

# Protective Behaviours: A Toolkit for Keeping Children and Young People Safe:

## A Report on Protective Behaviours Practice in Brighton and Hove

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## **Executive Summary**

This report sets out to explore how the Protective Behaviours, safety awareness programme, is being used by practitioners in Brighton and Hove to support work with children, young people and families. It also considers how the programme could be further developed in a more co-ordinated way in the future.

The Report provides examples of how Protective Behaviours is being used in a variety of settings and contexts across the UK and considers whether there are any evidence based outcomes for the work.

Protective Behaviours is described as a practical and down to earth approach to personal safety which aims to build self-esteem and an increased confidence and assertiveness relating to feeling and being safe. It teaches a range of safety skills including the ability to recognise when we are not feeling safe and providing tools to enable individuals to take action and seek help when they need it.

The programme fits alongside a number of national and local priorities, including every child matters, SEAL and the Child Health Improvement Programme because of it's emphasis on three key strands:-

1. Supporting emotional literacy and well-being.
2. Developing Resilience and life skills
3. Building skills to keep children, young people and families safe.

Protective Behaviours has been well established in the UK since the 1990's and there is a national organisation, Protective Behaviours UK which is the umbrella organisation for practice across the country. Protective Behaviours has been developed in a number of contexts including with young people at risk, in schools to promote personal safety and abuse prevention and for domestic abuse prevention work.

In Brighton and Hove, large numbers of staff have received training in Protective Behaviours over the years and there are some excellent examples of good practice being taken forward by individual practitioners. These include work in early year's settings and children's centres with parents and children, to run a nurture group for children who are displaying difficult or challenging behaviour towards a sibling, pet or other family member; work in schools to address bullying and develop peer support schemes, and the development of work to promote safety for children with special needs. The programme has also been used locally to support child protection work with children and families and in work with adolescents at risk.

The Report argues that this positive work could be more effectively and widely used across the Trust if there was a more co-ordinated approach to the development of Protective Behaviours work and an investment in developing and disseminating practice and resources.

## **Introduction**

Protective Behaviours, a Safety Awareness Programme, has been delivered in Brighton and Hove since the early 1990's when a small group of practitioners underwent training provided by International Trainer Di Margetts. Since that time hundreds of staff have been trained in health, education, school, community and social care settings. Yvette Queffurus and Wendy Guest (Health visitor and senior nurse consultant child protection) have been training health staff for a number of years. Safety Net, a local registered child safety charity (previously First Stop) has also been running training courses for the statutory and voluntary sectors and delivering Protective Behaviours work in schools and communities since 1995 as part of a community based approach to keeping children safe. In 2000 a conference entitled "Making a Difference: Working Together to Keep Children Safe" which had a focus on Protective Behaviours work was held in Brighton and attracted 160 local and national delegates.

The 2 Day basic training is currently being delivered by Safety Net as part of the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge and is acknowledged as one of the key practice delivery skills for Brighton and Hove staff along with cognitive behavioural therapy and Brief solution focussed therapy.

The aim of this report is to explore what Protective Behaviours is and how the programme is currently being used in practice elsewhere in the UK and across the Trust. It will explore whether there are any evidenced based outcomes for the work and how the programme could be further developed in a more co-ordinated way in the future.

## What is Protective Behaviours?

Protective Behaviours is a safety awareness Programme for children, young people and adults which aims to build self-esteem and an increased confidence and assertiveness relating to feeling and being safe.

It is a practical and down to earth approach to personal safety which was first developed in America as an abuse prevention programme by a school social worker as a response to young children talking about situations in which they didn't feel safe. The programme is widely used in schools across America and in Australia, where many of the States have a Protective Behaviours Consultancy group run in partnership with the state police. However, other ways of using the programme have since been developed, most notably with victims (and perpetrators) of bullying, crime and domestic violence as well as to address issues around risk taking behaviour and peer pressure.

The Protective Behaviours (PBs) process starts from the belief that we cannot be scared into feeling safe. It therefore avoids a focus on scary scenarios and rigid sets of rules for how to deal with unsafe situations (which tend to induce fear and guilt). Instead, it teaches an ability to recognise when we are not feeling safe, and provides skills and tools to enable individuals to take action and get help when they need it. Protective Behaviours also recognises that life is about taking risks and trying new things and that this is part of healthy development and an important life skill.

Protective Behaviours is based on two themes which are used to teach and reinforce the basic concepts on which the process is based.

“WE ALL HAVE THE RIGHT TO FEEL SAFE”

“THERE IS NOTHING SO AWFUL THAT WE CAN'T TALK WITH SOMEONE ABOUT IT”

Feeling safe is something that is generally not focussed on until the feeling has gone away and we start to feel uncomfortable or scared. The Protective Behaviours process helps people to identify what feeling safe is like for them and teaches the ability to recognise the difference between feeling safe, fun-scary feelings, risking on purpose and feeling unsafe.

The first Protective Behaviours theme '**We all have the right to feel safe**' reinforces not just individual rights, but the responsibility to make sure other people feel safe with us. This helps to promote the idea of responsible citizenship and encourages thoughtfulness of our own safety as well as developing empathy for the safety of others.

Protective Behaviours teaches awareness of what happens in our bodies when we start to feel uncomfortable or scared. These are called our bodies' **EARLY WARNING SIGNS**. They may include butterflies in the stomach, shaky knees, heart beating faster etc. The programme teaches recognition

of these body signals as an indicator that we may need to STOP THINK and TAKE ACTION.

Healthy lives involve an element of adventure and risk-taking. Often, when we do something fun-scary or take a calculated risk we can feel a bit unsafe and experience these same Early Warning Signs, *but there is a fundamental difference*. A fun-scary activity or calculated risk is *chosen*, and we have an element of *control* or a knowledge that there is a *time limit* (like on a roller coaster ride). Protective Behaviours therefore teaches us to ask ourselves whether we have **choice** and **control** or a **time limit** in a situation.

Sometimes the reason that we don't take notice of our Early Warning Signs is because of the messages that we get from all around us about how we think we should feel, think and behave. These might be about powerful stereotypes or assumptions which can lead us to make decisions that are not in our best interests and don't support us in feeling safe.

The second Theme '**There is nothing so awful (or too little) that we can't talk with someone about it**' introduces the idea of personal support networks of people that we could go to when not feeling safe and a process for how we might identify those people.

A support network aims for of a minimum of four people in addition to any adults at home. Strategies for checking out potential network people and building networks are explored including one-step removed questions and the use of our Early Warning Signs. The strategy of persistence is also reinforced to ensure that we get the help we need even if other people on our network are too busy or don't listen.

## **Keeping Safe Strategies**

Protective Behaviours uses a one step removed problem-solving model to help develop awareness of possible strategies to use in unsafe situations. For example 'How could someone keep themselves safe even if ...?' Many types of scenarios from minor predicaments to potentially dangerous and abusive situations can be explored in this way. The approach encourages problem solving skills and active thinking about developing a safety plan that will work for that person.

Strategies for Abuse Prevention also include the 3 Safety Questions: Does this give me a yes or a no feeling? Does an adult at home know where I am? Can I get help if I need it? Other strategies include teaching the concept of private and public as a way of exploring personal space and body privacy and safe and unsafe secrets.

Protective Behaviours has been used in a wide variety of settings by Teachers, Parents, the Police, Social Workers, Play and Youth Workers, Health Visitors and Community Workers to name but a few. The Protective Behaviours process has been used and adapted for many settings. For example, as a counselling technique, for conflict resolution skills, bullying and abuse prevention, domestic violence and general keeping

safe training. The skills and strategies are universal and suited to all people regardless of age, abilities, culture or religion.

### **Why Protective Behaviours is different to other safety programmes**

Stranger danger is a safety programme which only deals with the potential dangers that strangers pose to children. However, research shows that children are significantly more at risk from people they know. Therefore focusing children's ideas on stranger danger potentially leaves them vulnerable to other forms of danger and abuse. Protective Behaviours on the other hand aims to teach children and young people a range of safety skills and techniques which can help them in a wide variety of situations.

Unlike some other safety programmes, Protective Behaviours has a strong emphasis on developing an internal measure of whether we feel safe or not and on developing individually based strategies and solutions. This is in contrast to many other programmes which focus on external rules for people to follow, such as 'run, yell, and tell'. While there is a place for rules, particularly with young children, this does not encourage the development of safety awareness as a life skill, nor does it accommodate those situations where it may not be possible to follow the safety rules. For example if someone is so afraid that they are unable to run away.

The further advantage of a broad based safety programme is that the skills it teaches, while applicable to abusive situations, can be practiced daily in more everyday safety scenarios such as feeling worried, bullied or stressed. Research indicates that this makes it more probable that taught strategies can be utilised if a more serious safety situation arises.

## Where does Protective Behaviours fit within National and Local Strategies?

Protective Behaviours supports a number of national strategies because of its emphasis on three key strands:-

1. It supports **emotional well-being** by developing awareness of feelings and building self-esteem. This means that Protective Behaviours is very complementary to emotional literacy programmes for children such as SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) and PSE (Personal and Social Education). It also supports the recommendations and key objectives of the child Health Promotion Programme with its emphasis on improving protective factors, building warmth, self esteem and secure attachments. The programme further links to key elements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum, specifically the areas which focus on Personal Social and Emotional Development.
2. Protective Behaviours helps to develop **resilience** by building life skills and developing strategies to deal with difficult situations and manage risk. This fits alongside a number of studies which indicate an increase in childhood depression and ill health and a decrease in the acquisition of risk assessing strategies, because of the current trend for discouraging children and young people to experience a normal range of risk taking behaviour. The programme is very complementary to the resilience therapy framework and in many ways provides tools to deliver this.
3. The Protective Behaviours process won a Presidential Award for safety programmes in the United States of America. The programme helps to build skills to help **keep ourselves safe** by developing safety awareness and empowering people to make safer choices and learn safety strategies. This makes Protective Behaviours an effective programme for addressing a range of safety issues from bullying to child abuse prevention. In line with government recommendations, it is a programme which encourages the whole community to take responsibility for keeping children safe.

## How Protective Behaviours fit within the Every Child Matters framework

Protective Behaviours aims to make a positive contribution to helping children stay safe, be healthy, make a positive contribution, enjoy and achieve – objectives embedded within the Every Child Matters Framework (2004), the Government's programme for a national framework to support the "joining up of children's services. Children and young people live their lives across a wide range of social contexts – within the family, at school and across the community. Helping children to operate as effective social actors where they can be and can stay safe whilst also encouraging self

confidence, self reliance and exploration is a significant challenge for children, their families and society. (See also Appendix 1)

## **Examples of National Practice**

Protective Behaviours has been well established in the UK since the 1990's and there is a national organisation, Protective Behaviours UK which is the Umbrella organisation for practice across the country.

[www.protectivebehaviours.co.uk](http://www.protectivebehaviours.co.uk)

Protective Behaviours first arrived in the U.K in the early 90's pioneered by an Australian trainer and practitioner, Di Margetts who was invited to train police officers in Milton Keynes, with the programme then spreading into schools and then other areas of practice. A search of the internet reveals the range of settings in which Protective Behaviours is currently being used. Some examples are given here to illustrate.

### **With Young People at risk**

In many areas of the country, the police are the key drivers for taking forward Protective Behaviours work. The emerging restorative justice movement in the UK has been strongly influenced by the philosophy of Protective Behaviours. Thames Valley Police, who were responsible for introducing Protective Behaviours to the UK, were instrumental in forming links between Protective Behaviours and restorative justice, in particular through the Caution Plus! Initiative, which works with young shoplifters in Milton Keynes.

In other examples, The Devon and Cornwall Constabulary Youth Issues Team has used the Protective Behaviours process as the basis for it's PROBE Project which looks at tackling risk identification and safety management for young people.

Feeling Safe – Standing Strong is a group work programme based on the Protective Behaviours process that has been running in HMP Wood hill since February 2007. The objectives of the programme are to reduce re-offending by helping participants develop skills to keep themselves and others safe.

Protective Behaviours is also being delivered at the safety centre in Milton Keynes as part of their drugs education and prevention programme.

'Bursting the Bubble', is a piece of work which was developed by a health project in Leeds as a starting point for work with young women around preventing abusive and violent relationships. Protective Behaviours has also been championed by the Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation in their work with children and families around domestic abuse. They have produced a number of resources to support this work.

## **In schools to promote personal safety**

The most common method of delivery for Protective Behaviours work is through curriculum based work in schools. Protective Behaviours itself offers a range of curriculum based materials for Key Stage s 1, 2 and 3. The Safe Hands Programme based on Protective Behaviours is delivered to children in early years and primary schools around the country. Schools based work also includes programmes delivered in The Wirral, funded by the Children's Fund, in Warwickshire through the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and in Milton Keynes delivered via the Police.

### **Case Study 1**

*"I thought our three year olds were too young to do this, but in groups of two we worked on the concept and I was staggered at who the children chose as their trusted adults and their reasons why each person was suitable. I felt it was ok at this stage for them to name their teddy or their pet because as they review their safe hands network over time more significant suitable adults will start to emerge. Our head teacher wants each teacher all the way up the school to continue helping the children develop their safe hands. It's so simple but could have a phenomenally positive impact."*

Feedback from Safe Hands session

Protective Behaviours work at Sponne secondary school in Northants is used as a whole school approach and in particular to support schools in meeting the needs of children with challenging or anxious behaviour. In an evaluation of the work young people said: " *I learnt not to be afraid and to stand up for myself, I'm in control because I've learned how to deal with problems*"

## **Child abuse prevention**

As previously stated, Protective Behaviours has its origins in abuse prevention and it has been promoted by some Local safeguarding Children's Boards as a part of their safeguarding training and strategy. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board in Warwickshire for example, has commissioned a project called the 'Taking Care Project' to deliver Protective Behaviours work to children in primary schools across the authority. The project involves Protective Behaviours training for teachers, a curriculum pack and lesson plans to teach strategies to children to help them to keep safe from abuse. The programme also includes sessions and materials to support parents in reinforcing safety messages at home.

## **Domestic Abuse Prevention**

The Helping Hands programme was developed by the Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation as a tool for working with children who had experienced domestic violence, although it has also been used extensively as a general safety awareness programme for children.

The BRAVE Project (Bradford reducing Anger and Violent Emotions) is delivering Protective Behaviours work to 7 – 11 year olds across Bradford and Wolverhampton, as part of its domestic violence prevention strategy. The aim of the work is to help children to develop safe relationships.

## **Examples of Practice in Brighton and Hove**

As previously stated, Protective Behaviours has been delivered in Brighton and Hove over a number of years and through a key group of enthused practitioners. Basic 2 day training is available through Safety Net and offered as part of the Common Core of skills and knowledge. Training to health staff has also been extensively undertaken by Yvette Queffurus and Wendy Guest where it is promoted as a personal safety programme for practitioners themselves as well as for their client groups.

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in Protective Behaviours because of its continued relevance to a number of key governmental agendas.

There are now several hundred workers across Brighton and Hove who have undertaken basic Protective Behaviours training, however tracking the take up in terms of general practice has proved problematic.

To try to address this issue, Safety Net has recently established a Protective Behaviours Network to capture some of the range of practice and to encourage practice sharing and development. Since the establishment of the Protective Behaviours Network it has been possible to identify some of the range of settings in which Protective Behaviours is being used to support children, young people and parents.

## **In Early Years settings**

### **'Feeling Good Feeling Safe' group work with parents**

Wendy Guest a local Health visitor based at Moulsecoomb children's centre has previously undertaken training and practice development work with Health visitors around Protective Behaviours work. This included producing a booklet for Health visitors to use with parents as a starting point for talking about 'Feeling and Keeping safe.'

More recently, she has been allocated 5 hours a week to focus on Protective Behaviours work in the Children's Centre. This has led to a

number of new initiatives, including a training day for staff coming together as a new integrated team and setting up a 5 week programme for parents of under 5's, called 'feeling good feeling safe' using Protective Behaviours as the main practice tool. Referrals to the group come from Health Visitors including parents who have previously attended a post natal depression group and also increasingly from social workers and family support workers. Wendy has also delivered PB training to health visitors who run the local post natal depression group.

The 'Feeling Good Feeling Safe' course has a strong emphasis on feelings work, and encouraging parents to notice their own and their children's feelings. Being emotionally aware, able to reflect and empathise is fundamental for good attachment and to improve the quality of infant/caregiver relationships. This is a key recommendation of The Child Health Promotion Programme and is an important element in the group.

Other sessions covered unwritten rules or expectations for parents, and managing our feelings, thoughts and behaviour as well as networks of support. The group is evaluated by asking parents to monitor how confident they felt before and after the course and aims to track any changes in parents' self-esteem. All parents undertaking the group reported improved confidence in keeping children safe and in feeling better about themselves. The group is set to be more thoroughly evaluated jointly with the University of Sussex this year.

*"I was brought up in an abusive family and had no-one to talk to. I am so grateful that I have been able to be part of this group and feel so strongly that this programme should be available to all children and parents"*  
Parent attending the group

*"It's simple, can be explained in basic terms and is very adaptable. Getting children and parents to listen to them selves and to think of a range of people they can talk to is so basic and important".* Health visitor

Several of the parents who took part in the group have been motivated to produce a safety message calendar which has been distributed across Brighton and Hove and are planning other Protective Behaviours events and resources.

### **Using Protective Behaviours to run a nurture group for children**

Debby Bond and Jacqui Catt, a Community Nursery Nurse and Early years worker based at Roundabout Children's Centre, have been running a nurture group for children who are displaying difficult or challenging behaviour towards a sibling, pet or other family member. The group was set up following a conference which looked at the link between animal and child abuse. The group uses Protective Behaviours to help children to explore their own feelings and the feelings of animals and what both

children and animals need to feel safe. Children are encouraged to explore how to deal with their feelings and how they can recognize early warning signs that tell us we are frightened or if animals are frightened. The group has been very successful and is monitoring the effectiveness of the course in terms of its impact on children's behaviour.

## **The Unemployed Centre Families Project**

Judy Simon, of The Unemployed Centre Families Project uses Protective Behaviours as the basis for workers, volunteers, children and parents feeling safe while working or using the crèche at the Unemployed Centre. Staff routinely receive training in Protective Behaviours from Safety Net as part of their induction process. The Protective Behaviours concepts are then both modelled by staff in their interactions with children, used as the basis for how the crèche runs during a session and directly applied through the use of story time, puppets, feelings work and to deal with situations of conflict between children. *"For babies and younger children, the PB's environment gives them a sense of safety and the opportunity for good contact and communication, choice and challenge."*

### **Outcomes for children at the crèche have included:**

1. Children more able to recognise when they feel safe/unsafe and act on it.
2. Children able to express feelings and to share how they feel appropriately.
3. Children able to identify and talk to their key worker and other trusted adults.
4. Children developing relationship making skills, tools for conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, self control, resilience.
5. Children feeling safe in the play/learning environment, experiencing well being and therefore able to focus and thus enjoy and achieve.
6. Workers and parents also able to share, support and learn from one another in a safe environment.
7. Family difficulties picked up on more quickly (preventative work), signs of abuse picked up on more quickly and acted on.

## **Using Protective Behaviours in school settings**

### **Protective Behaviours Work with 5 - 11's: Using Protective Behaviours in peer support work and playground buddy schemes**

Safety Net has undertaken a range of safety based initiatives in primary schools across Brighton and Hove. In the initial setting up of the charity, Protective Behaviours safety work was delivered to teachers and children in schools in East Brighton as a key element of the community based child abuse prevention programme, however this work has been scaled down due to a change in funding. Other areas of work have included the delivery of a safety through circle time programme, peer support schemes, consultation work with children on safe and unsafe places and their worries as well as specific anti-bullying work. A number of schools have achieved their Healthy schools silver status as a direct result of their safety work.

Safety Net currently offers a playground buddy training and support scheme to primary schools across Brighton and Hove. Playground buddies undertake a 4 session training which includes identifying their own early warning signs and discussing situations which make them feel unsafe, a safe/unsafe mapping exercise of the school playground, even if situations to help with problem solving difficult situations and Helping Hands of police checked adults in school who could help.

Safety continuums are used as an excellent way to demonstrate that we all feel differently in different situations. They can also be used to identify common challenges and facilitate discussion about potentially difficult situations and to explore 'what if' scenarios.

Safety Net are currently seeking funding to extend Protective Behaviours work in schools to address abuse prevention in line with the model developed in Warwickshire.

*"I like Protective Behaviours because it is a non-scary, non guilt inducing way of doing prevention work. It is really positive, encourages self confidence and teaches the children life-long skills"* Senior Nurse  
Consultant child protection

### **Protective Behaviours work with children with special needs**

The Cedar Centre has been looking at how Protective Behaviours could be used to support children with special educational needs. Chris Colby the Head teacher has adapted the materials to make them more visual and has recently piloted a number of Protective Behaviours lesson plans with children in years 5 + 6. The work has already highlighted some of the obstacles to children keeping safe, for example she found that most of the children did not know their address or date of birth. All children now have

a Helping Hand which is reviewed before Holiday times and she reports that she is already seeing children using the strategies in practice.

## **Protective Behaviours work to promote community child safety**

Safety Net has been using Protective Behaviours for over 12 years to encourage adults to take more responsibility for keeping children and young people safe. The First Stop Project, its predecessor used Protective Behaviours as a key methodology for promoting child safety and child abuse prevention in communities.

The two core themes are a strong message about the right of everyone in a community to feel safe and our responsibilities to help others to feel safe. Theme 2 is a challenge to many adults to think about what it might mean to be on a child's network and what we might need to do to support children and young people.

This community based work led to a number of community based safety events and projects including, a child safety forum of parents, group work for parents, a safer babysitting course, a community child safety day and community questionnaires. A key methodology for disseminating safety messages was through the use of brightly coloured posters, key rings, fridge magnets and resources with simple safety messages on them. This was a powerful tool in raising awareness of child safety issues in a community. This work is no longer carried out in a systematic way due to funding limitations.

## **Protective Behaviours as part of Child Protection work**

A local social work assistant undertook 8 Sessions of Protective Behaviours with a 9 year old girl A, who was considered to be at risk.

### **The Positive Outcomes for A were;**

*Learning to recognise and talk about her feelings.*

*Listening to her Early warning Signs*

*Having a Safe Network of people she could contact if she had her Early Warning Signs.*

*Strategies such as the 3 safety questions she could ask herself to help decide if a situation was safe and an understanding that it is her right to feel safe and no-one should make her feel unsafe.*

*Positive messages about how we own our bodies and they belong to us.*

*A also wanted to tell her friends the messages of Protective Behaviours and help them to understand how to keep safe.*

**Social work assistant**

RISE has also taken on Board the Protective Behaviours programme as part of its induction training for all staff and is using the programme in its work with women and children experiencing the effects of domestic abuse.

## **Protective Behaviours with young people**

### **A Young Carers Transition Group for Girls aged 11-13**

The young carers' project in Brighton ran a series of workshops for young women aged 11 – 13 using some Protective Behaviours concepts to explore feelings around being young carers, stressors and support networks.

One particularly popular and successful session involved using Unwritten Rules to explore the concept of body image and the pressures caused by media images. The young women did a collage exercise entitled 'The Perfect woman' where they could stick pictures from magazines, comments etc. The young women then explored where these ideals come from and whether they are helpful or not.

During another session the young women did a version of 'The Huge Bag of Worries' exercise where they wrote school worries on cards and put them into a school worries bag. These were then read out and placed onto sheets under different categories such as attendance/peers etc. The young women then identified networks of support in school and discussed strategies to help them with these problems

### **Examples of Local Need**

Evidence suggests that Protective Behaviours is currently being used effectively by individual practitioners but is not yet used across settings in a co-ordinated way.

Other requests for Protective Behaviours work have included:-

- A demand from other Health visitors for 'Feeling Good, Feeling Safe' groups for parents across the Trust
- Requests for 1:1 Protective Behaviours work with children as a result of Child Protection Plans.
- Interest from Youth workers about developing the programme as a means of working with young people around risk taking behaviour.
- Requests for more resources to help practitioners to develop their practice and evaluation tools to demonstrate effectiveness.

## Research on the effectiveness of Protective Behaviours

Although it was first devised with children and young people in mind, Protective Behaviours is now used with and has been found useful by people of all ages. Formal evaluation, however, has proved to be a challenge. Early studies on the effectiveness of the process in schools include Dwyer (1990) and Johnson (1995) on Australian schools and F Briggs "child protection programmes can they protect young children?" (1991) and "choosing between child protection programmes" (1994.) The findings suggest that the Protective Behaviours based programme was effective in increasing children's safety knowledge. However the success of the school based programmes related to the factors of social class, level of teacher commitment and parent participation, which was found to be particularly important in low socioeconomic areas.

One recent attempt at evaluation in the UK (Rose 2003) focused on the experience of teachers and students being introduced to Protective Behaviours in the classroom, rather than on any long-term effects on either group, although it included a comparative study of a school where the process is established and where improved relationships within the school were directly attributable to it. In other contexts, however, more headway has been made, and this includes the study by Harper et al (2002), where it is shown that people with learning disabilities are able to grasp Protective Behaviours concepts and show improved assertiveness as a result, and also Fardons (1999) discussion of how his use of the process with groups of disaffected young people in school 'provide [d] support to pupils and a forum in which to talk about issues that concern[ed] them'.

The Taking Care Warwickshire scheme run by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board was independently evaluated and found that following the programme; *"children take their personal safety and the messages of the scheme seriously. It helps many of them to think about their safety and key messages are grasped. There are indications from school staff, from parents and from children that the programme does serve to improve many children's knowledge and understanding about key aspects of their personal safety, although it is less clear what specific learning children then retain and use when needed; this will vary so much for each child. The programme does have significant credibility amongst staff, parents and children because it helps bring into the open and address directly tricky yet important areas relating to personal safety."*

82 - 85% of parents who were interviewed for the evaluation assessed the Taking Care classes as very helpful or helpful for their child in understanding about their right to be safe, knowing the importance of telling and recognising their early warning signs. (R Ruddick 2008)

Where Protective Behaviours is seen to work, participant feedback suggests that it does so because:

- \* It doesn't preach: there are no 'musts', 'should' or Ought' about it
- \* It's individual, and it's adaptable. People take what they need from it and apply it in ways that are useful to them

\* It's easy to teach and to learn

\* It's fun.

The best evidence for the success of the Protective Behaviours approach is seen in the number of individuals who have taken it up and now use it as part of their professional practice. These include teachers, social workers, psychologists, and the police, all of whom find it of benefit both to themselves and to the people with whom they work. The challenge is to find appropriate and feasible research methodologies to capture what has been learned and to assess impact and effectiveness in a more systematic way.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations for Protective Behaviours work across Brighton and Hove**

There has been significant investment in the Protective Behaviours programme over the years, not least in terms of staff time and development through training programmes. However the core funding to develop Protective Behaviours has been lacking. The Safety Net project (formerly First Stop) promoted the approach as part of its community based approach to abuse prevention, however funding to develop and build on this work in a more systematic way has been limited. Some dedicated health visitor time has been allocated, with 5 hours per week recently agreed to take forward Protective Behaviours work in one Children's Centre. This time however is often under pressure from other demands.

There is evidence from this Report, that Protective Behaviours is being used effectively in a wide range of settings across Brighton and Hove. However it is not being done so in a joined up and systematic way and there are challenges around demonstrating effectiveness in a robust way. This report suggests that there is scope for further developing this work so that the benefits are felt across a wider section of the Trust.

## **Recommendations**

- To ensure that Protective Behaviours is used effectively across the Trust a more co-ordinated approach is needed to embed the programme into core services for children, young people and families.
- Funding for a Co-coordinator/Development Post or some dedicated hours would significantly increase the scope and effectiveness of the programme.
- There is a need to develop some robust performance indicators for Protective Behaviours work that can be applied systematically and used for evaluation purposes.

- Links need to be made to the University of Brighton and Sussex to explore the potential for more robust evaluation of the work.
- A Steering Group is needed to bring together practitioners from across the Trust and from the voluntary and statutory sectors to promote integrated working and practice in relation to Protective Behaviours. (This is being taken forward via the PB Network, but more work is needed to ensure that key players are involved)
- A Protective Behaviours rep from different services and a cascade train the trainer approach could significantly increase the scope for delivery of Protective Behaviours work.
- The Local Safeguarding Children's Board should consider the Protective Behaviours Programme as a strategy to meet its prevention and community awareness remit.
- More investment is needed to provide and develop Protective Behaviours resources and practice toolkits.

**Terri Fletcher September 2009**

## **Appendix 1: How Protective Behaviours fits within the Every Child Matters Framework**

**1. Being Healthy** - Protective Behaviours promotes being healthy through Theme One of the process, "We all have the right to feel safe". Feeling safe is dependent upon the individual having choice and control. The process helps develop emotional literacy thereby encouraging individuals to claim their right to feel safe when this is challenged, for example through peer pressure, illegal drug use, or unhealthy activity. In addition, the process offers a model of how to assess risk and problem solve thus developing personal resilience factors and enabling individuals to make better decisions for themselves..

**2. Staying Safe** - The Protective Behaviours process won a Presidential Award for safety programmes in the United States of America. Protective Behaviours works by giving a strong message that, we all have the Right to Feel Safe and encouraging the individual to identify when they do not feel safe, by taking notice of their own Early Warning Signs. The Programme also encourages thinking about Body Privacy and secrets to explicitly address abuse prevention. Theme Two "We can talk with someone we trust about anything, no matter how awful or small" encourages us to talk with others until we feel safe again.

**3. Enjoying and Achieving** - Protective Behaviours encourages adventure and risking on purpose. The purpose is usually to achieve or try new experiences. This risking is within the safety and protection of the process which teaches choices, control and at the very least knowing when an experience will end. Personal and social development occurs when we are encouraged to push ourselves, sometimes beyond our comfort zone. Protective Behaviours offers a framework in which this development can be achieved while retaining our feelings of control and ultimately that of feeling safe.

**4. Making a Positive Contribution** - The "We all" within Theme One underpins the equality offered through the process. This, along with the exploration of individual rights and responsibilities (**for** ourselves and **to** others) and consequences reinforces the need to make positive contributions to society. Protective Behaviours promotes citizenship within a framework that can help us navigate challenges successfully.

**5. Achieving Social and Economic Well Being** - Feeling Safe along with positive self worth are key elements required for the development of enterprising behaviour. Protective Behaviours encourages feeling safe, choices, control, rights, responsibilities and consequences along with developing self-worth. Access to further education and training and

economic well being for individuals becomes readily available if the qualities above are achieved. Organisations that embrace the above also thrive.

Protective Behaviours also supports the two cross cutting themes of Looked After Children and Children with Disabilities along with the Five Outcomes.