



The
Children's
Society

Prevention through Partnership

April 2011—March 2013



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Prevention through Partnership

Working with young carers and families facing acute and complex needs

What's in this briefing and who is it for?

This briefing celebrates the achievements and learning from Prevention through Partnership (PtP) 2011-2013. This ambitious national programme was funded by the Department of Education to underpin whole family working with young carers and their families facing acute and complex needs – as a result of parental substance misuse, mental health difficulties and dual diagnosis. The programme included a focus on early years, early prevention and awareness of families in the criminal justice system.

This report is aimed primarily at local authority and health decision-makers, to share lessons from the national programme, and to improve crucial areas such as:

- access to services
- whole family assessments
- partnership working across children and adult services
- strategic leadership

The briefing draws on knowledge and learning from over 100 local authority areas, and input from 700 participants from across statutory children and adult services, health, the voluntary and community sectors. It adds the experience of young carers to the expertise of professionals, and draws on the Include Programme's track record nationally and in Hampshire. This creative partnership has informed for example the Memorandum of Understanding, the Carers' Strategy and the Signposts document.

Building Capacity for Better Outcomes - What happened?

PtP was run jointly by The Children's Society's Include Programme and Stars National Initiative. It aimed to build partnerships to increase the effectiveness of early interventions, preventing poor outcomes for children, young people and their families.

The principle activity was the delivery of 17 capacity building seminars, attracting interdisciplinary managers and practitioners. The objectives were to:

- support the implementation of national guidance
- help develop local guidance and protocols to implement good collaborative working
- provide online resources, tools and good practice examples supporting whole family working within the extended workforce.

Seminars were underpinned by resources given to each area, and a comprehensive website with follow-up, phone and email support as needed. Each area completed an action plan which was typed and emailed back to participants within a week to maintain momentum. After 18 months, follow-up calls were undertaken with 40 areas to review progress. This fed into a national celebration event in February 2013

involving Edward Timpson MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (children and families) and Doctor Maggie Atkinson, Children's Commissioner for England.

Top tips from the PtP events

Practice

- Simple solutions in Hertfordshire: a single phone contact point, backed by dedicated and informed staff, able to respond to general queries and specialist concerns.
- 11am or 6pm: when to visit in the Wirral? When children are at school or when the whole family is more likely to be around and it is easier to talk about the nature of care and support to the carers of all ages.
- Questioning curiosity in Newham: an adult care worker wanting to know about the nature of care-giving. A children's worker considering whether adequate and appropriate care support is being received in the home by the family to prevent children from caring excessively.

Operational

- Radical responses in Liverpool: agreeing to use the Common Assessment Framework across adult and children services when people had said this could not be done.
- Practical partnerships in Stockton: bridging adult and children services, with an alliance of Eastern Ravens Trust working with young carers and the Crime Reduction Unit tackling adult substance misuse.
- Targeted training with Addaction in Peterborough: training staff to handle tricky face to face family meetings.
- In Waltham Forest GPs are trained about issues faced by carers and young carers: 'partnership training raises awareness and encourages thinking in new ways.'

Leadership

- Strategy and leadership in Central Bedfordshire: building relationships and mutual understanding among directors and using events to kick start change processes.
- Children's champions in London: community members knowing who to turn to with concerns for the wellbeing of a child or adult; the list included dinner ladies, housing maintenance staff, pharmacists and faith group leaders.
- Experts by experience in Wandsworth: young carers supported in schools by peer champions. The Education Welfare Officers trained young carer mentors around confidentiality and disclosure in their key role.
- Joint training for adult services and children's services in Hampshire, and Local Safeguarding Children Board Joint Protocol.

Getting stuck into the detail

Building a local action plan

Each participating local authority area took part in a guided conversation covering practice, operational and strategic issues. This led to the creation of their own draft plan, which included priorities and next steps for implementing changes. These included: other links to be made, network meetings to organise and attend, and training to be accessed or developed.

The focus for the guided conversations emerged from consultation with young people, families and professionals, as outlined in 'Signposts: See me, hear me talk to me – talk to my family as well' (ADASS / ADCS 2011). The main messages were:

1. **Actively seeking:** tackling self-identification, engaging with young carers and meeting expectations.
2. **Engaging and supporting:** successful front line partnerships for a 'Team around the Family'.
3. **Sharing the load:** building strategic leadership and partnership for sustainable outcomes.

1. Actively seeking: tackling self-identification of young carers and their families

'How do you explain to young carers what is happening in their families without overwhelming them and without making them feel stupid?' (Young carer at PtP event)

Key questions to consider

How do we identify families where children are at risk of or are taking on inappropriate caring, particularly where a parent has substance misuse issues or mental ill health? Here are some of the key questions.

- How do we overcome stigma around illegality, which stops most young people facing parental substance misuse seeing themselves as young carers?
- How do we ensure that young people and families don't have to tell their story multiple times?
- How do we ensure that our culture takes alcohol as seriously as drugs?
- How do we create safe environments for children and parents to speak up and take forward what they say?
- How well does professional awareness of parental substance misuse and mental ill health translate into understanding families' and young people's experiences?
- How aware are frontline staff in different settings of the potential barriers to self-identification and how are they responding to them?
- Is disclosure only happening at crisis point?

Action points and bright ideas

- Torbay young carers spoke passionately about how professionals need to respond to them, involve them in family decision-making and not patronising them while 'bombarding us with words we don't understand.'
- In the Wirral, the alcohol and substance misuse team look to make a first visit in the evening and not when children are most likely to be at school. In this way it's easier to talk about the nature of care and the support for carers, of all ages.
- In Newham, the director of adult services encourages curiosity: an adult care worker visiting and wondering about the nature of care giving; a children's worker considering the nature of the caring being undertaken and wondering whether adequate and appropriate care support is being received in the home.
- At a London event, workers spoke of unusual children's champions – people in the community who know who to turn to if they have concerns for the welfare and well-being of a child or adult. Their list included dinner ladies, housing maintenance staff, pharmacists and faith group leaders.
- Whole family working in Lambeth includes Family Group Conferencing, involving health and social care services in a team around the child. This allows families to engage in the round with a lead professional. It builds a shared understanding and ownership of issues, and empowers families to find their own solutions with the help of relevant services and resources.

Reflections from young carers

- Schools should be able to spot stress.
- Training should include spotting the signs of being young carers.
- Schools should follow up absences with an understanding of the potential situation.
- Agencies should work together and show an awareness of the family's needs.
- Information should be shared – 'without telling everyone our business.'
- Doctors' records should show whether an ill adult has children.
- GPs could check up with patients six months later to see how things are.

Simple solutions in Hertfordshire: a short story

Two vital issues are early identification through self-referral, and accessible, expert preventative support.

In Hertfordshire, self-identification by young carers and their families is facilitated by adult and children's services staff who are trained to be curious and ask the awkward questions. For the Turning Point drugs project, seeing parents with drug problems in the home means being able to ask about the children in the household, their needs and what support they are getting. Staff find that, rather than becoming defensive and hostile in fear of child protection proceedings, parents are usually responsive and keen to cooperate, to ensure the best support for them and their children.

The Schools Based Family Support Workers across the South West Herts Partnership also find that relationships with children presenting difficulties can lead to an early family meeting and better support to both the child and the parent.

However, earlier identification and self-referral is only as good as the response that comes with it. To help provide simple, professional and accessible support,

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Hertfordshire County Council has set up a Targeted Advice Service phone line, available via the main enquiries switchboard. It goes through to professional staff, including social workers and young carers' professional assistants. The Advice Service is available to anyone – professionals, parents and young people themselves. Both Turning Point and the Schools Based Family Support Workers value the service immensely and only make contact with the explicit permission of family members.

The combination of early identification, a simple source of expertise, and access to early family support are proving a winning combination, valued by adult and children's workers, parents and young carers.

2. Engaging and supporting young carers: and meeting family support needs

Key questions to consider

What services are currently in place, and how do they respond to and provide for the whole family's needs? Here are some key questions.

- Do professionals from health, treatment services and adult services always ask key questions such as, 'Are there children?' and 'Who supports you as a parent?'
- Do we ask what life is like for young carers and their families, and what would help them be a family?
- Do we all accept locally that there are no wrong doors for young carers who want to talk and do we support this in practice?
- How can we use learning and development opportunities to underpin whole family practice and to share good practice?
- Given the importance of trusted adults in working with young carers, do we ensure consistency in contact and try to avoid disrupted relationships?
- Are we seeing people in the right place and at the right time for them?

Action points and bright ideas

- Many groups agreed joint in-service training was crucial action to bring together adult and children services across, statutory and the voluntary sector. 'A cultural shift is required regarding workforce development training needs.' In Peterborough, Addaction ensures this includes equipping their workers to manage and engage in awkward conversations with parents about the impact of their alcohol or substance misuse on their children.
- For Newham, the focus was to put in place one key worker, linking with the whole family and accessing relevant support and carer services for adults and their children.
- Lambeth sought to build the quality and confidence in services by making young people an integral part of the commissioning process.
- In Derbyshire, 'partnerships are being brought closer together; there is new clarity between adult and children services on the scale of the problem and whole family issues are being mainstreamed.'
- At most events, there was a focus on improved partnership working with schools, both to help identification and also to engage and support families.
- In Liverpool, the radical response was to 'redefine the possible' and gain cross-sector agreement to use the Common Assessment Framework across adult and children services (when people had said this could not be done). In Lambeth,

the CAF is also used as an early identification tool with schools and partner agencies, leading to earlier multi-agency support.

- In Westminster, parents and children affected by parental substance misuse are helped through IMPACT, an eight-week programme delivered jointly through specialist adult services and children's social care.
- In Wandsworth, young carers felt they would be better supported in schools by peer champions. The Education Welfare Officers trained young carer mentors around confidentiality and disclosure in supporting their key role. In one school, 'we identify young carers as champions and involve older young carers as mentors.'
- In Hampshire, young carers are supported to have their voice heard through YC Voices.

Reflections from young carers

- Workers can be too quick to judge. There should be less stigma. Assume less, and talk to young carers' services to find out their point of view.
- We'd rather talk to someone we trust.
- Run meetings in different places (young carer clubs).
- Build in regular checks and chats in private. If not, we will forget what was said before.
- Don't ignore us or dismiss us. Communicate with us, and treat us like you would an adult.
- What's the place of young carer advocacy?

Practical partnership in Stockton: a short story

A difficulty often identified in whole family working is the disconnection between children's and adult services, in both the statutory and voluntary sectors. The partnership between Eastern Ravens Trust and the Crime Reduction Unit brings together an established young carers' project with an adult substance abuse project - to try and redress this disconnect, and to develop effective partnership working.

This collaborative approach has had significant organisational benefits and clear benefits for children and young people and their families.

A joint assessment by workers from both agencies is undertaken and well received, helping to reduce fears and make sure that children in the household are identified. CAF is used across the family and acts as the referral route. This joint approach has helped to reduce the risks of children and young people undertaking inappropriate caring roles. There is a perceptible shift from reacting to crisis to building family resilience through preventative action, leading to a reduction in statutory intervention.

There have been a number of challenges. Firstly, from the perspective of both organisations, the new approach requires a cultural change whereby both sets of workers see the whole family. They must feel comfortable working with families where adults have significant personal needs which are potentially impacting negatively upon the child. Secondly, the partnership has needed attention to detail and recognition that each family will have different circumstances and experiences. Finally, however accessible and non-stigmatising this whole family approach may be, some families remain reluctant to engage through fear, and are worried about the consequences for

them and their children. However, the positive impacts have proved the investment and joint approach extremely worthwhile.

3. Sharing the load: pursuing successful front line partnerships for a 'Team around the Family' approach

Key questions to consider

Strategic partners and processes are needed to implement cultural and structural change. How do we identify key partners, and also barriers and opportunities, within the context of local services? Here are some key questions.

- Are local assessment mechanisms integrated? How many times does the story have to be told?
- Are support thresholds clear? Are we confident that they are not used as a barrier to successful frontline partnerships?
- Are we engaging with third sector partners to widen family choice and control?
- What have we done about putting into place the Memorandum of Understanding, 'Working together to support young carers'?
- What are young carers and their families telling us about their experiences, and what have we done in response? Are we really listening?
- What are the barriers to effective partnership working in our area and how are these best overcome?

Action points and bright ideas

- Strategy and leadership is vital, with examples ranging from using events to kick-start change, to building relationships and mutual understanding among directors – this is already happening in Central Bedfordshire.
- The Wirral Strategic Health Commissioning Group seeks to identify and respond to local need by working with small and local voluntary and community sector groups.
- In Gloucestershire, an integrated response to early intervention and a preventative approach, with a 'no wrong door' policy, has led to increased family resilience and a 40% reduction in reported child mental health difficulties.
- Early referrals and a whole family assessment helps reduce the risk of crisis, increases the effectiveness of preventative support, and radically reduces later statutory intervention, which can be costly.

Reflections from young carers

- Services should recognise relationships that children and young people already have with other services, and plan joint visits.
- Substance misuse teams need to be able to talk to young people.
- Use language people can understand.
- Adult Mental Health workers need better understanding of the impact on young carers, and to communicate better with them.
- Keep the family in the loop.

Overcoming barriers to whole family working: a short story

The evaluation undertaken by York Consultants, 'Turning around the Lives of Families with Multiple Problems: an evaluation of the Family and Young Carer Pathfinders Programme', reviewed the impact of successful whole family working. The research

included interviews with 308 families with young carers, 12 to 18 months after they received professional support, and found significant reduction in concerns as outlined below:

- 75% housing
- 66% parenting
- 55% child protection
- 50% school attendance
- 32% caring responsibilities
- 60% reduction in overall caring responsibilities

Whole family working also proved cost-effective, averaging a £4000 cost per family per year, saving £8000 (1:1.9) - Turning around the Lives of Families with Multiple Problems.

The research explored four questions, with headline findings given below.

What does successful whole family working look like?

- Strong structures for partnership working, including 'team around the family' meetings.
- Key worker as a consistent referral point for the family, leading to increased trust and partnership working.
- Strong understanding of the family, with good quality whole family assessments.
- Whole family activity, helping rebuild relationships beyond caring roles.

What were the chief barriers to whole family working?

- Cultural barriers, where an individual rather than family focus prevailed, with corresponding lack of confidence and skills.
- Structural barriers, where there were no formal agreements among key services, no staff training, and poor commissioning, with agencies not being required to work with the whole family.
- Financial barriers, where it was not clear who pays for what leading to no overarching and coordinated approach to services or individual care plans.

How were barriers principally overcome?

- Joint working protocols, demonstrating accountability at senior levels.
- Commissioning frameworks, embedding expectation of partnership working, a whole family approach and joint commissioning.
- Integrated training, including training in schools, in partnership with young carers.

What were the main drivers to embed effective whole family working?

- Effective leadership.
- Clear aims and objectives.
- Strategic backing, for example through a joint Memorandum of Understanding between adult and children's services.
- Regular monitoring and evaluation of whole family working practices and their impact.
- Strong culture of engagement from all relevant services.

The full report is available on line: <http://tinyurl.com/d53ul8n>.

Children and young people's involvement

Young carers have established an impressive record of speaking truth to power through local projects and national events with politicians and policy makers. In law and in practice, their voice and influence is the corner stone, without which other building blocks to progress will probably fail. Throughout the PtP programme, young carers themselves listened, challenged and offered practical solutions through presentations, roving reporting and video.

'When young people are invited to these conferences, we can see what is going on in the background to support young carers, and that things are actually happening.'
(Young carers at PtP event)

How successful was the programme?

Key to the success of the 17 Prevention through Partnership seminars was getting a group of statutory and third sector participants from a local authority area with the right level of leadership and operational management responsibility to benefit from a guided conversation, leading them to create and own their action plan. The combination of informing and doing led to a dynamic triangular exploration of policy, practice and participation. The voice of young carers themselves being brought alive through direct presentations, roving reporters and video clips was another key to success.

Feedback was consistently high across all indicators, averaging over 90% either 'outstanding' or 'very pleased'. A participant in West Sussex said, 'That was the best day of my professional working life.' Similar tributes and comments were a regular feature of the feedback, thanks to of a process which allowed key stakeholders (who may well not have met before) to form ties, develop partnerships, deepen shared values and vision and agree priority actions. These action were based on three principle and connected aspects - assessment and referral, joint working and strategic leadership.

The seminars created a shared open space to hear from national policy and practice leads, connect with the experts by experience – the young carers themselves – and to build local stronger alliances with clear intent. As a result there are now 104 Memoranda of Understanding in place across all local authorities nationally.

'One of the benefits of the event was that our Assistant Directors from health, adult and children's services were present and stayed all day. That was the greatest value – sitting and taking space all day to discuss and explore, developing a stronger working relationship through spending time together. This has helped build on an important strength we have in linking strategic leadership and operational management.'
(Fiona Side, Acting Head of Child Poverty and Early Intervention, Central Bedfordshire)

Key messages from government

Key messages from government were shared at each event, with representatives from DfE playing a full and valued part in the whole day. Here are some of the messages.

- There is strong ministerial backing for this work.
- The revised Carers Strategy, *Recognised, valued and supported: next steps for the Carers Strategy* endorses:
 - whole family working
 - that no care package should rely on a child or young person taking on an inappropriate or excessive caring role
 - the need to focus on supporting young carers where parents misuse drugs or alcohol, or have mental health difficulties
 - that local authorities should consider improving their joined-up working through adopting the Memorandum of Understanding across children and adult services.
- The Department provides support through the Early Intervention grant, strategic partnerships, funding for The Children's Society and Carers Trust to promote Whole Family Working, and investment in research and training.

Making a step change for Young Carers and their Families

Carers Trust and The Children's Society are co-delivering a two year project (2013-2015) which aims to identify, champion and embed best practice in supporting families with young carers. Funded by the Department for Education, this partnership will deliver a holistic project which evaluates and promotes positive practice and effective pathways through direct delivery; and builds capacity and awareness with key stakeholders and decision-makers across England. It will help to embed learning in policies and guidance based on the Memorandum of Understanding 2012, and the 2010 Carers Strategy.

Carers Trust and The Children's Society will be building on the success of their previous programmes (Integrated Interventions and Prevention through Partnership) in order to:

- demonstrate improved outcomes for young carers and their families through a joined-up, personalised whole family approach to a wide range of statutory departments
- promote standardised identification, whole family commissioning and delivery as detailed in the Memorandum of Understanding and the Carers Strategy, linking to existing whole family focused resources
- provide information, advice and solutions to commissioners and service providers by sharing learning and evidence from the programme through national events.

For further information, or to book on a free event, contact us on 01962 711511 or e-mail include@childrenssociety.org.uk

Bill Badham
27 March 2013

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www.youngcarer.com/ptp

Prevention through Partnership Resource Pages

www.engagetoolkit.org.uk

Engage Toolkit to support BAME families



www.refugeetoolkit.org.uk

Refugee Toolkit to support Refugee families

www.youngcarer.com/hiv

EJAF HIV toolkit to support families affected by HIV

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