



# Family Action

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Development

supporting families since 1869

# About Family Action



- Grant maker to individuals
- Mental health services
- Family support services including
  - children centres
  - home-based family support

# Hard to be positive as CSR looms but:



- Sure Start is a national treasure
- It reaches parts no other services have been before
- Recognition long overdue investment in early years
- AND it works

# Coalition pledged support for:



- Sure start
- Health visitors
- Ending child poverty
- Cash for poor pupils
- Families with multiple problems
- Action on safeguarding
- Big Society

# BUT there is no money



- There will be cuts and huge cuts
- Treasured services will be lost
- We are all going to be very despondent
- Voluntary sector will be hit very hard

It is very easy to be despondent but there will be opportunities so.....

# Focus on what works



And this is what C4EO helps us with.

- **Children's Centres**
- Good quality services leads to improved outcomes
- Staff and creativity = quality
- Outreach helps

*But not reaching everyone including.....*

# Families with multiple needs - my focus today



- Families with multiple needs are not accessing Children's Centres
- This is not a criticism of Children's Centres
- They need a different service
- Often better provided in their own homes
- At the end of programme they may well be able to go to a Children's Centre

# Families with multiple needs



Very small numbers – 2%

- Parents own difficulties are affecting ability to parent effectively
- Mental health problems
- Learning difficulties
- Substance misuse



# Families known to many agencies



Often 10-15 agencies involved

Level of concern for children is very high:

- not achieving development milestones
- non school attendance
- on CPP, often neglect
- behaviour is giving rise to concern
- children have inappropriate caring responsibilities

# But there is a solution



Family Action's home based support

- Works with families in their own homes
- Focus on improving parenting
- Focus on child safety and wellbeing
- Works with family members individually and together
- Work is linked to other agencies

# Focus on Building Bridges



- Parents have a diagnosed long term severe mental health problem including
- Bipolar disorders, acute depression, acute anxiety, agoraphobia etc
- Illness is affecting their ability to parent

# Work with families includes:



- Assess parental difficulties and impact on children
- Assess their abilities and help needed to parent effectively
- Focus on parenting includes: home, food, hygiene, responsibility for their children and their wellbeing

# Thompson family



- Referred-not attending school, on CPP
- Mrs T sitting on sofa crying at 10am – 3 children unfed and clustered around her
- Discharged from hospital, children returned same day, no help
- Until drugs kick in just can't do anything
- House out of control, very distressing
- Knew child care poor, kids should be at school but couldn't do anything about it

# No task too small or too complex



- Work on mental health difficulties and ensure following treatment plans
- Work alongside on practical tasks - housework, food and hygiene
- Help rebuild confidence in parenting skills - play, setting routines,
- Help rebuild confidence and self esteem
- Set and agree clear plans for children

# identified pressure points



- 7am made tea Mrs T took drugs
- 7.30 divided tasks – breakfast and getting children up
- 8.45 walked to school with eldest 2
- 9.15 back and divided household tasks
- 11am focus on baby
- 3 pm went back and we went to school
- 7pm went back for bedtime routines

# Work for children



- Safeguarding is paramount
- Children have to go to school
- Reduce inappropriate caring responsibilities
- Help children understand their parents mental illness
- Set boundaries with parents



# Thompson family



- Not rocket science but needed daily visits initially and a plan to focus on manageable tasks
- Had to help family rebuild relationship - trust and confidence in each other
- Mother rebuilding confidence and self esteem is key but needed help to do so

# It works



- Building bridges evaluation

[www.family-action.org.uk](http://www.family-action.org.uk)

- C4EO validated practice: *grasping the nettle, what works in early intervention*
- SCIE parental mental health, good practice

# Thompson family



Mrs T

*Everyone told me I had to improve but no-one showed me how to do it*

Lilly T

*I got my mum back and I go swimming again*

Social worker

*Children are off CPP. I am about to stop visits*

# C4EO: Building Bridges



- Social return on investment
- Building Bridges costs on average £3500 per family
- Savings over two year period are
- Local authority £115,000
- DWP £158,000
- NHS £67,000
- Excludes costs of residential care and hospitalisation