

SHARING PRACTICE AND LEARNING



Introduction

#NWGFocusonfamilies has been developed to highlight the need to be thinking about, reflecting on and building on the work that we do with parents/carers where there is extra familial harm. Services have been generous in sharing examples of the work they are doing which demonstrates practice which enhances how we can work alongside families affected by exploitation, valuing them as a key safeguarding partner and promoting how it has made an impact for families. The purpose of #NWGFocusonfamilies is to capture some of this information and share the learning for others. We hope to continually grow this as areas pilot and develop new ways of working and thinking. If you found this helpful or would like to share with other colleagues please use the hashtag #NWGFocusonfamilies.



Overview

WalkwithMeUK CIC is an award-winning, non-judgemental support and guidance community interest charity (CIC) based in Croydon, London that works Nationwide to equip parents, carers and guardians using the Non-Violent Resistance (NVR) approach. This uses tools and strategies to rebuild and strengthen family relationships to keep families connected and to reduce conflict within the home. This helps families to have their voices heard, build a network of support and manage and respond to challenges impacting on the family in a safe and enabling environment. Many of the families need support linked to child on parent abuse, children with neuro diverse disorder, school exclusion, isolation, self-harm and child criminal exploitation.

#NWGFocusonfamilies
**KEEPING
FAMILIES
CONNECTED**
WalkwithMeUK CIC



Brief Description

WalkwithMeUK CIC provides term time group sessions, advocacy, and 1:1 support as well as signposting to other agencies. Families can either self-refer to the service or are referred in by many services such as social care, family justice centre, schools etc. Many families that attend have never had their voice heard or understood and many have unmet needs requiring an immediate response. WalkwithMeUK identifies the needs of families ensuring "no stone is left unturned" and works

in partnership with key agencies and grassroots organisations to reduce barriers and ensure a proactive planned approach is developed with the family as a key safeguarding partner. The service uses the principles of NVR which are to reduce conflict, regain love, empathy and respect and stay connected, this enables a less toxic and a more harmonious and healthier lifestyle/environment to live in, ensuring families have a "connection before correction". Recognising that after-care is key, the service offers online support once a month for parents and caregivers to come together, support each other and be supported. There are also regular celebrations for graduated parents to attend and share how the NVR tools have helped them.



How is the voice of families heard in the development of this practice?

The voice of families runs right through the ethos of the service recognising the value that parents bring with their lived experience. Through the graduation process, parents and care givers are encouraged to share their testimony with other parents and service providers as to what has worked and why to improve outcomes for other parents. Graduate parents are also encouraged to support new parents in the groups and become ambassadors. The online support groups help family's stay connected and provide ongoing support from each other.



What did you have to overcome to create positive change?

One of the biggest barriers for families has been the lack of partnership working between agencies to respond to the wider needs of families. To overcome this, WalkwithMeUK CIC has built trusting relationships with many statutory and voluntary sector services to enable a smooth transition / pathway of support for families who may be fast-tracked as an urgent response. This has been a lifeline for many, some life-threatening situations and it has helped to create a safe, non-judgemental space



How do you know it has made a difference for families?

A key tenet of the service is to share what works with families. Parents and care givers have kindly provided testimonies to describe the impact of the work and for others to learn.

"I remember when I came to the first or 2nd session, how I broke down in tears, for years I've been trying to fight to get support for my daughter I felt like no one was listening, no one understood and I was being judged. I was really on the edge and felt like giving up. In that session I felt that someone finally understood, supported and no longer alone. We all shared our journeys, it touched my heart."

"Apart from practical solutions on how to continue to keep the lines of communication open with my son, I was able to connect with other parents going through similar things."



What key message from your service could you share with other areas?

Nurturing the parents (mothers and fathers) means they are more able to seek support to protect their child, this helps to reduce isolation, especially those affected by child criminal exploitation.

The value and importance of lived experience as a lifeline of support ensuring that other parents no longer feel judged but are listened to and understood.

To get the right support to families earlier. Our aim is to prevent situations from escalating but the reality is that families/services reach out to us when they are at crisis point.



For more information go to www.walkwithmeuk.co.uk or email: info@walkwithmeuk.co.uk

NWG is a charitable organisation formed as a UK network of over 14,500 practitioners who disseminate our information down through their services, to professionals working on the issue of child exploitation (CE) and trafficking within the UK. Our network covers voluntary and statutory services and private companies working in this field. We offer support, guidance and raise the profile, provide updates, training, share national developments, influence the development of national and local policy informed by practice. **Maria Cassidy** (email maria@nwgnetwork.org) is the **NWG Families and Communities Lead** whose role is to support areas and services to enhance how they can work alongside families affected by exploitation, work towards key shared principles and to share learning from each other on what has made a positive difference for families. There are some useful resources that NWG have produced that can support this work including **Making Meetings Matter**, **Parents as Safeguarding Partners: An Exploitation Benchmarking Tool** and **Making Words Matter**. To access these and other resources, training and our membership offer go to NWG website.



NWGNETWORK.ORG
#NWGFocuseonfamilies

TACKLING CHILD EXPLOITATION