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Total Somerset

High Contact Families Project

Evaluation Report

20th October 2011

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Centre for Education Policy in Practice

School of Education

Bath Spa University

Total Somerset High Contact Families Project

Evaluation Report

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Foreword

This report was completed by the Bath Spa research team between July and September 2011. We would like to thank the members of the High Contact Families Project team for all their efforts and assistance in providing data, organising interview schedules and enabling contacts with a range of individuals and organisations.

1 Introduction

The High Contact Families Project is a multi-agency initiative sponsored by the Somerset Children's Trust, and aims to explore how agencies working with families in difficulty can work more effectively with likely reducing levels of resource. It sits within the Total Somerset programme which seeks *'to remove barriers to health and well-being, ...reducing the dependency of individuals, families and communities on Somerset public services; releasing significant potential for efficiencies across services and avoiding future burdens on public spending.'*¹

The overall scope and focus of the Total Somerset programme, including the High Contact Families Project, was endorsed by the Somerset Strategic Partnership (SSP) Joint Board meeting on 1 December 2009². The Children's Trust Executive identified the Sedgemoor area as having the highest concentration of priority wards in relation to high contact families and the Sedgemoor Area Planning Group agreed that the Total Place Pilot should be focussed on the Highbridge area³.

Following a period of research the pilot phase, involving eight families, ran from March to August 2011. Three key success measures were identified, in terms of achieving outcomes agreed with each family, reducing the levels of intervention required by agencies and improving the families' overall experience of agency services⁴.

The Centre for Education Policy in Practice at Bath Spa University⁵, which has a strong focus on multi- agency working, was commissioned in July 2011 to undertake an independent evaluation of the project on behalf of the Children's Trust; the outcomes of this evaluation are set out in the following sections

¹ *Total Somerset Programme – Project Initiation Document*: Somerset County Council updated 2 June 2010

² *ibid*

³ Total Somerset - The High Contact Families Project (2011)

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ <http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/schools/education/research/cepip/default.asp>

2 Background

2.1 The new localism – Total Place and Big Society

The underlying principles of the Total Place initiative, on which the Somerset project was based, are not particularly new. The Major Conservative government had launched the Single Regeneration Budget in 1995⁶, challenging local agencies to bring together resources to match fund targeted local issues, while throughout the New Labour government period the notion of local governance and accountability for community well-being was developed, with the establishment of local area agreements, with their associated partnerships⁷ and new statutory partnerships with specific responsibilities for areas such as children's welfare, including children's trusts⁸. While there was reference to the need to involve and consider the views of those directly involved, and the needs of particular communities, the emphasis on these programmes tended to be top-down, focussing on improving collaboration between agencies and the more efficient use of resources in a given area.

Another strand emerged in the later 2000s from concerns about the perceived 'democratic deficit' and lack of engagement of many individuals, particularly from more disadvantaged backgrounds, in their local communities. These approaches strongly informed the local government reorganisation programme in 2007/09⁹, and the 2008 White Paper 'Communities in Control'¹⁰, with their emphasis on creating larger more efficient unitary authorities, supported by locally accountable community governance structures.

A further emergent strand was the notion of 'social capital'. This can be defined as: *'increasing the confidence and capacity of individuals and small groups to get involved in activities and build mutually supportive networks that hold communities together'*¹¹. This influenced much New Labour thinking over community and disadvantage, but was given heightened importance following the recession of 2008, as the need for significant reductions in service costs became apparent, alongside growing concerns that the conventional top down planning and coordination mechanisms were failing to deliver sufficiently integrated and effective services at a local level, especially for the most troubled families.

⁶ See <http://www.landecon.cam.ac.uk/research/reuag/uars/projects/urgsr.html>

⁷ See the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

⁸ See The Children Act (2004)

⁹ 'Strong and Prosperous Communities – The Local Government White Paper': Department for Communities And Local Government 26 October 2006

¹⁰ 'Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power': Department for Communities And Local Government July 2008

¹¹ <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=1347434> – dated 21 October 2008

A number of local authorities and partnerships were already developing initiatives along these lines, building on some of the more successful partnership approaches developed through programmes such as Sure Start and Youth Justice, and further support was provided from the government via the 'Think Family' Initiative (see below)¹². These culminated in the 'Total Place' initiative, outlined by HM Treasury in March 2010, which set out the aim *'through bold local leadership and better collaborative working... to deliver services which meet people's needs, improve outcomes and deliver better value for money'* by

- *starting from the citizen viewpoint, to break down the organisational and service silos which cause confusion to citizens, create wasteful burdens of data collection and management on the frontline and which contribute to poor alignment of services; and*
- *providing strong local, collective and focused leadership which supports joined up working and shared solutions to problems with citizens at the heart of service design.*¹³

Many of these elements are implicit in the current government's 'Big Society' initiative, which seeks to:

*'Give citizens, communities and local government the power and information they need to come together, solve the problems they face and build the Britain they want... Only when people and communities are given more power and take more responsibility can we achieve fairness and opportunity for all.'*¹⁴

However, the current government initiative appears to have a much clearer focus on cost saving, the role of front-line professionals, the voluntary sector and private philanthropy, as well as individual responsibility¹⁵.

¹² *'Think Family: Improving Support for Families at Risk'*: Department for Children, Families and Schools 2009

¹³ *'Total place: a whole area approach to public services'*: HM Treasury March 2010

¹⁴ http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/building-big-society_0.pdf

¹⁵ See Francis Maude quotation in <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/big-society-in-action> 26 September 2010

2.2 The Concept of High Contact Families

Throughout the New Labour government period a concern developed that, despite a range of strategies to promote integrated working and support disadvantaged communities, initiatives tended to focus on specific groups or age ranges. This was compounded by the unintended consequence of the integration of children's services, in distancing children's from adult's social care. Those initiatives which were successful in engaging with families as a whole, such as Sure Start or Extended Schools, experienced difficulties in accessing additional services, while some areas such as Youth Justice began to develop projects such as Families in Focus as part of their preventive strategies¹⁶.

There was a recognition that early intervention and support for families, some of whose members were individually likely to suffer difficulties or become involved in criminal activities could help to deliver a number of broader social goals, in terms of education, health, housing employment and general community well-being, and actually save costs in the longer term. This was encapsulated in the Think Family programme, bringing together the then Departments for Children, Schools and Families, Health, Communities and Local Government, Justice and the Home Office¹⁷, and by the later White Paper 'Support for all'¹⁸ published in January 2010. Although the model has been changed, the notions of early intervention and prevention with troubled families have remained a key priority with the present government, through the Field¹⁹ and Allen²⁰ reports into poverty and early intervention.

Research undertaken by Somerset Council on behalf of the Strategic Partnership has indicated that such high contact families:

'consume significant resource (up to £250k per family per annum) and time of agencies; are often locked into self-perpetuating and recurrent cycles/patterns of behaviour; have poor outcomes; and can impact widely on the quality of life for neighbours and communities.

¹⁶see for example

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/healthandsocialcare/childrenyoungpeoplefamilies/youthoffendingservice/yospreventativeservices/yosfamiliesinfocus.htm>

¹⁷ *Think Family: Improving Support for Families at Risk*: Department for Children, Families and Schools 2009

¹⁸ *'Support for All'*: Department for Children, Schools and Families, January 2010

¹⁹<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110120090128/http://povertyreview.independent.gov.uk/media/20254/poverty-report.pdf>

²⁰ <http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/inthenews/a0073019/department-responds-to-publication-of-graham-allens-independent-review-of-early-intervention>

*'Despite the best efforts of many committed professionals, the duplication, complexity and fragmentation of the current system makes it hard to take a whole person/whole family approach that can address causes rather than symptoms and reduce levels of dependency on public services.'*²¹

The initial task of the project team was therefore to design an intervention which could explore, with a given number of high contact families, ways in which these issues could be addressed.

²¹ *Total Somerset Programme – Project Initiation Document: Somerset County Council updated 2 June 2010*

3 The Pilot Model

3.1 Research and Development Phase

The project team undertook a research and development phase involving 22 agencies and a number of families. A number of project tools were developed for use with the families, and several of these have been considered as part of the evaluation data (see below). Key learning points were:

- *From the family's point of view, there is nobody in charge of the system*
- *And from a system's point of view, there is nobody in charge of the system.*
- *The cost of providing services to Barely Coping and Chaotic Families in Somerset Families ranges from £26,000 to £200,000, excluding benefits & costs of looked after children²². [our emphasis]*

The families identified the following priorities:

"We want someone to help us find the solutions to the things that affect our family the most. The things that matter to us are,

- *that you listen to us*
- *that you understand our needs*
- *that we don't have to repeat ourselves*
- *that you respond in a timely manner*
- *that it is easy for us to access the services we need when we need them*
- *that we are supported in taking responsibility for our own actions*
- *that you do not pass us from pillar to post"*²³

The project team identified three particular areas for development:

Effective de-escalation planning, using a whole Family Plan to encourage agencies working together differently with families on identified underlying problems and causes of instability.

Developing Family Advocate / Family Coach roles. The Family Advocate was seen as someone who could help vulnerable families navigate the fragmented and complex pattern of public services, while the role of the Coach was to help provide ongoing support as the family stabilises and agencies are able to withdraw or reduce support / intervention.

²² Total Somerset - The High Contact Families Project (2011)

²³ *ibid*

Simplifying and integrating referral and assessment processes across agencies, while developing approaches which result in better shared understanding and learning about the family.²⁴

3.2 Project Activity

The pilot's overall aim was defined as *'to deliver new thinking across a broad range of agencies to stimulate a fresh debate about the potential for new and different solutions for future service design and delivery.'*²⁵

The pilot's overall purpose was stated as *'to identify and test solutions that will lead to:*

- *Better and more efficient services*
- *Improved outcomes for families*
- *Cashable and non-cashable savings for agencies*²⁶

In terms of scope it was intended to:

- *focus on the political ward of Highbridge in Sedgemoor over 6 months from March 1st to August 31st 2011.*
- *initially work with the 8 families the High Contact Families project engaged during its 'research and discovery' stage.*
- *continue involving agencies and organisations working with the same demanding and troubling families*
- *take on referrals as resources and growing expertise permits.*
- *provide a genuine opportunity to test out practical options locally for delivering services differently, saving significant delivery costs and improving outcomes for families.*
- *identify changes that will reduce the extent and complexity of contact & involvement, reduce cost significantly and improve outcomes.*²⁷

The pilot worked with eight families over the six month period.

²⁴ ibid

²⁵ ibid

²⁶ ibid

²⁷ ibid

3.3 Project Roles

The Family Advocate was given a caseload of families, and was asked to lead a multi-agency approach in responding to 'What really matters to each Family'. For the families this included developing an informed understanding of the family, dealing with any immediate family needs and introducing them to their Coach. For agencies this meant facilitating relationships and meetings between the families and agencies, brokering multi-agency meetings and encouraging information and intelligence sharing.²⁸

The Family Coach was intended to facilitate and support the family's engagement in constructing their whole family action plan and agreed outcomes.²⁹

3.4 Project Tools

The project team developed a number of interesting tools for understanding, supporting and monitoring the progress of families within the project. A number of these were considered as part of the case studies produced by the evaluation team, notably:

- Agency contact data spreadsheet (agency costs from March 2010 to August 2011) - used as a key element of the cost benefit analysis (section 5iii)
- Cost Savings Calculator – based on DfE model
- Customer Journey Mapping Tool (May '09-Aug '11) – this was a highly innovative approach, based on a Treasury Model³⁰ which enabled the highs and lows of each family's experience to be mapped against a series of other data
- Final Case Study - a one-page summary of family's situation and progress completed by the Family Coach
- Whole Family Action Plan
- Family Wellbeing Tool
- Family Experience Tool

²⁸ ibid

²⁹ ibid

³⁰ 'Total place: a whole area approach to public services': HM Treasury March 2010, p 19

4 Methodology: Data Generation and Analysis

4.1 Semi-structured Interviews

4.1.1 Data Generation

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with: five families (parents); five (respective) Family Coaches; the Family Advocate and representatives from five key agencies that have worked with the families during the pilot phase of the project.

4.1.2. Developing an interview guide

Four separate interview guides were prepared for use with the families (Appendix A.1.1.), the Family Coaches (Appendix A.1.2.), the Family Advocate (Appendix A.1.3.) and the agencies (Appendix A.1.4.). The interview questions addressed a range of issues relating to the project's three key success measures: 1) More efficient services; 2) Achieve outcomes from Whole Family Action Plan and 3) Improve family's experience. The project's 'Wellbeing' tool (Appendix A.6.1.), 'Family Experience' tool (Appendix A.6.2.) and 'Whole Family Action Plan' (Appendix A.6.3.) were tabled at appropriate points during the interviews with the families and the Family Coaches, to provide a focus for specific lines of questioning.

A 'line-grading interview tool' was also employed at the start of the interviews with the families, Family Coaches and the Family Advocate; whereby interviewees were asked to position themselves at the end of the pilot phase, by placing an 'X' on a line between two points A and B; point A representing their position at the start of the project and point B representing their ideal scenario from involvement in the project. This tool centred discussions on what worked well to get to 'X' and what still needed to happen to get to point B.

4.1.3. Capturing the data

The length of the interviews ranged from 35 to 75 minutes. The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and all interviews were transcribed in full.

4.1.4. Analysis of data from semi-structured interviews

Systematic analysis of the data was achieved through the manual analysis of the full and accurate transcriptions from each of the 16 recordings.

The analysis involved a general inductive approach guided by a framework relating to impact on families and impact on agencies. This study borrowed thematic analysis techniques embedded in Grounded Theory.

All transcripts were analysed using the same procedure. All quotes from the transcriptions were assigned a 'transcription reference' to attribute comments to a particular individual.

This ensured that at every stage of the analysis all quotes could be attributed to the specific context in which they were made.

Interview data was also used to triangulate and inform the case studies (see below)

4.2. Case studies

Case studies were compiled for five families to exemplify project findings, drawing upon the following sources of data:

4.2.1. Data collected and provided by the project

- Final Case Study (FCS) (one-page summary of family’s situation and progress completed by Family Advocate)
- Customer Journey Mapping Tool (CJMT, refer to Appendix A.6.4.) (May ‘09-Aug ‘11)
- Agency cost/contact data spreadsheet (ACD) (agency costs from March 2010 to August 2011)
- Whole Family Action Plan (WFAP) (reviewed in August 2010)
- Family Wellbeing Tool (FWT)
- Family Experience Tool (FET)

4.2.2. Data generated specifically for the evaluation

- Interview with Family Coach (IFC)
- Interview with family parent (mum, dad or both) (IFP)
- Interview with Family Advocate (IFA)
- Interviews with Agencies (IA)
- Line-grading interview tool (LGIT) (Family Coach)
- Line-grading interview tool (LGIT) (family members)

4.2.3. Analysis of data for Family Case Studies

Data sources for each case study family were triangulated (compared with each other to check for corroboration and/or contradiction) against the key outcomes specified for the pilot as follows:

Key Success Measures	Outcomes	Data triangulation:
More Efficient Services	Nature and extent of agencies involved / interventions - at regular points during pilot	JMT, FCS, IFC, IFP
	Cost Analysis: Level of cost savings Location of cost savings	ACD, JMT, FCS, IFC, IFP

	Non-cash benefits relating to professional roles (working practices; achievements; relationships / networks; professional knowledge; job satisfaction)	FCS, IFC, IA
	Non-cash benefits relating to family	FCS, IFC, LGIT, IFP
Achieve outcomes from 'Whole Family Action Plan (WFAP)	Profile of delivered and undelivered outcomes at end of pilot	WFAP, FCS, IFC, IFP
	Key Journey Steps to achievement of outcomes	FCS, IFC, IFP
Improve family's experience	Achievement by families / Exit strategy with families	FWT, FET, LGIT
	Achievement with families / Exit strategy with Family Advocate and Family Coaches	IFA, IFP, LGIT

Interview transcripts were coded as described above to enable quotes to be selected for triangulation against other data sources. An analytical commentary was given, for each piece of data quoted, at the end of each thematic section of the case studies.

4.3. Cost / Contact

- The Agency Cost/Contact Data spreadsheet (ACD) (appendix A.5.2.), supplied by the project, gave agency costs for each family from March 2010 to August 2011 (with the exception of family 2 for which data were only available from July 2010).
- Additionally, we used the Department for Education (DfE) Family Savings Calculator (appendix A.5.1.) to estimate future savings. This tool estimates the reduction of risk through successfully completing an intervention, based on national average data collected by the NatCen Information System. It compares the number of incidents for each category within a standard list before the intervention, with the number after the intervention. The reduction in such incidents is used to calculate projected savings. The Family Savings Calculator had been partly completed for Family 1 by the project. We completed it for seven families using data from the Customer Journey Mapping Tool.

4.3.1. Analysis of cost data

- We used the Agency Cost/Contact Data spreadsheet (appendix A.5.3) to compare the total agency costs for each month during the pilot with those in the equivalent 6-month period of 2010 (March –August) for each of the case study families. We then triangulated these figures against qualitative data from the Family Case Study and interviews with Family Coach and family to identify where costs of interventions, which were evidenced in the interviews, had not been recorded in the cost data.
- For all the families together, we summed the total agency costs for the 6 months of the pilot and compared these with costs for the 6 months immediately preceding the pilot

(Sept 2010-Feb 2011) and with the costs of the equivalent 6 month period in 2010 (March – August).

- Before using the Family Savings Calculator we chose to distinguish between ‘incidents’ i.e. unplanned emergencies involving expenditure by police, courts, hospitals or social services – and planned ‘interventions’: longer term support such as parenting courses, debt counselling etc. According to the literature, appropriately-targeted ‘interventions’ should reduce the number of future ‘incidents’, thus realising savings in the longer term.
- Using the Customer Journey Mapping Tool to distinguish between ‘incidents’ and ‘interventions’, we entered the number of ‘incidents’ recorded in the JMT in the 12 months leading up to the pilot (March 2010 – February 2011) for 7 families (no JMT had been completed for two families).
- To provide comparative data, we then entered the number of ‘incidents’ for each of the above families during the pilot project and doubled, since this was a six-month period being compared with a 12 month period. This assumes that the number of incidents over the next 6 months (September 2011 – February 2012) will be similar to that during the pilot period, despite the withdrawal of Family Coach and Family Advocate support.

5. Analysis of Findings

Working within a framework relating to the impact of the project on the families and the agencies involved, a number of themes have emerged from the analysis of the interviews. Refer to appendix A.2. for the findings in full, where the themes are linked to quotes from the interview transcripts. These themes are reported below, together with exemplar quotes, under the headings: 1) Significance of the Coach/Advocate model, 2) Impact on families and 3) Impact on agencies. Quotes labelled 'team' originate from the Coach/Advocate team; quotes labelled 'family' originate from a parent; quotes labelled 'agency' originate from agency professionals.

Please refer to appendix A.4. for the full findings and analysis for each of the five family case studies and appendix A.3. for individual case study summaries. An overall summary analysis of the five case studies is reported below (5.2). A summary of the cost benefit analysis is reported below (5.3).

5.1 Interviews

5.1.1 Significance of the Coach / Advocate Model

This project has demonstrated that there is a need for such an approach to fill the current gap in service delivery for these families. The Coach/Advocate team approach has been shown to provide support for quite practical reasons; including supporting those families coping with low levels of literacy.

"...she was having problems... to sort out tax credit and benefits and things... quite practical stuff really." [Team]

"I think they [agencies] need to spend more time understanding why [the families] are not coming to appointments, why they're not answering letters... I would say half of our families have got literacy issues." [Team]

A key outcome for this project has been to provide families with flexible support, built upon trust and respect; encouraging families to develop skills and positive attributes.

"...it's a friendship kind of, mentor role, and it's, it's just really obvious that these families they just don't have that direction..."[Team]

There is clear support from agencies to continue to develop the project; with recommendations to widen the scope of the project to other families,

"[we now] need to start looking at saying, well we've, we've cleared out the major problems, let's stop some of those barely coping, slipping into chaos..." [Agency]

including a more preventative approach working with less chaotic families and extending the project to families in rural areas who may have different needs.

“...I can instantly think of a whole number of families, you know who would benefit from the project... you know some of the villages... their needs might be slightly different.” [Agency]

The project has also highlighted the need for increased provision of those few services that work within the family home, notably the Parent Family Support Advisor service.

“I worked very closely with the Parent Family Support Advisors... they’re really my only main sort of resource that [the FA] can refer to for whole family support... [they] also provide Triple P Parenting Programme... however, there are only two of them...” [Team]

There is an awareness within the project team that the agencies involved in the project may be developing a dependency on the support provided by the Family Coaches and Advocate, to work more effectively.

“...probably got concern about the dependency of the agencies on us [the project]...” [Team]

Although the short timescale of the project could be considered helpful to focus the families’ actions, there are indications that the intervention period of six-months is too short for some families and it is sometimes difficult to measure impact within such a short time.

“...this sort of thing is a long-term issue, that I think that doing it for six months is too short, and we knew it was going to be too short, I think that if you’re looking at it from the long-term perspective then it certainly can be better in the long-term, for certain families...” [Team]

“Difficult to measure isn’t it ... [for] so many of the families [that are in] High Contact [are] families that deal with the ‘here and now’, that may be not analytical about the past or the future...” [Agency]

As part of the project’s exit strategy, a Lead Professional role is being identified for each family from within key agencies to take over some of the support that had been provided by the Advocate. This key contact will provide tapering support to the families for a set period of time after the end of the pilot project.

“...our exit strategy that would be briefing a key contact in a recognised [Lead] agency for [the family], who would hold this kind of futures plan [new action plan targets].” [Team]

5.1.1.1 Family Coach

What has worked well has been the opportunity for the Coach and family to meet regularly to develop a relationship built upon trust and understanding. In particular, the role of the Family Coach enables the bigger picture to emerge, to ensure that the families’ needs are understood and prioritised.

“...the understanding by[the family] that [the project] is totally independent that you know it’s, I’m not representing a particular agency, I’m coming as me [the coach].” [Team]

“...the opportunity to actually start to discuss really about what’s going on, um, in their lives... this notion of having some kind of support available, as a kind of an assurance really...” [Team]

It is clear the Family Coach has worked closely with the Family Advocate to broker the relationship between frontline staff and the families; enabling agencies to gain access to these families.

“Homes in Sedgemoor have used my [coach] role quite considerably now, obviously to get the gas serviced was the first thing, but then they kind of realised well actually, you know, (FC and FA) seem to be able to get in the house, so we need to do the smoke detectors, so we’ll go through them, and perhaps we can do a visit with the them, so they have kind of used us that way to get in.”[Team]

Experience as a Family Coach has been shown to impact positively on the Coach’s day job, from which they have been seconded to their coaching role.

“...if there’s any issues in any of the other families that impact on [our agency], the FA uses our Family Coach [seconded from agency] as that source of information, so she’s the... lead advisor for the FA should any of those other families need any advice or support [from our agency].” [Agency]

There are key issues to consider when employing a Family Coach; it is important that the Coach is comfortable with their remit and has the ability to respond appropriately, flexibly and regularly to the needs of their family.

“...some of the coaches are so tight with the timescale they’ve got and their flexibility... they haven’t actually physically got the time to go chasing [the families]...”[Team]

The project’s legacy is the intention of some agencies to consider either developing the Family Coach role from within their organisation’s frontline staff or seeking volunteers to fulfil the remit from within the local community.

“... I shall be making sure that we have some form of support, voluntary coaching in some form or another...and I then will be... trying... to find ways of, or means of identifying people who, within the community, are in a position to be coaches.”[Agency]

5.1.1.2. Family Advocate

The Advocate role has proved successful in providing support to the family to engage with agencies, especially where relationships have been difficult.

"[FA has] really just kept the project running to make sure... they've [the agencies] all been there, she made sure the cover's been in place..." [Agency]

"...there's comments that at the time I didn't like, um, but I'm glad they [Social Care] did say it because it's one, it's wanted me to sort of prove, prove to them, prove to myself I can and I will look after my two boys." [Family]

Support from the Family Advocate ensures that there is a more co-ordinated approach from the agencies.

"...we've learned a huge amount about the [Advocate's role]... there is a need for somebody to cut the crap, to cut through that bureaucracy." [Agency]

There are indications that, although the Advocate acts as a conduit between the families and the agencies, there have been occasions when the Advocate appears to have been overly focussed on supporting the needs of the families rather than adopting a more mediating role between families and the agencies. This suggests there may be a need to position the Advocate more equitably between the families and the agencies, to ensure that agencies feel equally supported to develop good practices to best meet the needs of families.

"[The Advocate does] need to look both ways... I felt... that the Advocate was perhaps a little too focused on guiding families through a complicated system... so I do think you know that [if] this project will continue, that we make sure we get the learning back into the agencies to correct what we're not providing effectively now." [Agency]

Although the consensus appears to be that the Coach/Advocate model needs a longer timescale to provide the necessary support to the families, to ensure they become able to progress independently;

"I think the longer the project can work with the family the more lasting the impact you'll have." [Team]

there is also an opinion that the shorter timescale proved helpful in some cases to focus the work of the project team and their families.

"...from the very beginning we've just been very conscious that we're not here forever and it's, in a way, it's been good having only a short space of time, because it's certainly focussed us." [Team]

There is evidence that in some cases there appears to have been a merging between the Coach and Advocate roles. Although, it appears that this was down to time pressures and the flexibility of the individuals involved.

“I saw it as being, the Coach being, you know the main person that would go into the family, um, and then to be passing on the information to the Advocate, um, but for this family I don’t think, I don’t think it would have worked as well...” [Team]

There are indications that the role of the Advocate had been historically fulfilled by Social Workers, but that this has now been lost, likely due to rising thresholds for Social Services intervention.

“...you may want to, as a Social Worker, go with a family to Citizens Advice, to a doctor’s appointment, managers will actually say ‘no’, ‘it’s not your role, you cannot do, you know you haven’t got the time to do that’. So they’ve [FA/FC] fulfilled a very important... you know would have been part of the role fifteen years ago, probably, to do, to escort somebody” [Agency]

Suggestions to develop an Advocate-type role from existing roles within organisations have been proposed.

“I would like to see it expand into some of our other deprived areas with the learning we’ve had. I think... we also need to find a way of creating that Advocate role from, from perhaps within other existing roles in our organisations.” [Team]

5.1.2. Impact on Families

5.1.2.1 Positive outcomes

The project has contributed to a range of positive outcomes for families, ranging from enabling access to services, front-line professionals, resources and courses.

“...after her being registered for Home Finder for two years, and not realising that she wasn’t actually bidding properly [online], we managed to get her bidding and to get her to go to weekly [support] pod for them to bid on her behalf... she [has now] moved... we facilitated all of that.” [Team]

“...he’s certainly more well equipped in that he knows who to contact...”[Team]

“I didn’t know there were so many groups and organisations about, you know, I didn’t know there was anyone that could help me.” [Family]

Often these positive outcomes can be linked to simple, low cost solutions.

“... he had worked in the past, we looked at possible training and skills for him, courses and things and that for him to go onto, um, and one of the problems obviously because he wasn’t able to sort of get around the area that easily having to spend money on bus fares which

would then impact on his money each week, and we managed to get hold of a pushbike for him, at a very small cost...”[Team]

The project has focussed on developing supportive and positive relationships between the project team and the families; building the families’ confidences to enable them to engage constructively with, what they often consider to be hard-to-reach agencies, creating greater independence to work towards more stable lives.

“...starting from where the families want to start and coaxing and supporting them will provide opportunities for them to take on bigger things.” [Team]

There is evidence to suggest that some families may now be equipped to take on stronger challenges than those set in the original Whole Family Action Plan.

“...we’re certainly at the point where we could provide some more challenge...” [Team]

Whilst acknowledging that the project is clearly working towards generating independence, there are indications that some of the families may be showing signs of dependency. However, this needs to be viewed in the context of work ‘in progress’ for many of these families, especially within this project’s short time frame.

“...the whole point of the project was for the families to own it themselves and to do things themselves... whilst we keep them motivated...” [Team]

“...it’s difficult really [avoiding dependence], because, yeah, I mean, you can’t sort of force them into anything particularly, you can’t give them sanctions, um, all you can do is give them some sort of direction and give them a goal and give them some of hope. ...and it’s almost, some of the times I think you’ve almost got to do it for them. ... that’s the frustration side of it.”[Team]

“If it wasn’t for them I wouldn’t have got as far as I’ve gotten now, probably would have got a lot worse to be honest... I could have lost the children, I could have, you know, lost the house... I still need that little bit of help ... I think, if I let go of this point now – I don’t want to, but I can see it, do you know what I mean, I can see the horizon’s coming and it’s going to go shit again.” [Family]

Key amongst the positive outcomes for families has been the impact that the project has had on developing positive attitudes within the families; on their outlook in general and attitude to acquiring new skills, in particular.

“It’s boosting my confidence...” [Family]

“...I’ve had a few problems with my eldest... daughter. ...and the parenting course, hopefully will be of assistance... you know that’ll help me with the kids.” [Family]

These changes in attitudes seem to be related to improvements in behaviour, with reductions in demands on services and the concomitant reduction in agency costs. Improved behaviours also impact positively on the families' social lives; often taking pressure off the children. Significantly, improvements in behaviour also impact on their relationship with front-line professionals.

"...just to see in a Child Protection Plan... how few actions the Social Worker has because it's a High Contact Project family." [Team]

" [After Triple P] I've calmed down... I found that I could listen more... I made friends with one of the mums" [Family]

"...one of our families... absolutely petrified to, to speak to the school... we've mainly focussed on... building that relationship... and [she] now feels comfortable and phones the school directly..." [Team]

5.1.2.2 Action plan targets

The families are shown to be supported to reach their targets through a series of manageable stages.

"I never judged her at all... Talked about things being small changes instead of massive steps... and we worked from the small changes up" [Team]

However, there are recommendations that the inclusion of sub-sections to each of the Whole Family Action Plan target stages would prove helpful to families; allowing them to demonstrate their achievements through the smaller steps. This would avoid families feeling demoralised because they haven't yet reached their main targets. There are also indications that some additional or different targets could have been set from the outset.

"[Reaching the targets is] such a long process... So then it can be demoralising if you're, it's about looking over this [action plan] every month, and he still hasn't got a job, I think, for me, I think it would be more useful to have like a broad category, broad categories, but then have the steps clearly laid out that you're going to take to get there, so that each month it does look as though you're ticking something off." [Team]

The project clearly illuminates the challenges that these families face in sustaining positive behaviour whilst coping with debt problems; transport-related issues; issues relating to relationships and isolation; mental health issues and issues related to challenges they face as parents.

"... being a single dad it does sort of, it is hard to come up with, with some of the money to pay off the debt. Obviously organise the debt, is one of my main things that I would love... to get sorted." [Family]

“Accessibility is huge... the resources are in Bridgewater... it’s organising your day, it’s having that money put aside for... the bus or train...” [Team]

“...I ain’t got any [friends]... so me life is me children...” [Family]

“...there was a lot of, um, worry, stress, anxiety and probably depression...” [Team]

“...they’ve not had good parenting themselves...” [Team]

5.1.3 Impact on agencies

5.1.3.1 Delivery of services

The project has enabled a range of agencies, including the Police, Social Services, Job Centre Plus, Homes in Sedgemoor and the District Council, to deliver more efficient and effective services. This has been achieved by engaging more effectively with each other, with the families and by a reduction in demand for services.

“...I think certainly the two or three that I have known for some years have had lots of intervention, lots of good will, um, but nobody’s ever got to the real bottom, or root cause of their problems and I think this pilot has...” [Agency]

“From a business point of view it’s probably cut down on the amount of interventions we’ve had... [FA] can ask one adviser a question about eight families and it will all be done within 12 minutes, whereas if, if all eight families had to make an appointment to come and see us it would be quite resource intensive.” [Agency]

“Of the families that were working... within the project... None of those six families are on my top ten list [now], they’ve all dropped out of my area of concern. So that’s the legacy. Those six families at today’s rate, are not my priorities. ...if I was to write my list of top ten again now, those six families wouldn’t be in it.” [Agency]

The project has supported families by empowering them to engage constructively with agencies and to access available resources by working closely with agencies to ensure that the services they deliver are more timely and appropriate and can prevent escalation into further chaos.

“[FA] been able to develop trust and understanding from them [agencies] about the coordination of appropriate or alternative responses that they could make... [FA] pulled together Housing and Police to... have a quite open and frank discussion about what options [mum’s] now got...” [Team]

“...you’re acting, you’re working smarter, you’re working more efficiently. I still haven’t got a pile of money there, but I’ve got better performance in a load of other areas...”[Agency]

5.1.3.2 Communication and collaboration

The model has facilitated improved networking, communication and collaboration between the agencies. The agencies indicate that poor communication and collaboration is an issue in the ‘old system’ and, despite a committed involvement with the project, communication issues still prove to be a problem within some agencies.

“I see the project as, as the conduit to making things happen with all the agencies that are involved with these families... and the glue, the cohesion that brings them all together.”[Agency]

“...a lot of the problems I think is the fact that one agency doesn’t speak to another agency and there’s stuff going on in one agency that the other agency doesn’t obviously know about...”[Team]

There is evidence to suggest that agencies moderate their approaches and responses to incidents, based on intelligence from the project.

“...the Police Officer that can... pop in the house and have an informal chat, Housing too, you know, having more open conversations with their tenant... wanting to explore alternatives, um, actions that could be taken outside of normal protocol...”[Agency]

5.1.3.3 Intelligence within and between agencies

The project has highlighted that frontline practitioners have insufficient time to spend with their families to enable them to understand fully the family’s situation, challenges and needs. This project has improved the breadth and depth of available intelligence on these families and, in doing so, illuminates how practices can change to respond more effectively and efficiently.

None of these issues have been ever actually sat down and talked about before... because [we] hadn’t got to the root of the problems, we’d only ever dealt with the symptoms.”[Agency]

“...we haven’t got anybody that I can go to and say ‘what do you know about?’ Whereas I know that I could do that with this project.”[Agency]

Improved intelligence has been shown to embrace multi-agency perspectives and equips agencies to respond appropriately to meet the specific needs of the family.

“[before the project] I would have looked at it purely and simply from [our agency’s] perspective. ... being institutional there because I’m not taking into account individual family needs...”[Agency]

“...hopefully, the project can influence... the agencies as well... actually get better at delivering at point of demand... sometimes [the families] don’t ‘need the whole roast dinner, they are just looking for peas and gravy’... that’s when we have to listen well to understand what the family’s after.” [Team]

5.1.3.4 Institutional practices

Through the work of the Family Advocate role, the model has raised awareness as to how institutional practices can impact negatively on both outcomes for the families and on the services themselves; suggesting that it is not only families that can be ‘hard-to-reach’ but the agencies themselves.

“[family has] moved to [a new area with]... , no consideration about the suitability of that location for her as an individual, with her history. No consideration was apparently given to the impact that was going to have on the other twelve residents in this very tight-knit close, who clearly were living a reasonably level ordinary lifestyle with no calls to... the police, and then suddenly this family go there, and it kicks off... then the children were being picked on, the children reacted badly... the kid doesn’t go [to school]... and it just mushroomed... But [institutional] rules and regulations are such that she doesn’t qualify for a move because she’s got a house.” [Agency]

“[with] the advocate role and the coach role... the family’s only giving their message once, rather than having to duplicate, and I think that’s one of the most positive outcomes out of the pilot...” [Agency]

“...agencies have got to work together and if the agencies can work together we can make it easier, but it’s about – I mean, my personal view is the families aren’t in chaos we are.” [Agency]

Evidence suggests that some agencies struggle to work effectively with other agencies; contributed to, to some extent, by the current pressures on budgets.

“...there needs to be closer working, the, the artificial structures between the various agencies at the moment are one of the biggest barriers...” [Agency]

“I think one of the difficult issues for the strategic leads on a project like this is [that] investment and change of behaviour in one organisation may reap benefits in another organisation... [however]the confines of budgets... don’t really support that joint working.” [Agency]

Such negative impacts from institutional practices can lead to 'business failure' with related cost implications.

"...we deal with, sort of, business failure on a lot of occasions because of the difficulty families are having, do have accessing the right agency at the right time." [Agency]

5.1.3.5. Opportunities to change the way services are delivered to improve outcomes for families

There are numerous examples of how frontline practice has improved during the course of the project, to meet the needs of the families and improve much needed positive outcomes.

"...we've... been trying to... [make] sure that we've got the right support in place for our families at an early stage. And they've been communicating them better with the Housing Officer, so that's something that we've put in place recently..." [Agency]

These changes in practice range from agencies undertaking joint visits with members of the project team to agencies providing some very simple, practical solutions to ensuring that families and agencies engage effectively.

"...now the Social Workers are phoning us up and saying, 'Do you know this has happened with the family? Can we go in together and do a joint visit?', it's really working well." [Team]

"...giving [families] a phone call to remind them about an appointment, I think is a huge, huge but very simple thing that could be done to avoid wasted appointments..." [Team]

The project has illuminated that institutional practices need to change because they are actually creating barriers for families.

"...it was saying to the Attendance Officer 'can you come round [to the home]'... instead of going into the school, which is quite intimidating...[saying] 'how about, you know, you come round and you see what the home life is like, you see how the kids interact' and get a better understanding of it." [Team]

Recommendations for changes to improve outcomes for families have been identified through the activity of the project. These range from changes to existing practices to ensure that families feel less intimidated by the agencies; to gathering intelligence earlier through a single point of contact in a lead professional role, employing a type of Whole Family Common Assessment Framework to ensure that agencies have access to and understand the whole picture; to working more collaboratively to provide multi-agency solutions, a form of 'Team Around the Family' with ready access to information; to improving communication practices both within agencies, between agencies and between agencies and families.

“I think in the long term if we had an advocate role in areas of most need who acted as single point of contact it would [save staff time] in the long-term” [Agency].

“...I think collectively as agencies we can all see that without a more joined up approach team around the family... we can't move them on.”[Agency]

“I think there needs to be... some central repository of personal data with the correct security... But there must be a way of hosting that kind of information locally. ...but the legislation, and the rules as they stand at the moment don't help the move towards that kind of environment.” [Agency]

It is clear that new ways of working need to be developed to make agencies easier-to-reach; to support agencies to better understand the needs of the families and to equip agencies to respond appropriately.

“But I can see the benefit in having people within this organisation attached to upcoming, potential chaotic families. ...there is a benefit for saying to [frontline staff], ‘actually I need you to spend more time with that family’.” [Agency]

“...[we have discussed] where we've got high contact families can we flag those? Because if we can... fast track those through the system, because benefit failure impacts on just about everything... and get that sorted, then hopefully that will then have a knock-on effect on the other agencies.”[Agency]

5.2 Family Case Studies

5.2.1 Agency involvement

In all the families studied the level of agency involvement remained the same or increased during the pilot period. Those most frequently cited were children's social care, the police, housing, and debt counselling.

The quality of the interventions improved, as crisis management gave way to more positive engagement between the families and the agencies involved. The project team facilitated meetings between the families and individual agencies, as well as ensuring networking and information exchange between agencies. The emphasis on practical and achievable outcomes led to a more focussed and targeted approach, while the achievement of those outcomes meant that families were more willing and able to engage with specific agencies. Frustration levels for agency staff, e.g. in terms of missed appointments or inability to access the family home, were also reduced. In some cases this positive approach meant that further needs were identified and addressed – itself leading to greater agency involvement.

5.2.2 Costs

In only one family were significant cost savings identified, resulting from a successful house move. In two other families actual savings were marginal, while in the other two cases there were significant increases in agency costs. However the qualitative data indicates practical ways in which the project has saved costs in the short term, while there is evidence that a shift from crisis management to a more positive engagement with the families will lead to savings in the longer term.

5.2.3 Non-cash benefits for agencies

Although the project has had a positive impact on the families' engagement with agencies, much of this appears to have been brokered by the project team itself. There is considerable inconsistency in agency responses; while there is evidence of some minor improvements in practice – such as the installation of an internal public telephone line at the Job Centre - relatively little evidence of significant structural changes has emerged. The project appears to have empowered some agency staff to step outside their perceived professional role in finding creative solutions for families within the project, but even amongst these individuals there is uncertainty as to whether or not such approaches are sanctioned by local and/or strategic managers. A number of respondents expressed scepticism that the benefits of the project would be retained without significant shifts in emphasis from the sponsoring agencies.

5.2.4 Non-cash benefits for families

The greatest benefit perceived by the families was that of non-judgmental support, a willingness to see issues from their perspective, and to find practical solutions. Regular

contact with the Coach enabled them to develop trust and self-confidence, and gave them space to get some perspective and direction. They also appreciated the initial support in setting up meetings, and the way in which this enabled them to develop their skills, confidence and understanding in dealing with different agencies. Particularly intractable areas addressed were around debt, parenting and health, including specialist support for mental health issues. Although most families expressed increased confidence in dealing with these issues in the future there were concerns as to how they could retain access to this type of practical support and advice after the project ended

5.2.5 Achieving action plan targets

Three of the families had made significant progress towards achieving their original targets, and the others had made progress in specific areas. The project had in almost all cases challenged families to consider ways in which they could address those areas where they did not appear to be moving forward. There is some danger that the simple measures adopted could exaggerate the level of achievement in some areas, while obfuscating the level of effort made by the family in others. Key barriers to success identified were dealing with debt, childcare, housing and associated transport issues.

5.2.6 Key journey steps

Although each family had very personal goals – negotiating a divorce, moving house, undertaking a detox programme - the documentation demonstrates the different types of support which the project provided – ensuring information flow between agencies and the family using media and language with which the family could engage, coordinating the agencies themselves, disentangling complicated situations to create simple step-by-step approaches, facilitating and providing direct support in meetings, and encouraging family members to take the first step in trying something new – parenting courses, or speaking to relatives. The roles of the Family Coach and Advocate were vital in ensuring these.

5.2.7 Experiences

All five families were very positive about their experience, with almost all expressing increased self-confidence and a more practical approach to addressing issues. However several Coaches and families indicated the need for further progress on existing targets, and the need to address new areas which had been identified through engagement with the project. Four of the families expressed concerns about future support when the project ended.

5.3 Cost Benefit Analysis

5.3.1 Identifying waste, duplication and fragmentation

There is evidence from interviews with Family Coaches, Advocate and staff in five agencies associated with the families in the pilot, that there exists within the current system practices which may incur unnecessary costs:

- The agencies suggest that poor communication is an issue, and that potential savings between services through better communication are actually disincentivised because of budget pressures:

“...investment and change of behaviour in one organisation may reap benefits in another organisation... [however] the confines of budgets... don’t really support that joint working.”

- The project has highlighted that frontline practitioners have insufficient time to spend with their families to enable them to understand fully the situation, challenges and needs.
- One of these needs is for support with literacy. There is evidence that several of the families may not be able to read the letters they receive from agencies or complete the necessary forms to access the services. This can lead to considerable waste.

“...this family has had about twelve years of intervention from hundreds of different agencies and everybody has given up with them. It gets to the stage where they don’t attend appointments, they get three letters and then they get stuck, sort of taken off.” [Family 1]

- Through the work of the Family Advocate role, the model has raised awareness as to how institutional practices can impact negatively on both outcomes for the families and on the services themselves. For example, in the provision of emergency loans:

“DWP keep giving them crisis loans and then pulling it back out their money, and that’s not taken into account in the budgeting with the Debt Relief Order, um, and there’s big council tax arrears.”

- In cases where there has been a breakdown of trust between the agencies and the family, this can result in wasted visits without access to the property:

“... the Social Worker used to just go and knock on the door and sort of shout through the window and then leave because she wouldn't let him access the property and, I think that, you know, what a waste of time and effort and money.”

- By bringing together unnecessarily large groups of professionals in case conferences, agencies may incur unnecessary costs whilst unintentionally intimidating families:

“But I don't think there's a need to invite the head from each school, the PFSA, the social worker, just to have them all there. It seems a bit unnecessary and a bit daunting for mum.”

However, on the positive side, there is evidence that the project has enabled a range of agencies, including the Police, Social Services and District Council, to deliver more efficient and effective services.

- This has been achieved by providing support to families and empowering them to access available services, and also by working closely with agencies to ensure that the services they deliver more timely and appropriate. For example, in the case of one family, Mum's access to a mental health group enabled another agency to step back:

“...[Family Advocate] found out about a group that, that MIND are running and it's every Monday for two or three hours in the afternoon... Community Health Right Steps ended their involvement with Mum as they had been keeping in contact with her until her other problems had been dealt with...”

- The model has facilitated improved networking and communication between the agencies.

“She's pulled together Housing and the Police to go and meet at Sanders' Garden Centre to have a open and frank discussion about what options [mum's] now got ... I think certainly (FA) has been quite instrumental really in helping that network to work.”

- There is evidence to suggest that some agencies moderate their approaches and responses to incidents, based on intelligence gathered via their involvement in the project.

“... now the Social Workers are phoning us up and saying, 'do you know this has happened with the family, can we go in together and do a joint visit', it's really working well.”

“Homes in Sedgemoor have used my role quite considerably now, obviously to get the gas serviced was the first thing, but then they kind of realised well actually, you know, (FC and FA) seem to be able to get in the house, so we need to do the smoke detectors, so we’ll go through them, and perhaps we can do a visit with the them, so they have kind of used us that way to get in.”

- By identifying some very simple, practical solutions to ensuring that families and agencies engage effectively:

“...[the agency has] now got a mobile number to phone rather than sending a letter...”

“The Project helped Mum to complete the application.”

“... we’ve opened the back door and the kids are now playing in the garden, she’s now hanging the washing outside and, you know things have progressed so much from a £12 door lock.”

Whilst the savings through changed working practices referred to above have not been quantified by the agencies confirmed, there is indirect evidence of their cost-effectiveness through analysis of the overall delivery costs during the pilot period – see below.

5.3.2 Saving delivery costs

- From the Agency Contact Data Sheet (V14, 15th September), the total cost of service delivery for all 9 families during the 6-month pilot period (March-August 2011) was £85,163.
- The above figure compares favourably with the total cost of service delivery during the 6 months leading up to the pilot (September 2010-March 2011), which was £125,027, indicating a saving of £39,863 over the pilot period.
- However, this does not include the cost of the pilot itself, which was estimated in the DfE Family Savings Calculator to be £3000 per family, i.e. £27,000 overall for the 9 families in the pilot. This suggests a more modest saving of £12,863.
- A more valid comparison of delivery costs may be between the pilot period and the equivalent 6 months of 2010 (March – August), since some of the service delivery costs may be seasonal. This comparison was only possible for 8 families, since there were no costs recorded for Family 2 before July 2010. This comparison suggests a saving of £30,875 excluding pilot costs, or £6,875 including £24,000 pilot cost for 8 families.
- These savings were not evenly distributed between the families. For example, the costs associated with family 3 during the pilot period were £2,197.83 higher than in the same period in 2010, whilst there was an apparent saving of £16,546 for family 4.

- The above figures suggest that, despite the many examples in the data of Family Coach and Advocate facilitating access to services for the families concerned, overall the costs associated with service delivery were modestly reduced during the pilot period.

5.3.3 Projected future savings

- In order to estimate future savings over the next year (September 2011-August 2012) arising from the High Contact Families project we have used the DfE Family Savings Calculator (see methodology above).
- We have chosen to distinguish between ‘incidents’ – unplanned emergencies involving expenditure by police, courts, hospitals or social services – and ‘interventions’: longer term support such as parenting courses, debt counselling etc. According to the literature, appropriately-targeted ‘interventions’ should reduce the number of future ‘incidents’, thus realising savings in the longer term.
- Using the Customer Journey Mapping Tool (CJMT) to distinguish between ‘incidents’ and ‘interventions’, we entered the number of ‘incidents’ recorded in the CJMT in the 12 months leading up to the pilot (March 2010 – February 2011) for 7 families (no CJMT had been completed for two families, whilst family 5 had no ‘incidents’ which correspond to the Family Cost Calculator categories in the 12 months leading up to the pilot).
- To provide comparative data, we then entered the number of ‘incidents’ for each of the above families during the pilot project, multiplied by 2 since this was a six-month period being compared with a 12 month period. This assumes that the number of incidents over the next 6 months (September 2011 – February 2012) will be similar to that during the pilot period, despite the withdrawal of Family Coach and Family Advocate support.
- The resulting 12 month saving in predicted ‘incident’ costs is £76,356 for these 7 families. Strictly speaking, this is for the period March 2011-February 2012, but since it includes the assumption that the rate of ‘incident’ will be roughly the same following the pilot as during it, we can project this figure forward to the next 12 month period (September 2011-August 2012).
- The above figure represents around £11,000 per year per family saved from a reduction of ‘incidents’. However, as with the actual cost savings above, these are very unevenly distributed between families. For example, the savings for family 1 are projected to be £62,745, whilst Family 3 are predicted to cost an additional £17,253 over the next 12 months.

5.3.4 Overall value for money of the pilot project

- Taking into account the opportunities to identify inefficiency in service delivery; the examples of de-duplication and simplification quoted above; the actual savings in service delivery costs – even when the pilot costs are factored in – and the projected savings in

future 'incident' costs; it is our judgement that the Total Somerset High Contact Families Project offers good value for money. Although the actual savings have not been spectacular, the interventions of Family Coach and Advocate in helping the families to stabilise and move forward are likely to realise significant savings in the future, particularly for the police and other emergency services dealing with incidents arising from chaotic lifestyles and criminal activity.

5.4 Project Tools

The evaluation team considered a number of tools which had been developed within the project. There were:

- Customer Journey Mapping Tool (May '09-Aug '11)
- Agency Cost/Contact data spreadsheet (agency costs from March 2010 to August 2011) Family Savings Calculator – based on DfE model
- Final Case Study - a 1 page summary of family's situation and progress completed by the family coach
- Whole Family Action Plan (reviewed in August 2010)
- Family Wellbeing Tool
- Family Experience Tool

The most useful instrument identified was the Customer Journey Mapping Tool. Although this was incomplete in many cases, it provided a highly sophisticated and dynamic profile of the individual families, and was used to inform both the quantitative and the qualitative elements of the evaluation. If all the partner agencies contribute to and maintain it, this tool could provide an effective and economic way for agencies to share intelligence and work collaboratively, while taking into account the family perspective.

The Agency Cost/Contact Data spreadsheet proved useful in supporting the cost benefit analysis work. Given the findings of this evaluation it would be helpful in any future developments to distinguish more clearly between planned 'interventions' and unplanned 'incidents'.

The DfE Family Savings Calculator was used alongside the Agency Cost/Contact Data to inform the cost benefits and future savings analyses, and the individual family case studies. This has the benefit of providing a robust model which has been tested on a national basis. The spreadsheet itself is very detailed and the initial case study identified some anomalies in the way in which the data had originally been calculated within the project. Applying further data from the Customer Journey Mapping Tool enabled a revised cost savings calculation to be made. However the model is somewhat cumbersome for detailed use.

The Final Case Studies supplied by the project team were highly useful in providing a snapshot for each family, at a given moment in time. However, there were developments in individual family situations during the course of the data collection period, which meant that they became rapidly outdated.

The Whole Family Action Plan was used with both families and Coaches in the course of the interviews. Families recognised their plans and were able to articulate their own aspirations

and progress on the basis of these. There were some inconsistencies in the level of generalisation and specificity of individual plans, which may at some times have tended to exaggerate or mask the level of progress. Some families and Coaches referred to the desirability of having sub-sets of targets to help the process; a number of respondents indicated the need to create new targets in the light of changing circumstances and two of the Coaches referred specifically to building more challenging targets into a second phase. Nonetheless, the notion of a Whole Family Action Plan created by the family using their own words and aspirations has been a powerful feature of the project, and would merit further development.

The Family Wellbeing and Family Project Experience tools were also used in the course of the interviews. While families on the whole recognised the instrument, they were much less clear as to what they actually meant, and in at least one case were confused as to the direction of the scale (0 = poor, 10 = good). It may be that these instruments are helpful to the Coaches in a formative sense, in shaping a discussion with the family, but the evaluation team did not see any evidence such as the weekly Coach reports to the Advocate, which might triangulate this. However our evidence appears to indicate that these instruments do not of themselves add any particular value to the overall project.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Significance of the Coach/Advocate Model

The evaluation has illuminated the need for the type of service provided by this project to fill a current gap in constructive engagements between frontline professionals and high contact / high need families. There is a pattern whereby families and individual family members fall just short of the threshold for intervention from specific agencies, and individual agencies feel powerless to intervene on broader issues, even though a particular crisis such as an arrest for anti-social behaviour may provoke an intervention by one or more agencies.

The evaluation has found evidence to suggest that the support provided by the Family Advocate had been historically, at least to some extent, fulfilled by Social Workers; but that this is no longer the case, perhaps due to rising intervention thresholds. It could be argued that this is precisely the role which the Lead Professional is intended to play³¹ but national literature indicates that there has been considerable difficulty in implementing the Lead Professional model³² and it may therefore be difficult to rely on this, as opposed to the Family Advocate role, in the current Somerset context.

It is clear that it is the close working relationships within the project team that enables the Advocate role to broker successfully the relationship between frontline staff and the families, especially when those relationships have been difficult. The evaluation has shown that in some cases there appears to have been a merging between the Coach and Advocate roles; although this seems to be due to the specific needs of certain families, time pressures and the flexibility of the individuals involved.

There are suggestions that agencies may have felt, on occasions, that the Advocate role was too focussed on championing the needs of the family, rather than providing a more mediating role between the family and agency, where the agency can feel supported in developing good practice to meet the needs of these families.

³¹ See for example <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/strategy/integratedworking/a0068961/the-lead-professional>, dated 14 February 2011

³² See <http://www.eastriding.gov.uk/hyperlinks/pdf/HullUniversityevaluation.pdf> May 2007 and <http://www.cypnow.co.uk/news/949809/Pilots-gave-professionals-budget-power-failure/?DCMP=ILC-SEARCH> 30 October 2009

6.2 Impact on Families

The evaluation has demonstrated that the Coach/Advocate model has had a clear impact on improving positive outcomes for the families involved in the pilot project. Many of these positive outcomes relate to quite practical, low cost solutions. The model has been responsible for improving families' outlooks and confidences, achieved by the Family Coach through investing time in developing supportive and positive relationships with family members.

Key to the success of the Family Coach has been the flexibility offered by the individuals concerned to ensure that they have been available on a regular basis to support families and to be persistent in that relationship, when necessary. This ensures that the family perspectives are fully understood and creates opportunities for regular points of reflection for the families. This relationship with the Coach has helped the family gain a perspective by understanding their situation, considering what is possible and identifying how they can work towards achieving positive outcomes. The project has enabled families to develop their skills, confidence and understanding in dealing with different agencies, with almost all families adopting a more practical approach to addressing issues.

The evaluation has shown that the main challenges that these families appear to face in moving on in their lives revolve around issues relating to debt, social and physical isolation, poor literacy skills and health problems, particularly mental health issues. The practical manifestations of these challenges are often seen in terms of crime, housing, employment and transport issues, as well as a general difficulty in engaging effectively with agencies. These issues are highly complex and there may be some merit in further investigating these in a particular context e.g. rural isolation.

Although some tendencies towards a dependency culture may be evident, this must be viewed in the context of the short timescale of the project and the approach adopted by the Family Coach role; to build a supportive, mentoring rapport with families to motivate, guide and equip them to move on in their lives. Many of the dependency traits identified could then be viewed as 'work-in-progress' and could be expected to reduce over a longer period of intervention.

The positive changes in attitude seen within these families seem to be related to improvements in their behaviour and improved relationships with frontline staff, leading to reductions in demands for some services and more efficient interventions. However, the success of this team approach has meant that some families have increased their access to resources and, by engaging more effectively with agencies, have resulted in placing increased demands on specific services during the course of the project. These increased demands have been largely in terms of planned and constructive interventions, rather than in crisis management of incidents.

6.3 Impact on Agencies

It is clear that the Coach/Advocate model has impacted positively on those agencies involved in the project. One agency, who had six of its top ten, high demand families involved in the project, has now been able to remove all six families from their 'top ten' list of high demand families. Recent anecdotal evidence from the project team, which has not formed part of our validated evidence base, suggests that this is also the case for some of the other agencies too.

The findings suggest that the families' improved access to or engagement with agencies is as a result of interventions by the team (Coaches and Advocate) members themselves, rather than due to actual changes in frontline practice within the agencies. However, there are clear indications that, despite this apparent lack of progress towards improved practices from the agencies during the project, most of the agencies have shown an increased awareness as to how their practices can and do impact negatively upon families, and they have indicated a commitment to consider new ways of working to improve the delivery of their services and improve families' experiences of receiving their services. Given a longer timescale, the project should be able to see demonstrable improvements in frontline practice, if supported by local managers and strategic leads.

Although suggestions have been made by some agencies that the Coach role could be recruited from a volunteer body from within the local community, there is evidence that the seconding agency benefits from the involvement of their Family Coach placement. These benefits relate to improved multiagency practices and empowerment of agency frontline staff to 'think outside the box' and seek creative solutions for families. However, any such benefits rely on the support of line managers and strategic leads to ensure that any learning is embedded into agency practices. To maximise impact there needs to be a clear commitment to empowering the Coach to feed-back effectively to peers and other staff from within the agency, and at a strategic level for the organisation to review and modify its practices and procedures in the light of that feedback.

Frustration levels for agency staff e.g. in terms of missed appointments or inability to access the family home, were reduced during the project. However, successful engagements between the family and the agency resulted, in some cases, to further needs being identified and addressed thus increasing agency involvement. Despite the many examples of the project team facilitating access to services, the overall costs associated with service delivery were modestly reduced during the pilot period.

During the course of the project, the quality of agency interventions improved, as crisis management gave way to more positive engagement between the families and agencies involved; this should undoubtedly lead to further savings in the longer term.

The evaluation has illuminated practices within the current system that can lead to ‘business failure’ and incur unnecessary costs. These relate to poor communication within and between agencies and between agencies and the families. Notably, poor literacy skills have been identified as creating a real barrier for many families seeking to access information and services, suggesting that it is not only the families that can be hard-to-reach, but the agencies themselves.

However, on the positive side, there is evidence that the project has enabled a range of services including the police, social services and the District Council, to deliver more efficient and effective services. In particular, the work of the project team has facilitated improved networking, communication and collaboration between the agencies.

6.4 Project Tools

The most effective instrument devised by the project has been the Customer Journey Mapping Tool which provides a highly sophisticated and dynamic profile of the individual families. If used effectively by all the partner agencies, this tool could provide an effective and economic way of sharing intelligence and working collaboratively, while taking into account the family perspective.

The Agency Cost/Contact Data spreadsheet was useful, although any subsequent development would need to distinguish between planned ‘interventions’ and unplanned ‘incidents’. The Whole Family Action Plan format was also found to be user- friendly and comprehensible to families. It was suggested that some greater consistency, and the use of sub-targets might be helpful.

The D.f.E. Family Savings Calculator provided an interesting basis for projecting future costs, and had the merit of being a nationally tested model, but proved somewhat cumbersome and difficult to use effectively. The Family Wellbeing and Family Project Experience tools, although possibly helpful in developing dialogue between families and Coaches, did not add significant value to the project as a whole.

6.5 Costs and Benefits of the Project

Taking into account the opportunities to identify inefficiency in service delivery, the actual savings in service delivery costs – even when the pilot costs are factored in – and the projected savings in future ‘incident’ costs; it is in our judgement that the Total Somerset High Contact families pilot project offers good value for money. Although the actual savings have not been spectacular, the interventions of the Coach and Advocate in helping families stabilise their lives and move forward more independently are likely to realise significant savings in the future, particularly for those services that deal with crisis incidents arising from chaotic lifestyle and criminal activity.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Refine the Coach/Advocate model:

- 7.1.1. Provide a longer time-frame for the intervention, especially for those families requiring more than just practical support.
- 7.1.2 Clearly define roles and responsibilities for Coach and Advocate, acknowledging that the impact of the model relies heavily on a flexible team approach.
 - 7.1.2.1 Family Coach to be focussed on building constructive relationship with the family.
 - 7.1.2.2 Coaches seconded from key agency frontline workforce.
 - 7.1.2.3 Coaches need to meet robust person specification.
- 7.1.3 Family Advocate to be positioned as an independent lead professional to mediate between agencies and families, supporting positive outcomes for both families and agencies.
- 7.1.4 Refine referral criteria into the project, prioritising those families that require support to address issues relating to debt, isolation (social and physical) and mental health.
- 7.1.5 Ensure management structures are in place to support the model i.e.
 - 7.1.5.1 Coaches line-managed by the Advocate.
 - 7.1.5.2 Local managers (from secondee agencies) support processes to enable coaches to feedback experiences and recommendations into their home agencies.
 - 7.1.5.3 Advocate line-managed through the Children's Trust.
 - 7.1.5.4 If Family Coaches are recruited from the voluntary sector, an appropriate framework for training, support and feedback to front-line agencies should be in place.
- 7.1.6 Retain the current Whole Family Action Plan model, but refine this to include sub-targets and consider ways in which families already participating in the project might be further challenged in phase 2.
- 7.1.7 Fully embed the Customer Journey Mapping Tool (CJMT) into the process, incorporating a more detailed Whole Family Action Plan.

- 7.1.7.1 Provide training to ensure the CJMT is used effectively.
- 7.1.7.2 Ensure that individual agencies include completion of the CJMT as part of their protocols and procedures.

- 7.1.8 Refine the Agency Cost / Contact data collation to distinguish between planned 'interventions' and unplanned 'incidents'.

7.2 Changes to institutional practices to improve outcomes for families:

7.2.1. Agencies should:

- 7.2.1.1 Address literacy issues: e.g. contact families by mobile phone to notify and remind about appointments rather than relying on families responding to letters.
- 7.2.1.2 Gather intelligence through a single point of contact, through a Lead Professional role. This role could be fulfilled by the Advocate.
- 7.2.1.3 Work more collaboratively to provide multi-agency solutions, e.g. by developing a 'team around the family' approach.
- 7.2.1.4 Provide ready access to shared information/intelligence on the families, where appropriate.
- 7.2.1.5 Fully embed the Customer Journey Mapping Tool into the process to incorporate the Whole Family Action Plan by ensuring that they.
 - 7.2.1.5.1 Provide training to ensure the CJMT is used effectively.
 - 7.2.1.5.2 Include completion of the CJMT as part of their protocols and procedures.
- 7.2.1.6 Second staff to act in Family Coach role and empower them to feed back to peers and managers.
 - 7.2.1.6.1 Modify policies and procedures in response to feedback.

7.2.2 The Children's Trust Board should:

- 7.2.2.1 Endorse the High Contact Family Project as set out in this report, by adopting the Advocate/Coach model as a way of implementing that approach.

- 7.2.2.2 Make arrangements for the Family Advocate role to be line-managed through the Children's Trust Board.
- 7.2.2.3 Encourage partners to make arrangements to second staff to act as a Family Coach. This could include recruitment from the voluntary sector.
- 7.2.2.4 Consider extending the model to less chaotic/high need families to support de-escalation planning; focussing on those families facing issues relating to debt, isolation and/or mental health.

8. Suggestions for further research

- 8.1 Identify the short, medium and long term benefits to those agencies who second frontline staff to a Family Coach position.
- 8.2 Investigate the medium and longer term impact of the Coach/Advocate model on families (including children and young people) and agencies.
- 8.3 Extend the model to incorporate less chaotic/high contact families and families living in rural areas – to compare and contrast needs.

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