

APPENDIX 3

Project : Swindon Family LIFE

Why did the project start and why did people get involved?

The Swindon Family LIFE Programme is a service that has been developed with families living in Swindon through a partnership with Swindon Borough Council, Strategic Health Authority, Primary Care Trust, Wiltshire Police and other partners. Together they commissioned a social enterprise called Participle. The result became known as the Swindon LIFE team: building new Lives for Individuals and Families to Enjoy.

The service was developed for families who are in chronic crisis, facing complex difficulties including debt, threat of eviction and police intervention and who are intensive users of public services and resources. By supporting families to develop capabilities, the programme aims to improve their quality of life as well as lessening the burden on public services.

The three key approaches of the programme are:

- A team of people working in new ways, building relationships between families, workers and the community.
- Building the capability of families to use available resources to improve their lives.
- Building local living through social networks, skills and training opportunities and peer to peer learning.

What happened and what is still going on?

Participle was given a base on a Swindon estate for six months and worked closely with families and front-line workers to gain a deeper understanding of their daily lives and the challenges they faced.

The idea was to empower the families to take action so families were asked to hand-pick their own multi-agency team who they felt they could communicate with and who understood them. This formed the core of the team who would take forward Swindon LIFE.

Following initial prototyping work, the team is working with a number of families, all of whom are invited, not required, to participate. One of the principles of the programme is that the team members themselves will be required to develop their own capabilities just as much as the families will be.

Were there any barriers or learning points?

The programme requires families to participate willingly and relies on commitment so preparatory discussions must be undertaken to identify suitable candidates.

Many of these families will require a high level of support initially so there must be an adequate number of representatives from the relevant organisations available to invest time.

What were the outcomes?

As well as the important benefits to the social resilience of families and the wider community, the LIFE programme had by July 2010 achieved the following outcomes:

- 80 to 90% reduction in police call-outs.
- 7 eviction orders being prevented.
- 4 children no longer having a child protection plan.
- A reduction in domestic violence.
- 90% improvement in mental health conditions for those who reported this as a risk factor.
- 70% of children re-engaged with education where this was an issue.
- 70% of family members building positive relationships between themselves.

There were also £720,000 of estimated savings in the second year (£235,000 on actual, £485,000 on preventative).

Partners across Swindon are now working with families and Participle to develop the Life Programme further, both in terms of numbers of families and its universality across local public services.

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