**Family Solutions Plus: a family safeguarding model to protect vulnerable children**

**Context**

Child Safeguarding Services intervene in situations where a child is at risk of serious emotional or physical harm. The response will vary according to the level of risk, but in serious cases, a child may need to be removed from danger and cared for by foster parents, either temporarily or permanently. The number of children being taken into care has increased markedly in recent years in the United Kingdom. Placing a child in care protects them and ensures their safety in the short-term. However, removing the child from their family has significant adverse effects on their well-being in the longer-term. Oxfordshire County Council is implementing a new approach to the welfare of children (Family Solutions Plus) in which the focus is to support the whole family and ideally reduce the need for foster care.

**Research context**

As part of the Oxford and Thames Valley NIHR ARC work on improving health and social care, they identified local research priorities which included an evaluation of a newly established service for safeguarding of vulnerable families by Oxfordshire County Council: *Family Solutions Plus*. This new model aims to rebalance the safeguarding system to help keep more families together where this can be achieved safely. It incorporates several new elements which work towards improving relationships between social workers and families, developing an approach which focusses on a family’s strengths and enabling services to work in a holistic and integrated way to support the family as a whole. The research group on this project, led by Professor Charles Vincent, is working in close collaboration with Oxfordshire County Council to evaluate the new safeguarding model.

**Research project**

The proposed programme of evaluation uses a mixed-methods approach. It will measure the impact of Family Solutions Plus through the analysis of routine data collected by Oxfordshire County Council on children entering services, which will be complemented by an exploration of the experiences of staff, families and children through qualitative methodology. The research student from Brookes would be involved in a follow-up study to the staff interviews, where they would work with the research group on data collection (e.g. sitting in on interviews), analysis and write-up, the details of which to be discussed further in due course.