**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF LEARNING FROM RELATIONSHIPS: AN EVALUATION OF RELATIONSHIP-BASED PRACTICE IN BRIGHTON & HOVE TO BE PUBLISHED IN JULY 2017**

In October 2015, Brighton & Hove implemented relationship-based practice as a whole system change across Children’s Social Work Services. The new model of practice, the Team Around the Relationship, involved a move to small social work teams, or pods, which support children from the assessment stage through the whole of their journey across social work services.

Relationship-based practice recognises that the relationships between social workers and families are the main vehicle to facilitate change. The Team Around the Relationship is premised on the idea that, if social workers feel safe and contained, they can build relationships with families and use these relationships to affect change. The model of practice, therefore, incorporates group supervision, reflective practice groups and a new model of relationship-based assessment and recording, One Story, as key processes to support whole system change. The practice system is supported by a cultural transformation towards becoming a relationship-based organisation, which inspires trust and confidence in its practitioners.

Brighton & Hove’s vision for the new model was assessed by Ofsted in June 2015 as being “coherent, with the right balance of care for social workers, relationships with families and performance management. It is being introduced in a measured way through constructive engagement with staff.”(Ofsted, 2015)

To measure the impact of the Team Around the Relationship we are undertaking an ongoing evaluation based on a targeted consultation to test our theory of change. The evaluation focuses on the context, mechanisms and outcomes of the model of practice.

The report will outline the findings of the evaluation so far and sets out the key messages from the first 20 months - in doing so it captures the implementation of the new model as it is emerging as part of a cycle of continuous evaluation. It is principally presented in the words of practitioners and the families they work with, as well as examples from practice, in order to provide a richness and depth to the findings.

The report’s key headlines will be that the evaluation has found that:

* families have a better experience of social work;
* social workers feel more supported and more able to make a difference for families;
* relationship-based practice appears to be supporting safe and stable family lives for children and
* the model of practice seems to have decreased demand for high-level social work interventions.