|  |
| --- |
|   |



LESLEY WILKINSON

-

MBE SERVICES FOR CHI

LDREN AND FAMILIES

GRIMSBY

FULL FAMILIES

REVIEW

-

JANUARY 2020

**CONTENTS**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS Page 2**

**CONTENT AND BACKGROUND Page 3**

**AREAS FOR INVESTIGATION Page 3**

**METHODLOGY Page 4**

**OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS Page 4-9**

**CONSIDERATIONS AND AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT Page 9**

**CONCLUSION Page 10**

**BIOGRPAHY Page 11**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, thank you to all families who generously shared their time and their stories as part of this review. The first- hand accounts of their experiences on the programme and the journeys that they took, have enabled the review to gain a deep understanding as to how and why this programme works in practice.

Thank you also to the team at Cat Zero and Creating positive opportunity for their warm and friendly welcome. Also, to those within the partnership that provided valuable insights and perspectives. This input has allowed for a broader and more holistic review.

# CONTEXT/BACKGROUND

The Full Families programme operates in Grimsby and is funded by Big Lottery Reaching Communities. It is delivered through a joint partnership with Cat Zero and CPO (Creating positive opportunity). The team consists of six members of staff and two managers. The programme is funded for two years till September 2020 to support 100 families over the life of the programme. The vision statement is:

*Through a positive and informal approach, we will work with families approaching crisis who want to change. We will connect and support families to identify issues which are causing problems and then support them to access the help they need to resolve these issues.* (Original bid submission)

The outcomes for the programme are:

* 100 families (300+ individuals) approaching a point of crisis will have developed a family action plan and shown demonstrable distance travelled against targets in the plan, addressing and confronting root causes of problems and barriers to achieving improved quality of life.
* In the most deprived areas of North East Lincolnshire, we will reduce the numbers of young people who are NEET, improve school attendance, reduce instances of anti-social behaviour and wellbeing of participating families.
* Participating families will create stronger and more resilient communities through the development of new grassroots community activity and greater integration with existing community and voluntary activities.
* We will create upwards of 24 volunteering, training, skills development and peer education opportunities for programme participants, building confidence and enabling them to play a key role as influencers in the lives of others experiencing similar challenges.

This review was commissioned jointly by the partnership to provide an independent review of the programme by someone who had extensive first-hand experience in this area of work and a knowledge of best practice nationally.

# AREAS FOR INVESTIGATION

The review has sought to investigate the following area’s

* How does the work benchmark against national good practice in this area of work?

* How do families experience the support?

* What are stake holders views of the service and does it align with strategic priorities.

* What difference is it making?

* How effective are the systems in place to support the work (supervision, workforce development, recording, planning and review process)?

* Areas of strengths, good practice, what is working well

* Areas for development.

# METHODLOLGY

A range of methods will be used to gather qualitative and quantitative feedback. This will include views from stakeholders, meeting with practitioners and families, attending key meetings and case file audits. Hearing how families have experienced the support is seen as a crucial part of the methodology.

# OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS

 How does the work benchmark against national good practice in this area of work?

The Full families programme is underpinned by a number of key approaches all of which are viewed as a good practice locally and nationally. These are:

*Signs of Safety*

The Signs of Safety is an innovative strengths-based, safety-organised approach to child protection casework. The model of its approach was created in Western Australia by Andrew Turnell and Steve Edwards. The Signs of Safety approach is now a key framework within a number of Local Authorities including North East Lincs. It provides a common language and approach for partner agencies.

All staff on the programme have been fully trained in Signs of Safety and the tools such as family networks meetings, placing the child and family at the centre and a family led approach were evidenced in the case file audit and from discussions with staff and families.

*“We are all involved in it, we all have a voice even the younger* *kids”* (Family feedback).

Feedback from a key stakeholder also confirmed that this approach provided a level of reassurance and a common thread with the local model*. “The team have taken it on board really well and it provided a level of confidence for us”.* He also valued *“the focus on families views and listening to the voice of young people”*. Listening to the voice of the child is seen as critical to the safeguarding of children and young people but evidence also suggests that giving **children** a **voice** promotes self-esteem and self-worth. (Early Years practice, giving children a voice, 2015).

*Whole Family*

A whole family approach has been advocated as good practice in improving the life chances of families at risk as far back as 2008 (Cabinet office,2008). It is also one of the driving principles of the national Troubled families programme

There was strong evidence across the whole review that a whole family approach is fully embedded within the programme. It’s the golden thread in all aspects of delivery including planning and goal setting.  *“The support they give us all is unbelievable its for the kids as well they love the activities and you couldn’t ask for better people”. (Family feedback). “They always engage and involve the kids it’s the first time we have all had support” (Family feedback)*

The case file audits strongly evidenced children, young people and parents’ engagement in family network meetings and robust evidence of goal setting for all family members*. “I always make a point of engaging with everyone in the family even if this means visiting later on an evening or on a weekend”* (delivery staff). What was also evidenced was a clear focus of ensuring the child’s welfare was paramount whilst balancing this with meeting the needs of parents.

Given the social factors and the complex needs of families accessing the programme using a think family approach is critical to improving outcomes. Morris et al., [**2008**](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/cfs.12636#cfs12636-bib-0047) argue that to break established cycles of disadvantage, social service providers must “Think Family”. All of the families, stakeholders and delivery staff confirmed that this approach is at the heart of the programme.

*Outcomes Based Accountability*

Outcome Based accountability (Freidman, 2005) is a model used to measure outcomes and provide a common language. The approach asks three performance measures. How much did we do? How well did we do it? And Is anyone better off?

This model is used in the Local Authority and nationally and fully adopted by the programme. It forms the basis of all performance reporting and the review saw robust evidence of its use in systems and processes*. “It’s good that they are using OBA to measure outcomes it fits with our own approach to outcomes”* (Key stakeholder).

In summary the programme is adopting national best practice and aligning with local approaches. This is enabling local integration with the Local Authority and a common language and way of working. A good example of this is how delivery staff are to be part of the training around parental conflict. This can only add value and promote stronger partnerships at a local level.

 How do families experience the support?

*“I would be dead now if it wasn’t for the support I’ve had here” (*Parent*).* This is just one of many statements that families provided on their experience of the programme. All families spoke overwhelmingly positively about the support. *“You never feel judged”. “You can just pick up the phone and they listen”. “The kids love the trips they are allowed to be themselves”. “The staff are supportive in every area”. “If it wasn’t for them, I would not have my kids now”*

When families were asked what they valued most about the support it included the following:

Whole family, non

-

judgemental, activities and trips, always there

for you, flexible, be spoke support, they listen, not authoritarian,

there to help, encouragement and praise, ha

nds on, practical

help, never over promise, hand holding, it’s your plan, we have a

voice, everyone is involved, they are honest with you, they help

you, having a laugh, meeting new friends, lots of opportunities.

This feedback was mirrored in the planning for each family and the network meetings which evidence a creative, flexible and needs led approach underpinned by family led decision making. All families commented on the richness and range of activities they could get involved in which included bowling, rock city, parenting groups, picnic, trips to the beach, Xscape, farm trips, sailing on the boat. *“it was the greatest experience I have ever had” (Young person).* Clearly this is a key strength of the programme and was reflected too by stakeholders.

A really good example of the responsive way in which the team engage with families was the Christmas pop in where over seventeen families dropped in. Families received a food parcel and could have a professional family photograph taken free of charge. For most of the families this was their first family photograph and it was clearly a special occasion for them which they all really valued. *“It’s the first time I’ve had a photo taken with my two sons”* (Parent).

All families said they would recommend the service to other families. Given the increasing number of self-referrals it is clear the community are beginning to have confidence and trust in the programme which is a critical success factor.

 What are stake holders views of the service and does it align with strategic priorities.

The stakeholders I spoke to all spoke positively about the programme and that it clearly aligned and supported key priorities particularly the focus on early intervention which was a key priority for all stakeholders*. “Early intervention is key the programme made life easier for families and I can’t praise it enough”* (Early Intervention Police Team). The Police also spoke about the positive impact on NEET, impact on crime and anti-social behaviour which are key local performance indicators. A good example of this is the NEET summer programme which was delivered over the summer.

Another strength was also the *“collaborative”* approach and the multi-agency meetings which brought together local information sharing*. “This was key for us in relation to county lines and the bringing together of local intelligence “*. (Early Intervention Police Team). The meetings also allowed for a more targeted approach and the use of activities was again highlighted as a huge strength” it *opened up rewards and incentives and the young people loved the boat” (Early Intervention Police Team).*

Another stakeholder spoke positively about how the programme aligned with the key principles of the Troubled families programme. *“the full families programme is the nearest thing we have to delivering the principles of the troubled families programme “. (Key stakeholder).*

One of the key drivers in the Local Authority is to reduce the number of children coming into care and costly statutory interventions. A high percentage of families are on child protection or child in need plans so timely support from the programme provides a route for de-escalation within an early help approach*.*  A number of families I spoke to had been deescalated and were no longer on plans. This is evidenced in the OBA report in addition to three children returning home from Local Authority care.

Evidence suggests stakeholders are positive about the programme and the programme aligns with key strategic priorities. It is also felt the programme has a key part to play within the Early Help landscape.

* What difference is it making?

The difference the programme is making has to some extent already been highlighted in other areas of this report. The evidence suggests families hugely value the support and they can clearly articulate the difference it has made to their lives. “*I would not have this house now and be where I am if it wasn’t for full families”.* (Parent feedback*).*  Equally as important is the focus on sustainable outcomes for families. There is strong evidence that families are increasing their skills and confidence, linking into community networks, volunteering and building resilience. These are all key for reducing reliance on the welfare state and the wider growth strategy. The approach of “working with” but not doing for has a positive impact on outcomes and this is also validated in the individual plans.

We should not underestimate the impact on children and young people either. There is strong evidence of improved school attendance, children felling safer and children been more confident to deal with everyday life. *“I am so much more confident now and I have made some new friends too”* (Young person).

All of the people spoken to as part of the review spoke about the importance of early intervention and its clear this is a key success factor. *“Early intervention can help children and young people to develop the skills they need to live happy, healthy and successful lives. It can improve the quality of children’s home lives and family relationships, increase educational attainment and support good mental health.” (EIF 2015)*

* How effective are the systems in place to support the work (supervision, workforce development, recording, planning and review process)?

There are some strong systems in place to support the work. This includes the family network meetings, delivery meetings, weekly reports, OBA reports, individual plans and attendance at CSAM. The families were very vocal about how they valued the whole family approach and that everyone was involved in the meetings. Equally the plans are outcome focused and evidence support that is creative, be spoke, needs led and use SMART principles.

The multi-agency working is also a key strength and linking into the CSAM meeting has huge benefits on many levels*. “Being able to share information on families and work together is key”* (Key stakeholder)

The system for reviewing and closing cases is an area for development, particularly now the numbers on the programme are growing. All good practice guidance on working with complex families suggests an assess, plan review approach (Munro,2015) and this was not always visible. However, it is important that the programme does not become over professionalised or bureaucratic as this would totally undermine its unique selling point and what families most value too.

All staff have been trained on Signs of Safety, OBA and Restorative practice. They are also able to access any training from the Local Authority which ensures there’ s a common approach to supporting families. The team may want to look at how they can add to this and access wider training to build their skills and knowledge particularly in light of the complexity of families they are working with. However, I appreciate the programme has limited funds for this. It was also raised by a team member that there is no supervision in place and this need addressing in line with best practice.

A major strength is the focus on outcomes, the systems in place to evidence outcomes are excellent and a golden thread in all aspects of the programme. The OBA reports are visual, clear and transparent and evidence improved outcomes across a full range of indicators. It is clear families provide positive feedback on the support and it may be worth considering how this is captured more systematically to feed into the overall performance

 Areas of strengths, good practice, what is working well

The programme is fully embracing a number of good practice approaches. These include

Whole family, Signs of Safety, Restorative practice, Outcome based accountability and Strength-based approaches. What is most striking is the ethos, culture and the values behind the programme which is built on building positive and trusting relationships with families. This is key to how families experience the programme and a unique selling point.

The team are creative, flexible, responsive and I saw evidence of staff going the extra mile on numerous occasions to make a difference for families. There is strong team work and the expertise and skills are used effectively to meet the needs of families. The team “reach out” to families in a way that is quite unique and in a way that is innovative too. The family budget enables practical and creative approaches which is working well.

The collaborative approach with other agencies and links with community organisations is also working well and another key strength. *“It made my day when the parent said I have just been to the hub to sort my debt out”. (delivery staff).*  There is a real focus on building social capital and asset-based approaches which adds real value to the programme.

The team actively encourage families to use the local hubs and community networks. It is far more likely that outcomes will be sustainable if families have built stronger networks within their own communities and are more resilient.

One of the strongest elements of the programme is clearly the activities that are provided for families. “The activities they can *provide is just such a bonus”* (Police). The partnership delivery allows for access to a wide range of activities that adds real value to the programme and is highly valued by the families and stakeholders. Given the current reductions in services and the social factors this is a real bonus and makes a huge difference at all levels of the programme. It is clear families also appreciated the hands-on practical support provided*. “coming here today has been great, the food and presents will be such a help for us.”* (Family feedback)

The OBA approach, family networks, weekly reports and plans are real strengths and working well. They provide a strong infra structure to support the practice. In addition to a real focus on driving positive outcomes and goals which are really clear and transparent. Families and stakeholders can also see the tangible evidence of impact.

# CONSIDERATIONS/AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Areas for development have already been highlighted in the report. The review provided just a snapshot and some insights in the programme and so need to be considered within that context. In summary the following are for consideration:

* Supervision for staff- You may want to approach the Local Authority and ask if they could support some group supervision or one to one. This would further develop links and develop relationships. Equally someone external maybe just of value.
* Look at a more structured approach to reviewing the support/plans and documenting this. (plan, assess, review)
* You may want to consider closing cases as there is a danger this can encourage dependence and is this sustainable going forward? However, families appreciate been able to drop in and call at any time and this provides a safety net. A compromise maybe about moving to light touch support and then closing but making sure families know they can get in touch if they need to.
* Look at gathering feedback from families on a more systematic basis.
* Look at how staff can access further professional development bearing in mind limited funds.
* Explore how the Signs of Safety model can be more integrated within the programme. As an example, the Referral Form.
* Review the practice of working in pairs. This is not normal practice within any family support approach unless part of a risk assessment. This also increases the cost of the intervention. One suggestion maybe to have a buddy approach where there is a keyworker but a buddy too who is familiar with the case and can also support but not all the time.

# CONCLUSION

In summing up, the programme is hugely valued by families and there is strong evidence it is making a positive difference to everyday lives. It is seen as a key resource in terms of early intervention and is viewed as playing a key part in the Early help landscape. There is clear evidence that it is making a difference across a range of key performance indicators which reflect those of the Local Authority.

 The programme is valued by local partners, families and stakeholders. The culture and the partnership delivery have a real focus on continuous improvement and this pays dividends in terms of the quality of practice and the impact on outcomes.

The programme is underpinned by a strong value base and national best practice. One of its key strengths is its workforce who are passionate, committed, enthusiastic and provide support that is tailored to each individual family. This is in contrast to many other services that are often service led where families have to fit neatly into boxes. The programme turns that completely on its head and its totally need led, flexible and responsive. The team are a huge asset and totally outcomes focused. It’s been a pleasure to be part of this if only for a short time.

# BIOGRAPHY

Lesley has over thirty years’ experience of delivering family support services within Leeds and Hull. Lesley has led locally on some key policy initiatives including Children Centres, Family Group Conferencing, Parenting, Family Intervention projects and more recently Troubled Families. For two years Lesley was the Regional Lead for Yorkshire and Humber as part of the Families at risk team (DCSF). Lesley received an MBE in 2013 for services to children and families. Lesley is a qualified Social worker (BA Hons, 1998).