



## **News release 64/11**

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# **Pioneering London safeguarding children award winners are announced**

A family, drug and alcohol court and a project to reduce violence in families are joint winners of the first London Safeguarding Children Awards.

The pioneering awards highlight innovative ideas and best practice to improve the protection of children in the capital. Local authorities, health workers and the police who provide this vital service nominated examples of their work, including projects with other agencies and charities.

One of the joint winners is the Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) which aims to improve the outcomes of children whose parents misuse drugs or alcohol.

The first of its kind in England and Wales, the court motivates and encourages parents to tackle drug or alcohol misuse in cases where a local authority has issued care proceedings.

A family chosen for the FDAC will go through a slightly different process to normal care proceedings, with more regular court hearings and the same judge throughout the process. They will also be offered intensive support by the independent multi-disciplinary team attached to the court.

'Parent mentors' - who have overcome similar problems - also offer emotional support to parents who are going through the system.

In cases where parents have been unable to address their substance misuse, the court enables swift decision-making to remove the child.

The FDAC was set up by Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust and the children's charity Coram. It is commissioned and part-funded by Camden, Islington, Westminster and Hammersmith & Fulham councils.

The other joint winner is The Non-Violent Resistance Project which seeks to reduce violence in families by addressing destructive behaviour in children and adolescents.

The Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust in Bexley and Greenwich runs The Non-Violent Resistance Project through a series of parenting groups.

The programme helps parents and carers to overcome feelings of helplessness through support networks in and outside the home.

It is based on the methods and philosophy of the non-violent civil rights' leaders Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Martin Luther King.

Parents who took part in the programme have described how it helped them to rebuild relationships with their children and reduce levels of distress in their family.

Explaining why these two projects won joint first prize, chair of the London Safeguarding Children Board, Cheryl Coppell said: "These are the first awards of their kind in London and the standard of entries was so high that it was impossible to choose just one winner, so we have made a joint award for two exceptional projects.

"Safeguarding children is a complex and challenging area of work, and these awards aim to recognise the innovative ideas and hard work of frontline professionals to make a real difference to the lives of the most vulnerable young people in London.

"I would like to congratulate all of the shortlisted nominees and hope their innovative work will promote teamwork and learning between safeguarding children boards and all the agencies they work with."

As well as the overall award, there is also an accolade for Emerging Practice. This was won by a project which recruits parent champions to reach out to mums and dads in the Congolese community to encourage them to get involved in decisions about the services in their area. Enfield council created Community Parent Engagement Panels to bridge the cultural divide between Congolese refugees who had recently arrived in the country and a range of agencies. The panels are volunteers drawn from the Congolese community who are parents themselves. They raise awareness of services, including the NHS, which could provide assistance to Congolese asylum seekers as they raise their families.

The awards were judged by a panel of experts including Professor Eileen Munro, who led the government's recent review of child protection; Amanda Edwards, deputy chief executive of the Social Care Institute for Excellence; Cheryl Coppell, the chair of the London Safeguarding Children Board and London Regional Safeguarding Adviser Kay Bell. The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes (C4EO) supported the awards.

The winners were announced and presented with their awards at the London Safeguarding Children Board's annual conference on 5 December.

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There are two highly commended entries for the London Safeguarding Children Awards:

- Young children affected by domestic violence are often at risk of slipping under the radar of the agencies which could help them. Barnet council's Safer Families Project created four posts in its social services team to focus on

families with children under the age of 11 where violence was happening at home. These dedicated workers support mothers and children who had suffered violence, advising them what practical help and emotional support services are available from a range of organisations.

- The children of patients with mental health problems are at risk of being overlooked as support services focus on the health of their parents. A project in West Kensington spearheaded by the Central North West London Foundation Trust and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children aims to stop families slipping through the gap between adults and children's social services. Frontline professionals are encouraged to check whether patients with mental illness have children and if so, offer a tailored package of support to the whole family.

There are three highly commended entries for the London Safeguarding Emerging Practice Award:

- Children and young people are being brought to the forefront of making decisions about the services which affect their lives. Barnet Council commissioned a piece of research which showed that although many young people wanted to have their say on developing services aimed at them, they felt excluded from decisions. This led to a plan being drawn up on how to gather feedback from as many young people as possible on what issues to prioritise and how a range of services can be improved. A variety of ways to reach young people were highlighted including school assemblies, social media, focus groups and questionnaires and these are currently being taken forward.
- A helpline for health workers caring for people with mental health problems was set up to provide expert support on safeguarding children issues. The telephone advice service was pioneered by the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust to give its employees a place to discuss what can be complex cases with an experienced mental health practitioner who has a detailed knowledge of child protection issues. As well as raising awareness among healthcare staff of safeguarding children as part of treating their parents, the hotline has identified areas where further training is needed. So far, more than 400 calls have been made to the helpline.
- Barnet Local Safeguarding Children Board looked at how they could raise awareness of their work with faith and cultural organisations in the area. Their CommUNITY project resulted in a directory called Faithbook and opening better lines of communication, both via newsletters and leaflets and online. Advice surgeries were run by the board in locations including a mosque and a synagogue to encourage people in the voluntary sector to seek information on how to keep children safe.

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For more information about the awards and the work of the London Safeguarding Children Board, visit [www.londonscb.gov.uk](http://www.londonscb.gov.uk)

For media inquiries, please contact the press office on 020 7934 9970.