

Working Together with Families – Asset Based Approaches

The Working Together with Families (WTWF) Governance Group which is a strategic multi agency body reporting to the Lancashire Children and Young Peoples Board and Lancashire Children and Young People Safeguarding Board, has senior officer representation from Lancashire County Council, District Councils, Police, Police and Crime Commissioners Office, Public Health and Health Providers. The group established the role of Strategic Advisor, Asset Based Approaches, in June 2013, for a two year secondment period, running to May 2015.

On commencement there were three areas identified for development.

- Building on the strengths of Individuals and families
- Building on the strengths of communities
- Building on the strengths of organisations

The role was strategic, and therefore approaches were developed to aid in the transformation of the wider systems, rather than focussing on isolated projects.



Building on the Strengths of Individuals and Families

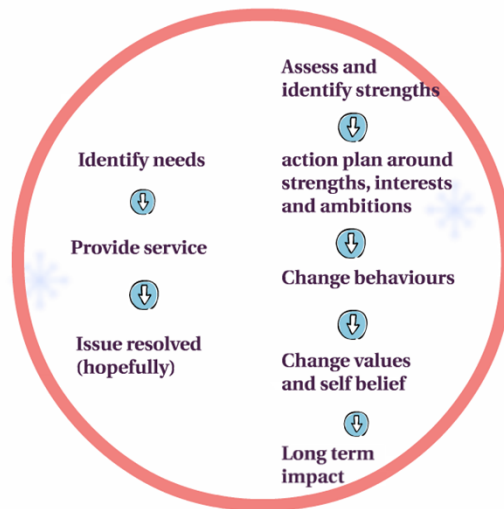
The aim of this was to ensure that, where appropriate, in every interaction with families and children, their strengths, assets, interests and ambitions were taken into account, and that they were encouraged to build on these to improve outcomes.

The focus has been on developing strength based approaches to assessment and action planning, which was mainly done through embedding this approach throughout workforce development, as well as developing family voice opportunities. Family Group Conferencing and use of the family star also impacts on this area but have been outside the workload of the post discussed.

Workforce Development

To achieve this, asset based approaches was threaded throughout some of the main training and development opportunities for Lead Professionals. This was to ensure that the approach is mainstreamed and becomes integrated as part of the normal

practice of the CYPF workforce. The main focus of this was changing the narrative of interventions which is illustrated below:



Common Assessment Framework Implementation

This included a significant input into the CAF training and implementation programme, to ensure that the tool is encouraged to be used in strength based ways. This is now a staple in the course, and is threaded and encouraged throughout the course. The CAF QA framework makes direct reference to strength based assessment and action planning, the findings of which will indicate the success of this approach within the training. The CAF training team were given training input to show the importance and the practice of asset and strength based interventions. The CAF implementation team will continue with including the approach in their training and in the QA framework to report on its impact.

Lead Professional Training

Lead Professional training already contained input on asset based approaches. This was developed further and will continue being delivered through the training and is in the quality assurance framework.

Introduction to asset and strengths based approaches – e learning

An e learning module, Introduction to Asset and Strength Based Approaches, was published in early 2014. 120 people have taken the e learning course. This is in the process of updating the course to an e learning format, which will allow for more evaluation and information. This should be completed by mid-December 2014. The e learning will then be hosted in conjunction with the workforce development team.

Solution Focussed Approaches Training

Solution focussed Brief Therapy training was commissioned for two pilot sessions in June/July 2014. Solution Focussed Brief Therapy is an approach used in family intervention which looks at the strengths of families and encourages them to use this in their own developments. The training was productive; however there was significant

crossover with the coaching module, which could lead to confusion. It was decided to discontinue the training and encourage attendance to the Coaching Training instead.

Family voice/engagement commissions

To ensure that as a service and a wider workforce we are listening to family voices in designing our services, a number of districts received commissions for work on engaging families and encouraging collective voices.

The table below shows a summary of the activity, which is due to be completed by mid-March 2015:

District	Provider	Overview of commission
Lancaster	Strawberry Fields Training	The aim of this project is to run forums with families and capture their voices. The aim is to help develop family led support forums. Expected outcomes: information regarding the families' experiences. An on-going forum for families to attend.
Chorley	Key	The aim of the project is to capture, through one to one and group engagement, the voices and views of children, young people and families. This will include visual and verbal responses, using art to show experience. Expected outcomes: final report detailing findings and showcasing visual and verbal responses.
South Ribble	Child Action NW	The project, called 'Raised in South Ribble' will use group setting events and meetings to capture local families' experiences and use arts based engagement tools to visual that experience, alongside families. For added value, family members will have the opportunity to undertake training and support to become mentors following the events Expected outcomes: final report detailing the findings of the engagement
West Lancashire	West Lancs. CVS	West Lancashire CVS are carrying out semi structured interviews with families to gather experiences. They will then, in partnership with Skelmersdale Artz centre, develop a drama depicting those experiences. Family members will have the opportunity to take part in the development of the drama piece. Expected outcomes: findings report and a drama piece
Burnley	CSNW	CSNW, working in partnership with YNOT, will hold a number of family engagement sessions, hosting families with a range of positive activities and gifts on offer. Throughout they will look to engage families, allow them to share stories and experiences, and put forward recommendations for improving services. Expected outcomes: report indicating findings from engagement

Pendle	Pendle Action for the Community	PAC is holding a survey and questionnaire exercise with families, alongside an engagement event and drop ins for families to engage and have their voices represented. Expected outcomes: findings report to feedback on engagement activity and families' views.
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Building on the strengths in communities

Asset based approaches recognises the resources in the community and looks to mobilise them. One of the major resources in communities is the diverse Voluntary Community Faith Sector (VCFS). The VCFS includes small local groups to major strategic partners that deliver regionally and nationally.

VCFS engagement events

VCFS engagement events were held throughout March 2014, where 90 people from the voluntary sector attended three events held across Lancashire, focussing on the role of the VCFS in the delivery of Prevention and Early Help (PEH) and Working Together with Families. These were some of the first events to bring together Early Support and Working Together with Families, and engaged a range of agencies in mapping support and developing better ways of working with the voluntary sector. Evaluations show that these events were useful in engaging with the voluntary sector, with many appreciating the networking opportunities and the chance to speak face to face with LCC. This event also helped inform the development of the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Directory, by tapping into knowledge of the voluntary sector and completing a mapping exercise of local resources per district. This set the foundation for developing a joint Emotional Health and Wellbeing Directory, developed and delivered by the Integrated Health Service. This event was planned as the beginning of a continuous conversation, meaning similar events would become a regular part of the CYP PEH offer.

These events will form part of the on-going offer for Prevention and Early Help, ensuring that the service maintains the momentum in continuing the conversation with the VCFS.

Public service market fairs

Following the VCFS engagement events it became clear that there were many community organisations and groups that were unknown to local lead professionals. District level fairs were developed, focussing on engaging Lead Professionals with local groups and organisations, with the following areas delivering events: Wyre, Fylde, Burnley, Chorley, South Ribble and Pendle; and events planned for the following districts: West Lancashire, Lancaster, Rossendale and Preston.

Volunteer Family Support Commissions

Four districts have been successful in gaining funding to develop support for families through voluntary support, as follows:

District	Provider	Overview of project
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Lancaster	Strawberry Fields Training	SFT will recruit and train families who have been through early support and WTWF, to enable them to act as mentors for families
Chorley	Chorley Borough Council	CBC will use a community development approach with families, engaging them in sports, arts and cultural activities to show the added value this can bring
Burnley	Community Solutions NW	CSNW will train and support a number of volunteers who can be called upon by lead professionals to support families with their low level needs
Pendle	Community Solutions NW	CSNW will train and support a number of volunteers who can be called upon by lead professionals to support families with their low level needs

Building on strengths of the organisation

Lancashire County Council is a major provider of services for Lancashire. The assets and resources within the organisation are significant. Part of the role has been taken up with developing strategic partnerships and alliances to allow a targeted provision for families, making use of the range of support in LCC.

Professional area	Area of work and progress
Lancashire Cultural Services (Libraries, museums and archives)	Cultural services hold a number of local community buildings and resources. Some of the work they carry out includes supporting literacy, supporting IT skills development and employability support. The initial focus of the work is to enable families to access the resources available, with a potential possibility to have supported volunteer opportunities within cultural services for families to take on as a step towards employment.
Lancashire Adult Learning	Lancashire Adult Learning delivers a significant number of courses and training for Lancashire residents. One of their primary aims is to develop opportunities for troubled families. Again, employability is one of their key outcomes.
East Lancashire Public Health	East Lancashire Public Health Team has a significant programme of work which includes development of asset based community development approaches across East Lancashire. This has developed into using locally based time banking methods.

For further information please contact:

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