



# North Earlham service evaluation project

## Executive summary

As part of the previous Government's Total Place policy, in 2009-10 Improvement East provided funding to support analysis of public expenditure in Norfolk and 'deep dive' activity into the issues relating to high contact families. Building on this initial analysis at a more local level, Norwich City Council and Improvement East funded the North Earlham service evaluation project (NESEP) to investigate issues affecting Norwich families which receive support and intervention from a range of service providers.

The NESEP focused on eight families living in a specific locality – a deprived area in the west neighbourhood area of Norwich. However, the issues the project addresses are typical of many families living in deprived areas. These families are often complex and will be engaged with a range of support and intervention services over a period of years.

### Outcomes

The project sought the following outcomes:

- Improved service delivery for families.
- More effective and efficient use of public sector resources at a time of reduced public sector spending.
- Increased capacity within families to cope by themselves.

The project was developed and delivered from August 2010 to March 2011 through a multi agency steering group led by Norwich City Council. The project consisted of two phases.

### Phase 1: Service evaluation

Norwich City Council contracted Future Projects and an independent consultant, Helen Read of CapacityBoost – (working on behalf of Future Projects), to undertake the evaluation work. This is an organisation that could demonstrate proven, effective dialogue with families in the area that use a number of support agencies.

Face-to-face interviews with eight families were undertaken in December 2010. The information from agencies was gathered during December 2010 and January 2011. The capacity to provide the necessary information varied among providers, and estimation of time and costs proved difficult. For some of the service providers, involvement had been constant over the five year period for which information was being captured.

The information gathered from the families and the service providers was pulled together in an anonymous format in a set of eight family storyboards. These are available to view through this link:

[http://www.norwich.gov.uk/site\\_files/pages/City\\_Council\\_\\_City\\_of\\_Norwich\\_Partnership\\_\\_Partnership\\_working\\_\\_North\\_Earlham\\_service\\_evaluation\\_project.html](http://www.norwich.gov.uk/site_files/pages/City_Council__City_of_Norwich_Partnership__Partnership_working__North_Earlham_service_evaluation_project.html)

Helen Read presented this information, as well as her key learning points from the service evaluation, at a workshop in February 2011. The storyboards were used as a tool for further discussion and analysis by the wide range of service providers who participated in the workshop.

Details of the evaluation work and its preliminary findings can be found in **Section 2** of the main report. [Click here](#) to view.

## Phase 2: Wider stakeholder analysis of the case study material

The workshop provided the basis for wider stakeholder analysis of the information and insights gathered from families and service providers. thinkpublic worked with Helen Read and Norwich City Council to develop and then facilitate the multi agency workshop. The aim of this workshop was to broaden the review and analysis of the information by involving practitioners and managers who work with families similar to the eight NESEP families on a daily basis. It provided a means to work collectively to understand the issues and identify opportunities to change the way we work as service providers, both individually and in partnership.

Details of the workshop and its outcomes can be found in **Section 3** of the main report. [Click here](#) to view.

## Key learning points and recommendations

A number of key learning points were identified from the service evaluation phase.

It is clear that complex and multiple issues around drugs, alcohol, domestic abuse, physical, mental ill health and/or learning difficulties, can create chaotic lives and trigger crisis situations that require intervention. There is a need to address and support the root causes of these problems and recognise that there are few quick wins.

Similarly, while there is a clear need to strengthen family resilience and develop parenting and life skills, this is an ongoing process. It requires a journey of confidence building and gaining self esteem. Support should not be time limited, and 6 to 12 week set interventions are not the answer.

There are inequalities in access to services. The offer of support may be insufficient. Some families need support to access and engage with services and statutory interventions. The role of a key worker or community-based worker acting as a facilitator and coordinator of multiple interventions can be critical to a family's access to and successful engagement with services. Practical support is often required to complete forms, apply for benefits or attend meetings. This may be provided through community workers, wider family networks, neighbours or community volunteers.

Multi agency working is essential to address these multiple and complex issues and a joined up approach is valued by the families. Good communication between providers is essential and while there are good processes in place through the common assessment framework (CAF), its effectiveness can vary. Intensive support is required, but this should be from a whole family perspective and provide the flexibility to target support when it is needed.

In some instances the flexible use of resources, such as the provision of a skip to clear rubbish, can act as a quick win for both the family and the community.

The relationship between the service provider and the family is critical. There should be clarity of purpose and expectation. Effective support and intervention occurs best when there is trust and a good rapport, operating on a 'do with' rather than a 'do to' approach. 'Soft' support provided by traditional enforcement agencies such as the police is valued and the school has a key role for both the child and parent in whole family activities and development of life skills.

There appear to be some gaps in service provision, particularly in the provision of:

- mental health services for those not meeting the thresholds
  - early identification, referral, shorter waiting lists
- services for teenagers and young adults with emotional and behavioural issues, particularly ADHD
- services during transition from child to adult, when support services diminish and are replaced by enforcement activity.

These findings were presented to the workshop participants, who were able to explore the issues in more detail. Building on these key learning points, the following recommendations have been formulated through comprehensive consideration from the perspective of the service provider, the parent, the child and the commissioner.

## **Recommendation 1: Improve multi-agency working, particularly at an early stage**

- Improve early information sharing, both by developing new systems and through staff training across agencies.
- Build on existing processes to ensure the effective use of the CAF and consider opportunities provided by the multi agency safeguarding hub (MASH).
- Develop the role of a key worker, working across agencies, as facilitator, and navigator, who is able to undertake a whole family approach.
- Explore opportunities for the co-location of staff and services – the ability to hot desk, a potential one-stop-shop or localised hub of service provision.
- Seek ways to work better together with GPs, schools and the voluntary sector.

## **Recommendation 2: Address the disconnection between adult and children's services**

- Improve the commissioning process to enable commissioning that meets the needs of the whole family by straddling children's, adult and health services. This links to the development of community budgets in relation to complex families.
- Develop a more integrated social care function that ensures matters do not get lost in the transition from child to adult.

### **Recommendation 3: Ensure there is ongoing support to build a family's confidence and resilience and to develop life skills**

- Develop the role of a key worker (links to recommendations above).
- Ensure all staff have the skills to build trust and rapport with families who struggle with multiple and complex issues.
- Provide both practical and soft skills support.
- Develop the role of community volunteers and peer mentors within the community, providing positive role models.
- Support schools to provide whole family activities and enhanced pastoral support, potentially through a schools' resource centre.
- Ensure the staged withdrawal of services and support, with better support in transition from care to independence.
- Involve the family in developing an action plan to empower them and facilitate the exit of support services.

### **Recommendation 4: Improve support to families with mental health issues**

- Increase support and access to services, particularly for adults with caring responsibilities.
- Ensure mental health services are responsive and waiting times are reduced.
- Understand the picture of low-level mental illness in Norwich, including those who are below the threshold for services and issues relating to depression.

### **Recommendation 5: Build awareness and understanding of complex needs**

- Develop tools for raising awareness by involving parents and children within complex families.
- Deliver training and awareness raising events.

### **Recommendation 6: Give families ownership over their story**

- Co-design a family-held record book for all to contribute to and access.
- Involve the family in developing an action plan to empower them and facilitate the exit of support services (links to recommendation 3).

These recommendations now need to be taken forward and tested.

Ownership of this work across service providers and commissioners is critical.

Please [click here](#) for a copy of the full report.

**For further information please contact:**

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