagogy and the conference model
July 2016	Independent Chairperson's Service Development Day specifically in relation to SMART planning. New conference agenda developed Business Process Review for Child Protection Completed
October 2016	Presentation delivered to Families First (Newcastle SSU) about background history & the new model
November 2016	Two development days held with a cross section of Families First staff to develop conference agenda / confirm new smarter business processes, amend child protection leaflets currently available / discuss request for conference process
December 2016	Interim policies and procedures for the pilot developed
January 2017	Planned meeting with external partners cancelled due to lack of attendance – Meeting with partner agencies subsequently held on 26.1.2017 – documents developed at November 2016 development day, shared and agreement obtained for their use in the pilot Meeting with the County Managers regarding implementation of the model for Child in Need. Decision to await final analysis of the pilot before progressing further.

February 2017	Further work undertaken internally – discussions/emails with staff Mock child protection conference held Meeting held with a grandmother who is the primary carer of her granddaughter (previously approved as a foster carer), no longer involved with the Local Authority but who has previously experienced the child protection process. The new model was deemed to be more inclusive and she supported its use. Training provided to the Police specifically in relation to the report they produce and how they convey information at ICPC. Attendance at SLA meeting with Police and Stoke on Trent Independent Chairperson's Service to discuss exclusion criteria
March 2017	Newcastle Child Protection Pilot launched
April 2017	Mid point review meeting held with Families First staff – due to difficulties of directly meeting with partner agencies an email exchange was undertaken. Multi agency agreement to use the model for all existing child protection conferences in Newcastle from 1.6.2017 obtained
June/July 2017	Separate discussions held with staff (internal) final feedback sought. Email exchange to partner agencies sent three times due to lack of response, unfortunately the response rate remains low with only 4 responses received to date. Analysis of parental/professional feedback also undertaken

4.   Changes to practice

4.1   The pilot was aimed at encouraging professionals to work and think in a different way. For example based on the information available to that professional, what was it they were **worries** about for that child? What were the **positives** in the family and what **changes** were needed to reduce the risks to the child? The ultimate aim of this approach was to encourage a more focused discussion/debate at the actual conference.

4.2   Initial consideration was given to developing one multi agency report to conference; however partner agencies were not in support of this due to the different focus of the individual agencies. However the Police did decide to amend their report to initial conference to include the Three Houses Model. In the absence of having one multi agency report, the agency invite letters were amended to include details of the Three Houses Model with a specific request

that agency reports contain information regarding **worries**, **positives** and **changes** required.

4.3   The social work report to conference could not be revised at this stage due to the upgrade of care director; therefore in the social workers analysis section of the report, they were required to include the Local Authority's **worries**, **positives** and **changes** required. In addition social workers were requested to ask parents if they wanted to complete a learning styles questionnaire in order to determine their preferred learning style. Once a questionnaire is completed the scoring determines whether the individual is a visual, auditory, kinaesthetic/physical learner. This approach has not been used in Staffordshire previously. In light of a recent serious case review in the Local Authority which found the social work intervention did not identify a parent had a particular learning need in addition to parental feedback during Ofsted inspections which highlights some parents do not understand what is expected of them from the plans produced, this was an opportunity to understand how the individual parent receives information. Unfortunately due to the low completion rate at the time of writing this report, it is difficult to offer an analysis regarding any benefits of using the questionnaire for all future assessments.

4.4   Social Workers were asked to include an eco-map and genogram when submitting their assessments to conference. This then enables conference to have a wider understanding of the family support networks.

4.5   Prior to the pilot, a major area of frustration for minute takers was around obtaining timely and complete information from social workers regarding who needed to be invited to child protection conferences. The Police service level agreement and timely invitations to parents and other professionals was frequently compromised by missing or incomplete information in addition to late notifications also being received from social workers.

4.6   One form entitled 'ICPC notification form' was devised for social workers to complete within 24 hours of the strategy discussion. The notification clearly identifies agencies that are mandatory and lists agencies whose attendance the SSCB needs to monitor, and also includes information required to request a Police report. Once the document has been received by business support and accurately completed, business support send out invitations within 24 hours. Previously invitations were sent out late giving parents / professionals very limited time to arrange their attendance.

4.7   The pilot introduced a revised child protection minute template. A large part of the minutes are now produced as bullet points with much of the key information, including the decisions and recommendations being documented on the flip chart paper. The minutes are colour coded and the sections in relation to **worries**, **positives** and **changes** are highlighted in the respective colours.

4.8 Laptops were introduced in conferences for the minute takers with the aim being to reduce the amount of time taken by them as they originally wrote notes during the conference and then spent a number of hours afterwards typing them.

4.9 Invitations to child protection conferences have been undertaken outside of the electronic system and are now a word document as a place-holding assessment record in Care Director. The decisions and recommendations are still completed as an assessment in Care Director which must continue as this assessment feeds reports and the safeguarding dashboard.

4.10 The business process review was undertaken with the primary aim of creating efficiencies, providing business continuity and consistency and making best use of workers time.

5. Analysis of the data

Figure 1 **Total number of ICPC's/ Review Conferences/ Dual Process Meetings held from 1st March to 30th June 2017**
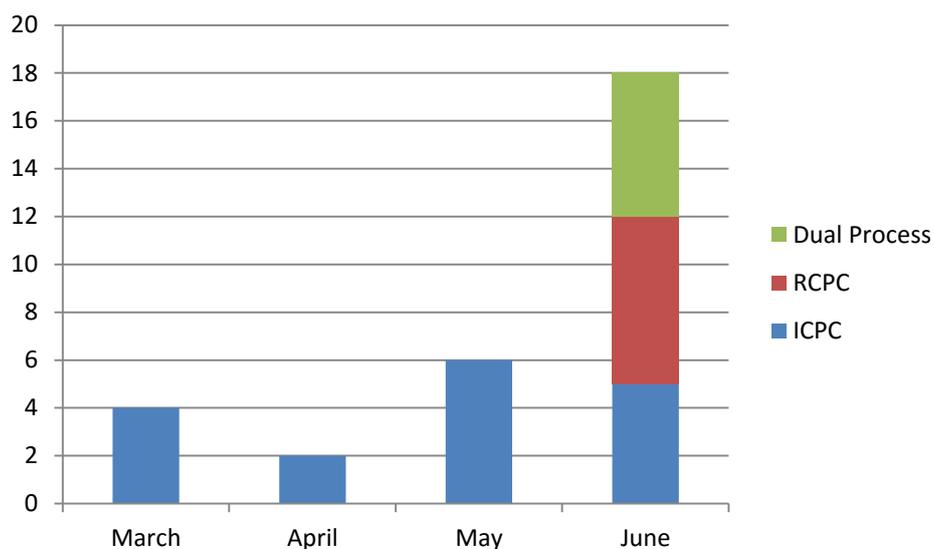
5.1 In total there were 17 initial child protection conferences for 27 children, 7 child protection review conferences for 11 children and 6 dual process meetings for 6 children during the period of 1st March to 30th June 2017.

5.2 Of the 17 initial child protection conferences (ICPC) a dip sample of multi-agency reports to 10 conferences was audited. The majority did not contain information regarding the agency's **worries**, identified **positives** and what **changes** were required. However agencies attending conference did have a clear mind-set regarding the requirements of the Three Houses model. Police reports to ICPC's did contain details of the Three Houses Model.

5.3　Of the 17 initial child protection conferences a dip sample of 10 social work reports to conference was audited (the same cohort as the multi-agency reports discussed in 5.2) 60 % did not contain information regarding the Local Authority's **worries**, identified **positives** and the required **changes**. Furthermore in the majority of cases the eco map, genogram and learning styles were not completed. Towards the latter stages of the pilot compliance in these three areas has increased due to further discussions with the Social Workers, Team Managers and County Manager.

5.4　When the new notification to request conference form was completed correctly the process worked well with invitations being sent much earlier. This allowed the service level agreement with the Police to be easily met. However, there were still a number of occasions when Social Workers missed out Health Visitors, School Nurses and GP's.

5.4.1　65% of notifications from the social workers for initial child protection conferences were received within the agreed timescale (24 hours of the strategy discussion). For those not received in timescales, the timeframes were: 2 received 1 day late, 2 received 2 days late and 2 received 4 days late. Whilst 6 notifications were outside of the agreed timeframe, this is a significant improvement on previous practice which has directly led to parents/professionals being invited in a timelier manner.

5.4.2　Where notifications were received by business support within timescale, they achieved 100% in sending out invitations within the agreed timescales (48 hours of the strategy discussion).

5.5　The use of the laptop and the revised template for the minutes created a more time efficient way of working for the minute takers. The estimated time saving for the minute taker is as follows:

- Decision and Recommendations (outline plan) - reduced from an average of 1.5 hours to 30 minutes: 1 hour saving
- Minutes for single child - reduced from an average of 3 to 4 hours to 1.5 hours: 1.5 to 2.5 hour saving
- Minutes for sibling group of 3 plus - reduced from an average of 7 hours to 4 hours: 3 hour saving
- Length of conferences - reduced from an average of 2.5 / 3 hours to 45 minutes-1.5 hours: 1 hour saving
- Per conference: saving a minimum of 3.5 hours up to a potential of 5.45 hours

5.6　　Further benefits include:

- Clearer, more concise minutes produced for all parties
- Format of minute template is quicker and easier to use

- Use of laptops allows more efficient way of working
- Conferences are more focused
- Time saving achieved
- A County wide roll out has no identified Care Director issues
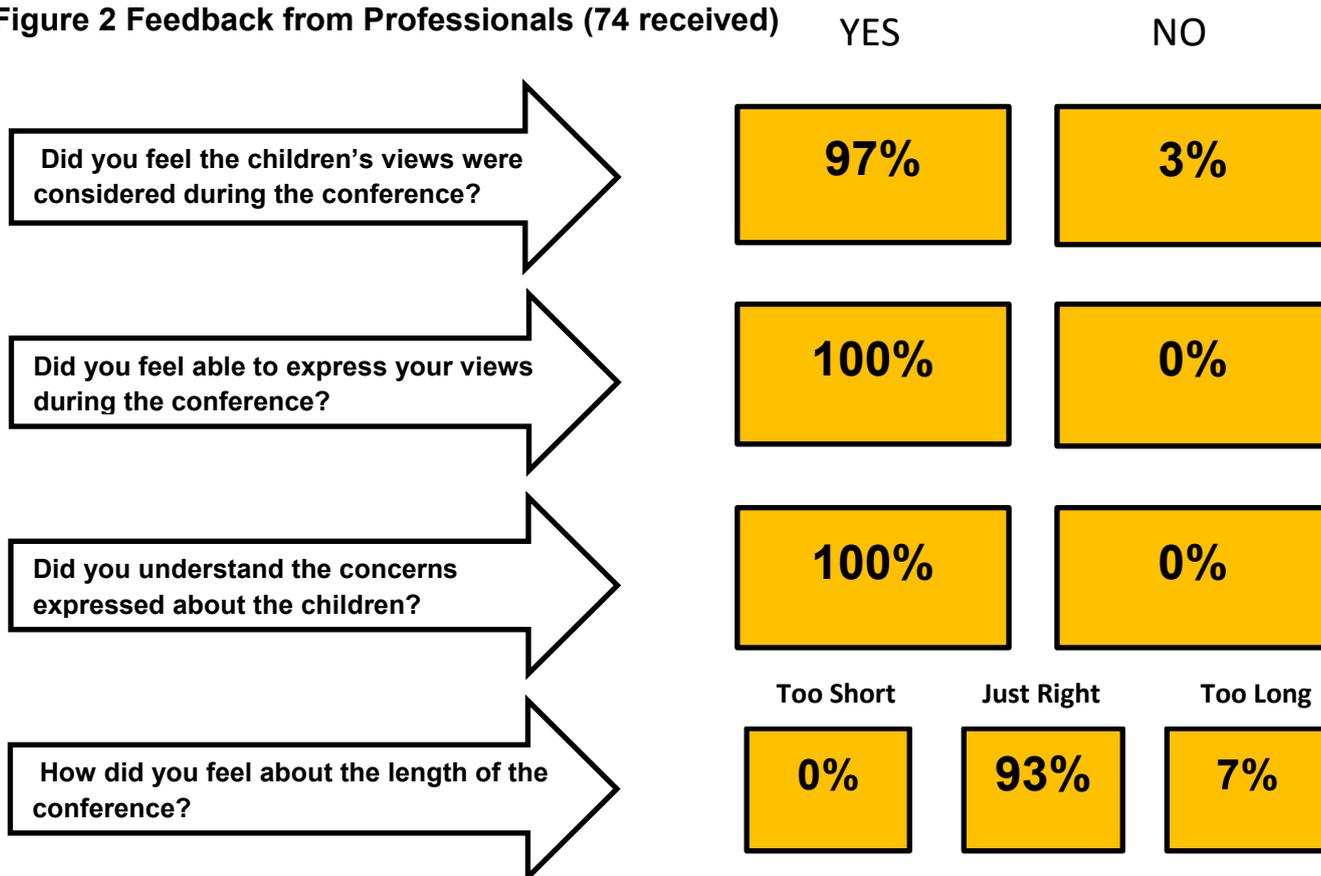
5.7 An analysis of the recommendations and the number of pages of minutes revealed that risks could now be easily identified rather than being lost in a 'list' as was previous practice; that minutes were now focused and significantly reduced in unnecessary content. Furthermore when child protection plans ended at conference, the model was positively used to develop the outline child in need plan.

5.8 The business process review identified a very interesting picture in terms of the amount of processes being undertaken in order to arrange and convene a child protection conference. In total 53 known steps were taken from the Social Workers requesting the conference to the minutes of the conference being distributed by business support. 60% of the 53 steps were identified as 'inspection' thus not adding value to the business. There was a substantial amount of waste in the processes, allowing for checking and re-checking of work and passing tasks between team members. This has been significantly reduced in the pilot to 18 steps which includes the mid point review undertaken by the Conference Chair 3 months after the conference has taken place in order to review progress of the child protection plan. In light of Families First transformation plans, it may be of considerable benefit to undertake a similar process in the social work teams given the benefits identified in the pilot.

5.9 In terms of roll out, all of the chairs have now received training about the new model and the minute takers from the Biddulph and Kidsgrove area offices have minuted conferences in Newcastle under the pilot. Therefore the Moorlands may be an ideal place to begin roll out.

6. Analysis of feedback

6.1 From the initial stages of this pilot the intention was to ensure an inclusive approach to developing the model. In order to achieve this, a number of meetings/ contacts have been held to develop, to implement and to review the model. Details are contained in section 3.

6.2   Figures 2 and 3 below evidence parental/ professional and young people's views of the child protection conferences held from 1st March to 30th June 2017. On the whole feedback has proved to be in favour of adopting the new model. One family whose children had previously been subject to child protection plans expressed their view the model was, "much better" than the previous conferences held, on the basis the risks were much clearer.

6.3   Two feedback forms were received from a sibling group of two young people who attended their conference. Both independently said they knew about the meeting, they were able to talk to the chair beforehand, they felt able to join in the meeting, understood what was going to happen and felt listened to during the meeting. One young person wrote, "Sometimes when getting the point cross they didn't understand what was said and twisted somethings".

6.4   The minute takers reported they enjoyed the revised way of working; they felt better informed and have all expressed a desire to continue with this method of working. One minute taker said, "Please don't make me go back to the old way of working". It is important to acknowledge that the minute takers in the Newcastle office are long standing members of staff who have well established ways of working. They were naturally very anxious at the beginning of the pilot about the new way of working; however they have all embraced the introduction of laptops, the revised minute template and the innovative method of producing minutes. The chairs have also fully embraced the pilot and shared similar anxieties at the beginning of the process; given this was a completely different way of working.

6.5   At the end of the pilot Families First staff and partner agencies were invited to provide their feedback. Families First staff support the use of the Three Houses Model given its inclusive approach; however identified some challenges which are detailed in section 7. Whilst the response rate from partner agencies was limited those that were received overwhelmingly supported the introduction of the new model.

6.6   A reason for the low response rate from partner agencies could be that on balance, people generally provide feedback where they have felt there has been a negative impact. Therefore it could be hypothesised the lack of response is actually a support of the model.

Figure 2 Feedback from Professionals (74 received)

	YES	NO
Did you feel the children's views were considered during the conference?	97%	3%
Did you feel able to express your views during the conference?	100%	0%
Did you understand the concerns expressed about the children?	100%	0%

	Too Short	Just Right	Too Long
How did you feel about the length of the conference?	0%	93%	7%

6.7   Additional comments from professionals included:

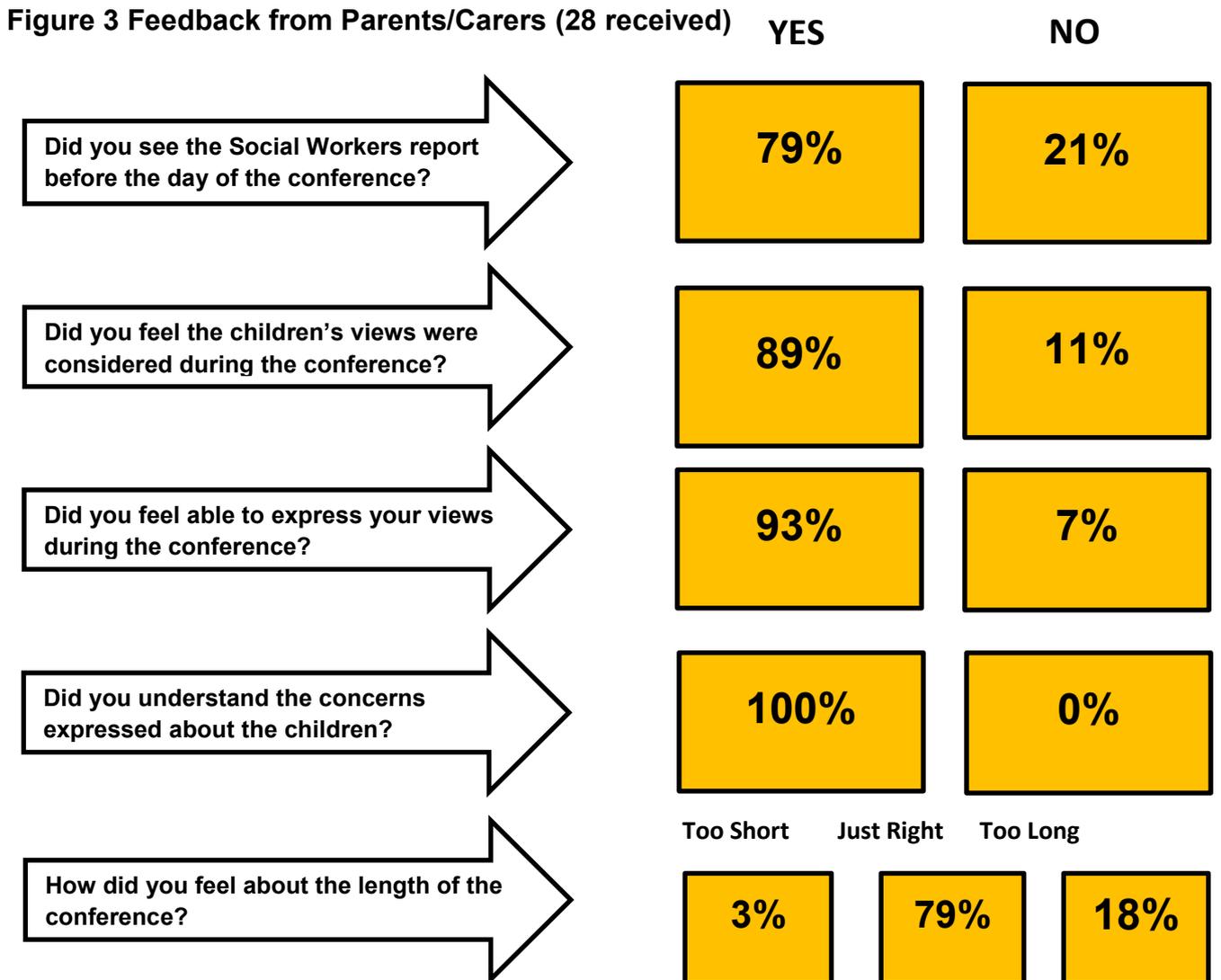"The format of the meeting worked well…appeared to put parents at ease more so than the formal setting"

"Visual and process engaged parents throughout, clear strengths but not minimising risks"

"The Three Houses Model positive – it was a much more relaxed environment, parents' views taken into account at every opportunity"

"Good use of solution focused [therapy] to gain positives, concerns and develop plan, parents included in a more parent friendly manner whilst still addressing concerns"

"No table is proving difficult…supporting parent going through the report was difficult…with parents struggling with reading and writing"

"An excellent productive way of leading the meeting, the new format allows people to speak and making notes on large pieces of paper focuses the group and defuses potentially volatile outbreaks. A much better way of conducting a conference"

Figure 3 Feedback from Parents/Carers (28 received)

	YES	NO
Did you see the Social Workers report before the day of the conference?	79%	21%
Did you feel the children's views were considered during the conference?	89%	11%
Did you feel able to express your views during the conference?	93%	7%
Did you understand the concerns expressed about the children?	100%	0%

	Too Short	Just Right	Too Long
How did you feel about the length of the conference?	3%	79%	18%

6.8   Additional comments from parents included:

"Try and put the chairs in a circle as to reduce long head movements. Will make it much easier to communicate"

"I felt I didn't get much of a chance to express my feelings…I do have a lot of thoughts… I don't want my baby taken away from me"

"Thought it went very well"

"Needs enforcing better, good ideas but needs following through CP plan"

"The new set up is much better"

7   Challenges

7.1   Taking a whole systems approach, the challenges for County wide roll out identified in the pilot are captured below:

- There will be practical issues for a number of conference venues in attempting to achieve the 'horseshoe' lay out and use of flip charts due to room size and fixed nature of some tables
- Minute takers do not have their own laptops; therefore for the pilot they had to borrow the independent chairpersons laptops
- Difficulties with lack of data points/ Wi-Fi led to occasional data loss
- The engagement of partner agencies at the various stages of the pilot
- Internally having no access to the network meant electronic calendars could not be checked which would have been advantageous in identifying availability for future conferences
- Encouraging Social Workers to think differently when working with families and when writing the assessment. Both social work teams initially lacked full engagement in embracing the new way of working despite being provided with full information about the requirements of the pilot. It is acknowledged however both teams have capacity issues which will undoubtedly impact upon them
- Different chairing styles of the Independent Conference Chairs which highlighted the need for a consistent application of the policy and process for the model.
- Dual process meetings were more efficient as all of the professionals and the family were only required to attend one meeting, as opposed to two, which considered the child protection plan and the care plan given the children looked after status. However for business support the process proved time consuming and confusing. The user specific process guides for business support staff amounted to some 17 pages. Therefore this area will undoubtedly require further refinement.

8   Recommendations

8.1   For the Three Houses Model to be used in every Initial and Review Child Protection Conference across the County and for consideration for the model to also be used in Child in Need.

Recommendation	By Whom	Timescales
Presentation of the report to SSCB and FFMT	Claire Cartwright	August 2017 / Early September 2017
Develop a video of a mock conference to be used as a training material for roll out	Claire Cartwright / Carrie Wain	Late August 2017 / Early September 2017
To update the SSCB Policy: Initial Child Protection Conferences, Managing Conferences and Child Protection Review Conferences	Claire Cartwright	Early September 2017
To plan roll out the new model across the County on a district by district basis for all initial and review conferences (planning to include: review agenda / notification form/venues/ IT needs/ training of staff/partner agencies/add question to feedback forms re timeliness of core groups minutes/CP plans received/to confirm continued use of the learning styles questionnaire)	Claire Cartwright / Caroline Dunn / County Managers (SSU) / Steve Lycett	September 2017
Roll out of the new model to commence	Claire Cartwright / Caroline Dunn/ County Managers (SSU) / Steve Lycett	1st October 2017
Finance to be identified for the purchase of laptops for minute takers and access to the network either via data point or WIFI	Richard Hancock / Steve Lycett	September 2017
Working group for dual process meetings to be developed to agree the process	Claire Cartwright / Caroline Dunn/ County Managers (SSU) / Steve Lycett/ Karen Mason	September 2017

Working group to be established for new model to be introduced in Child in Need Strategy	Claire Cartwright/ Caroline Dunn/ Teresa Murray/ Chris Heeley/ Karen Mason/ Karen Johnson / Dave Bates	November / December 2017
Multi-Agency Audit of outline child protection plans at ICPC (County Wide)	Carrie Wain	4th October 2017
Consideration to be given to complete a business process review for the SSU's	Claire Cartwright/ Caroline Dunn/ Teresa Murray/ Chris Heeley/ Karen Mason/ Karen Johnson / Dave Bates	During the course of the transformation programme

9   Appendix

Three Houses Model

The Three Houses
Tool - Building Safety

Initial and Review Child Protection Agenda (including learning styles questionnaire)

Three Houses Model
Conference Agenda I

Learning Style
Indicators.docx

Parents / Agency Invite Letters

Initial Child
Protection Conferenc

Initial Child
Protection Conferenc

Redacted Minutes of an Initial Child Protection Conference

Redacted CP minutes
for new model.docx