

London Borough of Bromley

PART 1 - PUBLIC

**Briefing for Care Services
Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee
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SOCIAL CARE INNOVATIONS GRANT FINAL REPORT

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1. Summary

- 1.1 The Social Care Innovation Fund Project (SCIF) is a time limited project which has developed a programme of innovation relating to assessments for short breaks for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- 1.2 The development component of the project is due to come to an end in March 2017, at which point it is intended that the implementation of elements that have been successfully tested and proven will commence.
- 1.3 This report provides Members with details of the key learning and outcomes from the SCIF project

2. **THE BRIEFING**

Introduction

- 2.1 The Social Care Innovation Fund (SCIF) is a national programme funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and led by the Council for Disabled Children (CDC). Bromley was successful in securing funding of £100,000 from SCIF to develop and test more efficient processes linked to the current assessment process where families receive social care services from the statutory sector, with the aim of co-producing and testing innovative solutions to deliver improved outcomes for disabled children and their families and value for money for the Council.
- 2.2 The current process for allocation of a short break involves social workers making a home visit (in most cases) and completing an assessment. The assessment is comprehensive and provides a range of details that determine the needs of the child and family, which is then presented to a resource panel for a decision. The panel includes a Group Manager and Deputy Manager. Detailed analysis of this work flow has indicated that the cost is approximately £500 per case. The mode average of the resource allocated is typically equivalent to £1,000 of services.

- 2.3 The current process requires the input of a significant amount of time on the part of qualified social work staff although the majority of outcomes are deemed to be 'low level'. This would indicate that the current process is not proving cost efficient.
- 2.4 The innovation project was designed to explore a new approach to streamlining the process and ensure that the Council is using its social work resource in the most appropriate and cost effective way to support children and families with the most need.
- 2.5 In 2015/16 there were 336 families known to the Disabled Children's Team categorised as follows:

Assessed Level of need	Number of Children	% of total
CIN 1	270	80%
CIN 2	29	9%
CIN 3/Child Protection Plan Children Looked After	37	11%

- 2.6 At this time, 47% of children and young people did not have an assigned Social Worker but would have still had to have undergone the assessment process as described in 3.2 above.
- 2.7 The significance of this data is to demonstrate the disproportionate amount of social worker time being applied for 'CIN 1' cases, thus reducing the resources available to support the most vulnerable children and families. Although children classed as CIN 1, will have a severe and profound disability, many of these families will not require a detailed social work assessment.
- 2.8 The project team has worked with over 100 individuals including parents/ carers, disabled young people, staff from special schools, representatives from the voluntary sector and social workers to:
- **Discover** what works well/not so well in the current process
 - **Define** the key issues are to be addressed
 - **Co-Produce** a number of solutions/outcomes to the problems
 - **Test** these solutions/outcomes within the Bromley Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) community
- 2.9 All testing has been supported by CORAM - an independent organisation appointed by the DfE
- 2.10 The project included the following key principles:-
- Empowering families, increasing their resilience and improving their experience of the assessment process
 - Developing methods of meaningful co-production and positive relationship building between professionals, parents/carers and children and young people
 - Developing proportionate methods of assessment
 - Testing approaches that demonstrate better value for money
 - Clarifying the role of the Social Worker

Key learning

- 2.11 **Assessments take too long** – the experience can be intrusive and the eligibility criteria is not clear. This can result in negative experiences for families, which can invite unnecessary challenge.
- 2.12 **The resource utilised for ‘low level need’ assessments is too great** – this detracts from appropriate use of skills and knowledge to support those with the highest need. Establishing a clear criteria for services assists with the management of resources.
- 2.13 **There is lack of consistency in service and experience** – it is vital that the process is developed to promote consistency in communication, culture and service delivery, increasing customer satisfaction and minimising challenge.
- 2.14 **There is an over-reliance on specialist services** – the project found that families see specialist services as the only options available to them, precluding other, less costly options from being explored. It is apparent that the Local Offer must be comprehensive and provide the ability for families to access a range of universal and targeted options as an alternative to specialist provision.
- 2.15 **The Social Care element of the EHC plan needs to be strengthened** – it is vital to approach social needs with an asset based approach, promoting resilience within families, drawing on existing circles of support. Identifying universal and non-statutory support that contributes to a holistic plan is vital to promote sustainable progression and preparation for adult life.

Key Solution (1) - An Online Assessment for Short Break Enquiries

- 2.16 Families with a low level of need will access a short break by applying on line. The assessment will be electronically managed by the Bromley Mylife portal and a staff verification process put in place to ensure information provided is accurate. An automatic scoring calculation will determine the precise level of the short break which will be ratified by a manager within the Disabled Children’s Team. This will significantly reduce response times for families from the point of application through to a being informed of a decision about their application.
- 2.17 The online assessment will be extended to annual reviews for those low level need families to ensure shorter timelines.
- 2.18 This system will ensure parental confidence in knowing that an equitable system has been adopted for all families making themselves known to the service.

Key Solution (2) - A Social Worker ‘Ways of Working’ tool kit

- 2.19 For the ‘higher need’ families, a Social Worker Assessment will still take place. To ensure consistency within the service and to demystify the role of the Social Worker for young people and their families, a series of tools have been developed including:
- A ‘jargon-free’ letter for parents
 - An Easy Read letter for young people
 - A film for young people explaining the role of the Social Worker
 - A ‘leave-behind’ detailing the ‘next steps’ and contact details of the Social Worker.

Key Solution (3) - A tool kit for Young People, families and professionals

2.20 Having the right support at the right time and developing resilience can make a significant difference to disabled children and young people and their families. In the EHC process, typically the Social Care/Social Needs outcomes are limited and are not regarded as a priority. The SCIF project identified a number of tools to help generate a conversation about a family's social needs, including:-

- i) a set of questions for parents & professionals, intended to generate a conversation about social needs,
- ii) Outcomes Pyramids – to generate Education, Health and Care outcomes to be used in annual reviews, and
- iii) Social Needs questions and film for young people to think about activities outside of school.

Key Solution (4) - development of the Local Offer

2.21 The SCIF project identified that many families with SEND in Bromley are unaware of the Local Offer and those that use it find it not always 'fit for purpose'. Subsequently families can be left feeling isolated. The project devised an advertising campaign 'Time for Me' (posters, films and interactive email) directing families to the Local Offer which encourages them to think that having a child/young person with additional needs does not preclude them from living life to the full.

2.22 The Disabled Children's Team in co-operation with the My Life Team plan ensure that as and when new services are available this information is updated online. The Disabled Children Team is committed to an ongoing process of informing the My Life Team of new services/information which will support disabled children and their families to access universal and targeted services

Measuring impact

2.23 **Realignment of resource** – the solutions identified through this project reduce the time required for assessments (social workers) and managers (decision making), resulting in the ability of skills and expertise being focused on those families with the most need, a key driver in the Ofsted Children's Services Improvement Plan. Resources will lead to social worker time being appropriately allocated to high needs children. Disabled Children, will often have a high level of communication needs, which demands more intensive work to gain their wishes and feelings, either through direct work or observations. Providing Social Workers more time, supports identifying better outcomes for disabled children and their families and safeguarding them from abuse. Research consistently identifies that disabled children are at the highest risk of abuse.

2.24 **Promoting co production** – the project has been delivered with a focus on co-production which meets the Council's statutory duty in this respect. This approach has started to engender a change of culture in working closely in partnership with families.

2.25 **Reduced reliance on statutory services** – this will be realised by promoting early intervention, the right support at the right time, together with a strong Local Offer resulting in an increase in family resilience.

Next Steps

2.26 The key solutions will be implemented from 1 April 2017. The impact of the project will continue to be monitored by the Group Manager within the Disabled Children's Team in order to

determine whether resources have been appropriately re-allocated to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people remain at the forefront of the service.

3. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 This project is in line with the Care Services Portfolio Plan 2016/17: to support children with complex disabilities to remain within their family home and their local community

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The local authority has a duty to provide social care assessments within designated timescales and to ensure the safeguarding of vulnerable children. The online referral supports this duty and allows parent/s carers to request a Social Work Assessment if they so wish.