

Evaluation of the Safeguarding Children Assessment and Analysis Framework (SAAF)¹

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Applications for care proceedings in England and Wales are at record levels and are the subject of the Care Crisis Review.²

A randomised control trial on the outcome of the implementation of a new approach to analysis in complex cases, the SAAF, was carried out in six local authorities over a two-year period. During this time, staff in the intervention group were trained to use the SAAF and the outcome of their assessments was compared to outcomes in the control group.

The SAAF was designed to help social workers make an analysis in complex cases about the level of harm suffered or likely to be suffered by the child; the risks of re-abuse or likelihood of future harm; and the prospects for successful intervention.

The study included 12,899 children from six local authorities. Although the research drew no clear conclusions about the efficacy of the SAAF, nevertheless across all local authorities a markedly lower proportion of referred children became the subject of a child protection plan in the intervention group compared with the control group. The number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan for one form of maltreatment and later recorded as the subject of another was noticeably lower in the intervention group, 62 rather than 102 (pp.32–33).

One local authority accounted for 40 per cent of the total sample of children. This local authority implemented the SAAF training and established the SAAF as routine practice for the trial period in the intervention group, with active support from team managers (pp.77, 124 and 126).

In this local authority, with similar numbers of referrals to the intervention and control groups (49 and 51% respectively), a total of 741 children became the subject of a child protection plan. Of this total, 326 children in the intervention group went on to have a child protection plan compared with 415 in the control group – 89 fewer children in the intervention group than the control group (page 36). The results are consistent with our belief that SAAF training leads to more discriminating assessments that are better attuned to the needs of the child.

At the end of the study, this local authority demonstrated its confidence in the SAAF approach by implementing the SAAF on an authority-wide basis.

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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/666477/Evaluation_of_the_Safeguarding_Children_Assessment_and_Analysis_Framework.pdf

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<http://www.frg.org.uk/involving-families/reforming-law-and-practice/care-crisis-review>