

3.1 Family Support

Improvement Project Title: Improving Home-based Family Support
Executive Sponsor: Rob Polkinghorne (ICS Board Chair)
Project Lead: Eleanor McEwan (Homestart)
Aim statement: Increase the number of families who request additional support and receive an offer of an appropriate service within 30 days of receipt of the Child’s Plan, to 80%, by 2021
Link to Local Outcome Improvement Plan: Stretch Outcome 3: 95% of children(0-5 years) will reach their expected developmental milestones by the time of their child health reviews by 2016
Why is this important: In the 2016 joint inspection of services for children and young people, inspectors identified that families waited too long for family support services. At that time inspectors acknowledged that family support services were having a positive impact on children and family outcomes and recognised the valuable contribution that the services made. We formed a multi-agency improvement team; involving private, public and third sector family support services; to address concerns raised in our joint inspection of children’s services. Analysis of the data gathered and feedback from families provides evidence that there was a delay between Health Visitors requesting a service on behalf of families and the service being offered. At that time, families could wait for as long as 174 days between the date of referral and the date service was offered. There was also evidence that Health Visitors were making multiple requests for services from a range of providers in an attempt to access support as quickly as possible. The multi-agency team agreed that there was need to improve systems and processes to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce the delay between the Health Visitor identifying a support need and the family being offered support from an appropriate service; • reduce the “scatter gun” referral approach; • ensure early intervention to reduce the need for statutory services; and • work collaboratively to improve outcomes for Aberdeen’s children and families. In June 2017 the team reviewed all data and learning so far. They found that there were aspects of the new system that could be implemented in each agency and there were aspects that could be spread to improve the system for all services in Aberdeen; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was evidence that use of the Child’s Plan had improved the quality of information shared between Health Visitors and Family Support Services which had reduced the “scatter gun” approach; • Use of the Child’s Plan had reduced the time taken to establish which service could best meet family needs and therefore the total time taken to offer a service to families. • Sharing and analysing of data from different services provided evidence of improvement but there is still variation in waiting times: • In one service between June and December 2016, some families waited for over 100 days to receive a service. During 2018 all families received an offer of service within 38 days.

In another service many families waited between 60-100 days for a service. Between September 2017 and the end of 2018, 64% of referrals received an offer of service within 30 days. The longest delay was 59 days for one family. The services are determined to reduce this variation to ensure all families are able to access support at the right time.

A number of reasons were identified for the variation in waiting times between services, both at the beginning and review points of the project:

- Year to year funding of services leads to periods where services have to 'close to new referrals' as there is insufficient funding or lack of certainty about future funds. This puts pressure on other services.
- Any 'promotion' of the services available leads to increased requests for the service which leads to increased delay for all families.
- Lack of capacity of family support workers/volunteers/childminders. Each service continues to test ways to improve this (although they cannot influence situations where lack of capacity is due to lack of funding)
- For childminders, there is an issue with Care Inspectorate providing 'emergency variations' to allow short term emergency placements.
- Variations in the time between a Child's Plan being signed and being received by services.

Measures:

Outcome measures:

- % of families offered an appropriate support service within 30 days
- Number of days families wait to be offered a service

Process measures

- Number of monthly requests for services
- Number of requests received on a child's plan

Balancing measures

- Number of new agencies using a child's plan

Change ideas:

- Reliably use the Child's Plan to record reason for request for service and impact on outcomes. This includes ensuring consistency in completion of Plans and provision of all relevant information to ensure the right support is offered with the minimum delay
- Develop action plans to focus on the specific needs of the family
- Family Learning are testing whether an intensive programme over 4 months could improve outcomes for families whilst reducing the delay for others
- Introduction of a new data dashboard to ensure data is collected and used consistently across services. This will allow clearer understanding of points in the process where improvements may be possible and highlight the impact of tests of change
- Peep offering 1-1 support to parents with low mood to reduce group waiting list
- SCMA are contacting parents initially to reduce inappropriate requests for service

Potential risks and/or barriers to success & actions to address these

- The change ideas suggested above are those within the control of the services involved. One of the challenges in providing a reliable service in a timely fashion is the current funding arrangements, including perception of external funders.
- Lack of consistency and clarity around the use of child's plan

Project Team:

- Eleanor McEwan, General Manager, Home-Start Aberdeen
- Loraine Duncan, Development Officer, Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA)
- Jenny Adie, Family Learning Development Officer, Family Learning Team, Aberdeen City Council
- Natasha Martens, Peep Co-ordinator, Aberdeen City Council
- Cathy Beattie, Team Leader, Home-Start Aberdeen
- Lisa Lawrie, Service Manager/Lead Health Visitor, Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership

Project Support:

- Sacha Will, Programme Manager (Improvement), Aberdeen City Council
- Sharon Skene, FIS Manager, Business Intelligence, Aberdeen City Council
- Ljiljana Pavlenic, Strategic Performance and Improvement Officer, Aberdeen City Council

Outline Project Plan

Project Stage	Actions	Timescale
Getting Started (Project Score 1-3)	Forming the improvement team; developing the project charter; gathering and analysing baseline data; understanding the current system	Completed
Designing and Testing Changes (Project Score 4-7)	Identifying changes and prioritising; engagement with customers & colleagues; Identifying the people, place to start testing	June 2019
Implementing and sustaining changes that demonstrate improvement (Project Score 7-10)	Information sheets for Health Visitors, Education and Social work Changes to procedures in all services Internal Training in Teams Liaison with GIRFEC group on training to complete child's plan	December 2019
Spreading Changes (Project Score 9-10)	Engagement of other teams/colleagues through Community Planning Aberdeen Board (current improvement team would not be able to spread changes)	January 2020