

# Dave Hill

## Executive Director People

### ESSEX





Essex County Council

# Culture and Leadership to support service quality throughout the UK

- Creating the condition for Success
- Culture eats strategy for breakfast



It's just the way we do things round here...

**“Once you begin to master team learning or systems thinking it is very difficult to play the old game of optimising your position at the expense of the whole” (Peter Senge)**



# Context and Challenge - National

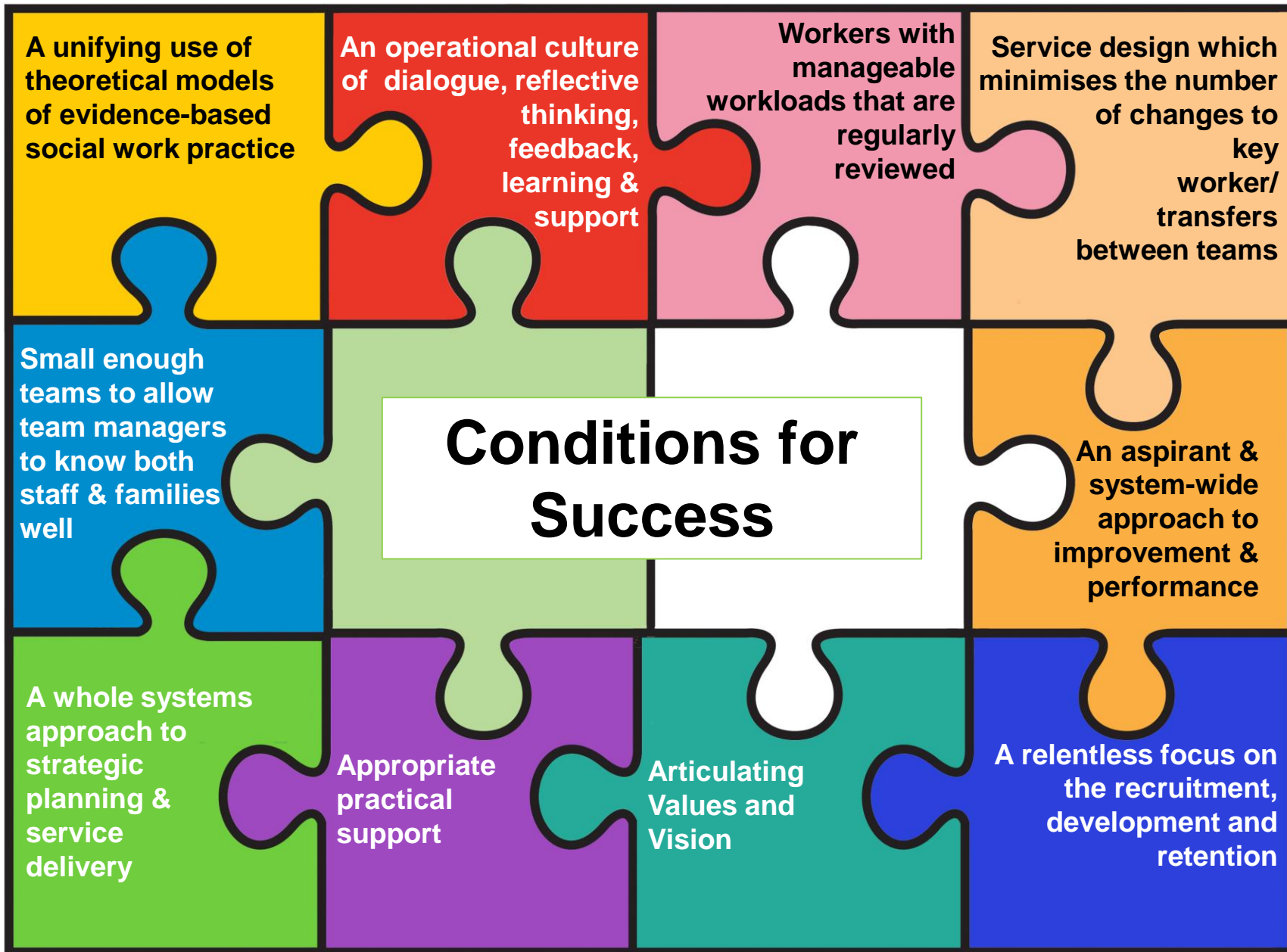
- Social work at the crossroads
- Deep ambivalence about success
- We sort this for our users – not just for ourselves
- Financial adversity is here to stay, innovation and commitment need to be our response
- Munro, early offer and prevention is not an interesting side issue, but central to the forward agenda



# Courageous Conversations - “Saying what needs to be said”

For the purpose of leadership, courage is defined as a reconciliation of the consequence of failure. A **Courageous Conversation** is then the interaction between people, when the leader has defined the consequences of failure and is alright with the potential risks.





## A new system should be characterised by:

- *children and young people's **wishes, feelings** and **experiences** placed at the centre;*
- *a relentless focus on the **timeliness, quality** and **effectiveness** of help given to children, young people and their families;*
- *the availability of a **range of help and services** to match the variety of needs of children, young people and their families;*
- *recognising that **risk and uncertainty** are features of the system where risk can never be eliminated but it can be managed smarter;*
- *trusting professionals and giving them the scope to exercise their **professional judgment** in deciding how to help children, young people and their families;*
- *the development of **professional expertise** to work effectively with children, young people and their families;*
- *truly valuing and acting on **feedback** from children, young people and families; and **continuous learning and improvement**, by reflecting critically on practice to identify problems and opportunities for a more effective system.*





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### Strategy

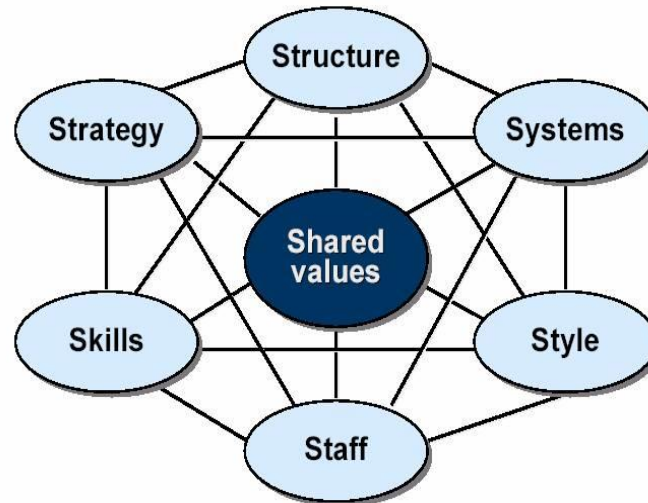
- Whole system change
- Reduce children in care numbers
- Invest in social workers
- Invest in family support - D-BIT (Divisional Based Intervention Teams)
- Lead – don't manage
- Act and sort!
- Be brave and principled
- Respond to the inspections

### Skills

- Systemic approaches
- Evidence based interventions
- Joint working – get things done quickly
- Access to highly skilled supervision
- Learning circles (assessments, care planning etc?)
- Invest in skill development
- Essex Social Work Academy
- Effectively use supervision

### Structure

- Move to the quadrant model
- Keep your best social workers practising
- Bring in develop the next generation, each team having at least 2 students per year
- Design to facilitate partnership



### Staff

- The most valuable resource
- Spend time recruiting the right people
- Remember the complexity of the task social workers do
- Help move on those for whom its not working
- Support, nurture, develop and enthuse
- Make active use of HR procedures

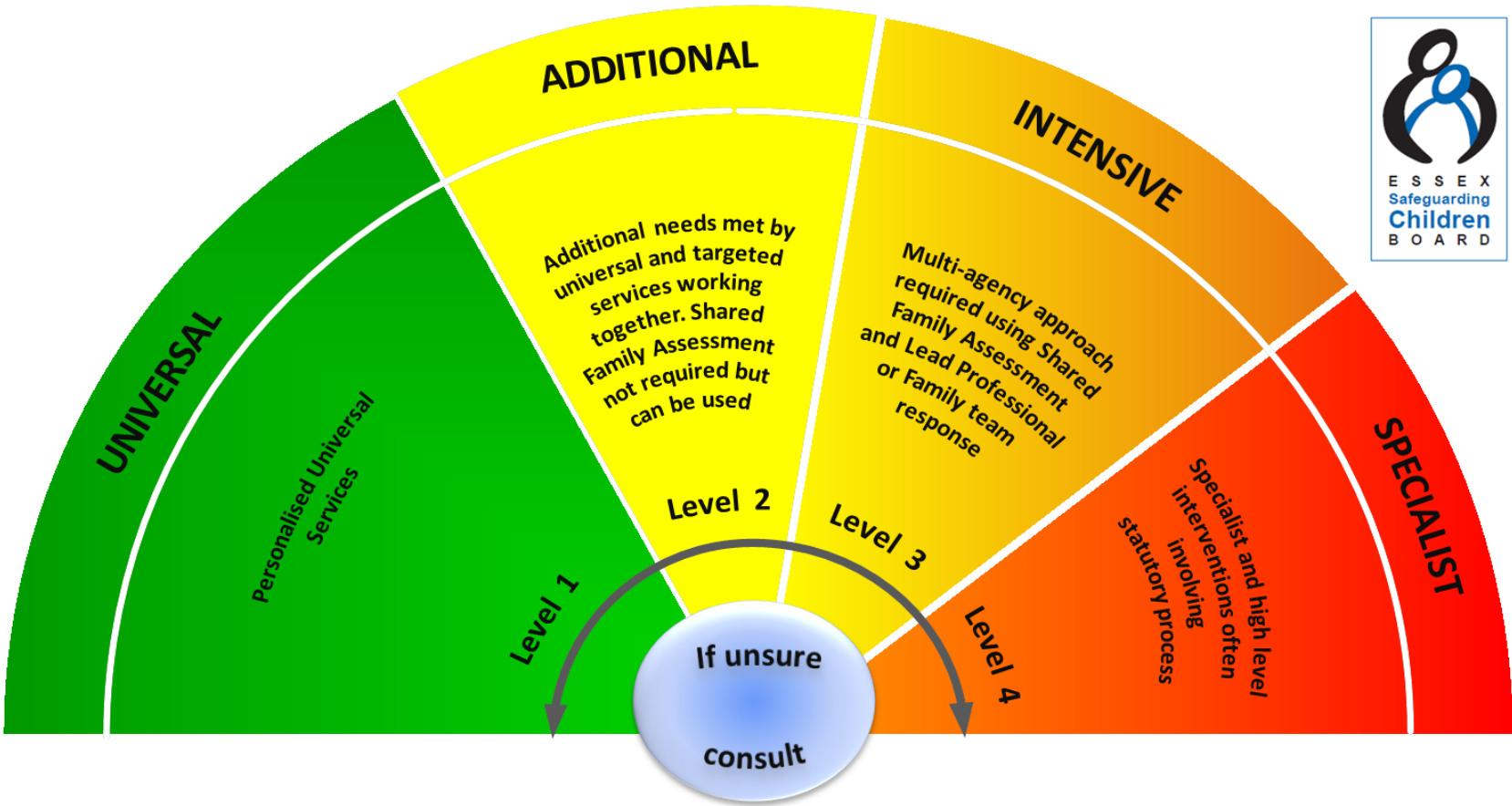
### Systems

- Reduce processes and procedures....Slim down protocol forms / revisit what really needs authorisation
- Family focussed assessment tools
- Turn decision making on its head
- Take bureaucratic burden away from social workers
- Work to avoid duplication

### Style

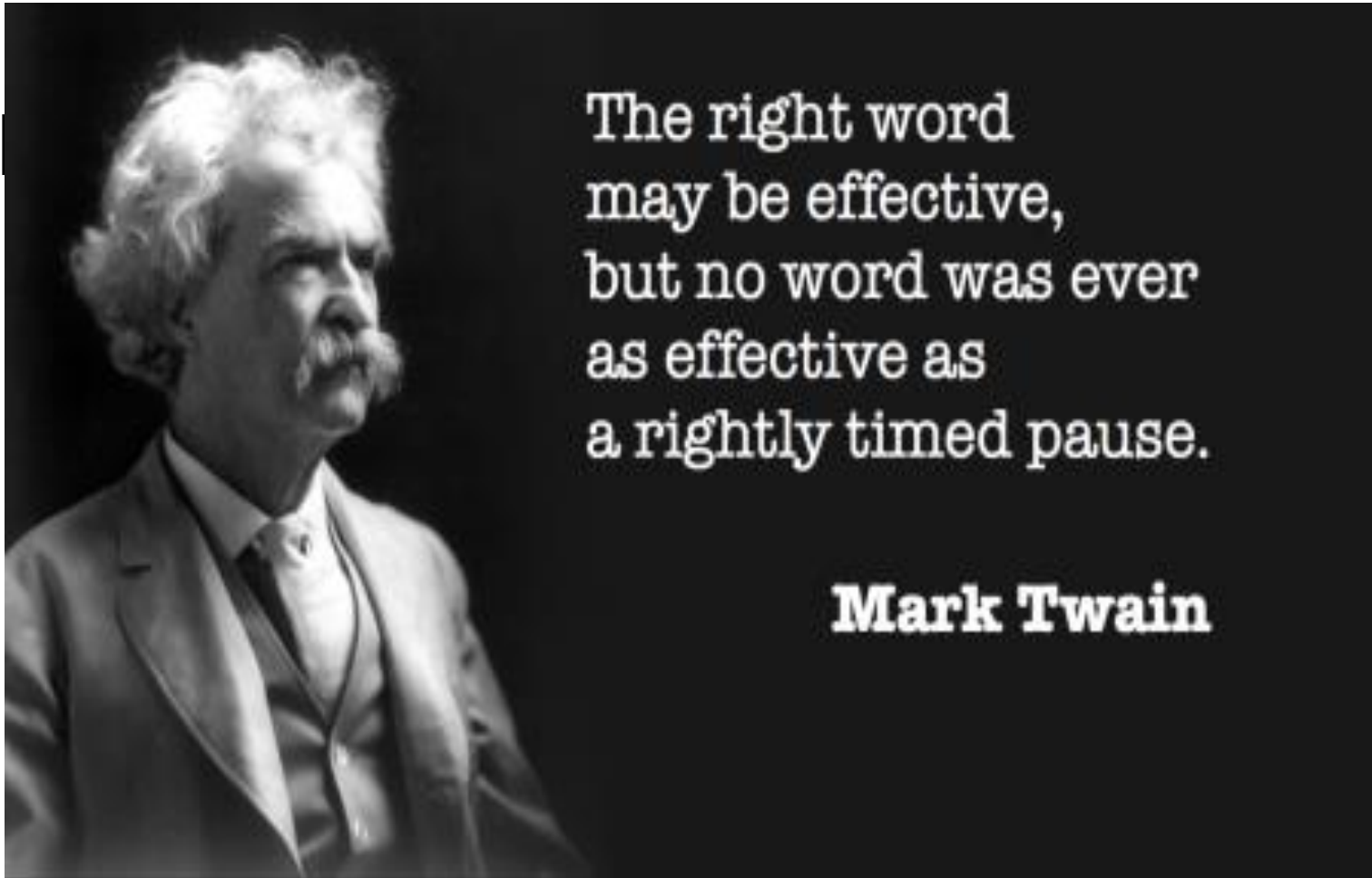
- Risk management not risk adverse
- Role generosity
- Allow for difference
- Take responsibility
- Be a learning not a blaming service
- Actively model behaviours, performance and thinking required to reshape our service and champion the necessary culture change
- Be positive and supportive whilst demanding high performance, flexible and supportive team work

# Wellbeing Effective Support Windscreen



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The right word  
may be effective,  
but no word was ever  
as effective as  
a rightly timed pause.

**Mark Twain**

# Essex Promotion of a Relationship Based Approach

- We have invested time, attention and energy to how social workers spend their time, mode of operating and how frontline managers support this
- We are researching the significance of emotional intelligence to this approach
- The thing that is common to all social workers is the world of the home visit...
- How often do we unpick this?

Despite everything that happens around it “social work will always begin and end with a human encounter between two or more people and this encounter, or relationship as it develops, is the medium through which the social work task is carried out”

*Danielle Turney, University of Bristol*

*‘Relationship Based Social Work: getting to the heart of practice’*

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# Relationship Based Practice

- Beginning; middle; end
- Working with families amidst crisis and uncertainty, tolerating uncertainty
- Seize the energy of crisis as a powerful change force
- It has a coherent theoretical grounding, not ignoring intuition but not dictated by it
- Relies on understanding family narratives, understanding how past experience affects current attitude and behaviour and how you work to change both
- Facilitates an environment for workers to be skilled and confident in their ability to confront, challenge and resolve
- Powerful approach for workers and they need the right support to anchor it

# Motivational Social Work

‘Empathic social workers created less resistance and increased the amount of information disclosed by clients. This was not associated with failure to identify and discuss concerns. Empathy, therefore, appears to be central to good social work communication in child protection situations’

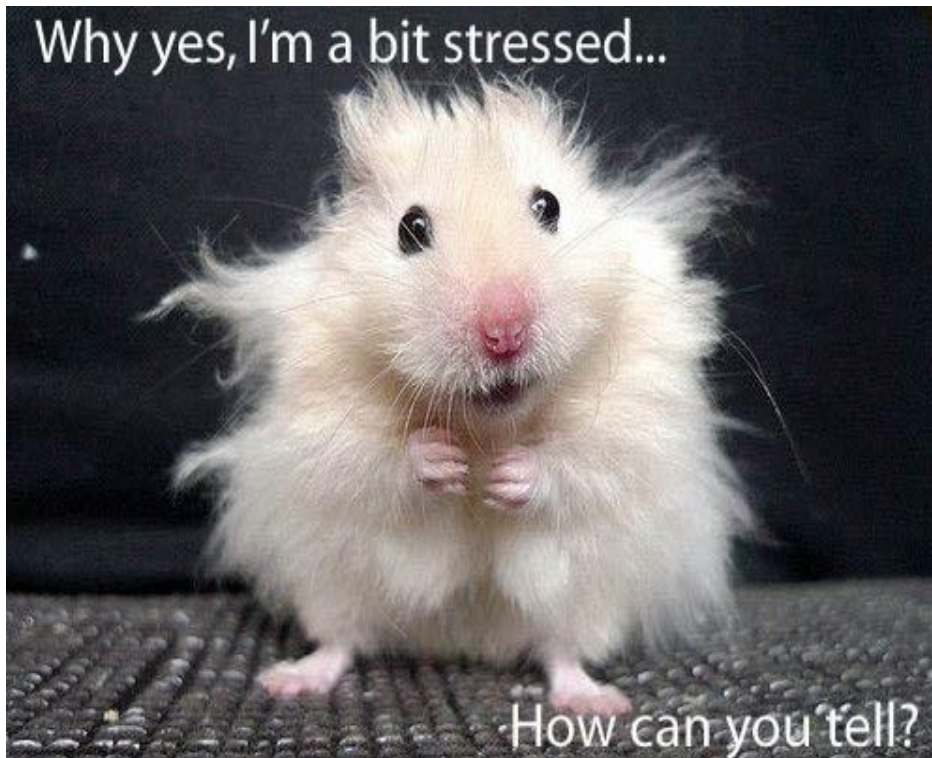
Donald Forrester et al 2007 Child and Family Social work



# Supervision

Is it an emotionally informed thinking space?

How does it support active, brave, risk sensible practice?



# Impact in Essex on Taking a Relationship Based Approach

## Practice

- Reduction of children in care
- Reduction in children subject to child protection plans
- Reduction in caseload —————> better quality of work

## Cost

- Reduced

## Reinvestment and savings

- Early help
- Targeted intervention
- Intensive support

# Relationship Based Partnership Work

- Relationship based social work isn't only about the direct relationship between the social worker and child/family.
- Also significant are the relationships within and external to the organisation.
- Confident, mature, partnerships *on the ground* mark a distinction between a fragile system and a strong sustainable system