



Making it Work for Families Evaluation Report

Produced by Poverty Alliance August 2018

Report written by :

Fiona McHardy Research and Information Manager at the Poverty Alliance
August 2018

Published by :

The Poverty Alliance

94 Hope Street

Glasgow G2 6PH

Opinions expressed in this report does not necessarily reflect those of the Poverty Alliance, its members, Fife Gingerbread or Citizens Advice & Rights Fife or Clued Up or Fife Council. The Poverty Alliance is a network of community, voluntary and statutory and other organisations whose vision of a sustainable Scotland is based on social and economic justice, with dignity for all, where poverty and inequalities are not tolerated and are challenged. Our aim is to combat poverty by working with others to empower individuals and communities to affect change in the distribution of power and resources.

For Further Information

Please visit www.povertyalliance.org

Or contact: T: 0141 353 0440 F: 0141 353 0686

E: admin@povertyalliance.org

The Poverty Alliance is recognised as a charity by the Inland Revenue.

Reference No: SCO19926.

Acknowledgements

This report would like to acknowledge the support for the Making it Work for Families Staff team for their support and commitment to this work as well as all families who gave their time and took part in this evaluation.

Contents

Overview of Making it Work for Families Project	4
Overview of Evaluation	7
Methodology.....	7
Executive Summary.....	10
Understanding the Whole Family Approach.....	14
Providing an Anchor.....	15
Project Identity	17
Referral Points.....	17
Core Components of the Whole Families approach.....	18
Persistence.....	19
Pace.....	20
Coordination	20
Trust.....	21
Family Perspective of Interventions and Change	23
Financial Stability and Management.....	23
Health and Wellbeing.	25
Aspirations and Destination of the Household:.....	29
Relationships and Communication	33
Wider Community Connections.....	37
The Practitioner Perspective ‘The Whole Family Approach’	39
Evidence and Communication within the Whole Family approach.....	40
Working in Wider Context of External Partnership	42
Whole Family approach and Age provision.	42
Employability Needs and Progression	43
Skillset and Competencies of Practitioners	43
Family Expectations and Understanding of the Project	44
Engagement/Retention of families.....	46
Challenging Situations and Risk management.....	46
Case studies	48
Conclusions and, Looking forward at the ‘Whole Family’ approach and Recommendations.....	50
Thinking differently about Employability.....	50
Looking forward: Next steps	52
Recommendations for Policy and Practice	53

Overview of Making it Work for Families Project

Making It Work brought together a range of agencies on an early intervention and prevention project. This multi-agency project consisted of the following project partners.

Citizens Advice & Rights Fife (CARF) is an information and advice agency working across Fife which provides information and advice on a range of subjects including: welfare benefits, debt and money advice, and other areas such as tribunal representation. This service applies a preventative approach looking at financial circumstances and other key areas to prevent escalation of issues and upskill households on entitlements and rights.

Supported Employment Service (SES) provides advice and information to households affected by health or disability issues. This includes support across the employability journey from establishing vocational profiles and to liaising with employers and providing ongoing support within workplaces.

Clued Up (CU) Offer a substance use support and information service for young people under-25 in the Fife area, also targeting the wider issues of general well-being and lifestyle. The project provides education, prevention, early intervention and diversion for young people affected by their own or someone else's substance use.

Fife Gingerbread (FG) supports lone parent, vulnerable and disadvantaged families across Fife with the ethos: Engage - Support - Progress. They provide holistic ongoing support to families to overcome number of complex barriers such as poverty, isolation and poor mental health.

In terms of resources within the project this is broken down as follows across the different strands of the project.

Adult Team	Support Workers (FG)	3 FTE
	Employability Worker (SES)	1FTE
Financial Inclusion	Financial Inclusion Family Worker (CARF)	1 FTE
Family Learning	Family Learning Coordinator (FG)	1 FTE

Young Person Team	Development Worker(Clued Up)	1 FTE
	Project Worker (Clued Up)	0.5 FTE
	Employability Workers (SES)	1 FTE
	Employability Assistant (SES)	0.5 FTE

In addition to this there was costed management time across the different project partners. The Making it Work for Families project was funded by Opportunities Fife and Poverty and Social Inclusion with additional support from the Fife Council, Big Lottery Fund, Gannochry Trust and the Corra Foundation.

This project was designed to take an innovative approach to employability and was piloted across two areas in Fife: Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath. It was anticipated that the project would work with 60 families before March 2019.

The project was designed to target families with young people who were experiencing complex long term barriers to employability and were economically inactive. These were households that had experienced prolonged periods of being unable to sustain or access employment or another positive destinations.

Figures from the Office of National Statistics from a 6 month period indicate that across Fife there were 23,000 households that were classified as workless representing around 19% of all families. This is higher than for Scotland overall (18.3 %) and Great Britain as whole (15.1 %)¹ indicating particular localised problems in Fife. Participation Measure rates for Fife indicate the 88.7% of 16-19 year olds are participating in education, training or employment compared to 91.1% nationally. Non-participation amongst 14-19 year olds is 4.8% in Fife compared to 3.7 % nationally² again indicating locality issues.

¹ Households where no-one aged 16 years or over is in employment. These members may be unemployed or economically inactive. Economically inactive members may be unavailable to work because of family commitments, retirement or study, or unable to work through sickness or disability.

² Not participating i.e. those unemployed seeking employment and others unemployed and not seeking e.g economically inactive.

The figures for Fife illustrated that a new approach was required to support families to achieve sustained change. The Making it Work (MIW) project employed a 'Whole Family' approach which is distinct from other employability models. Traditionally employability projects have focused on one specific cohort within a family for example a parent or a young person. This project aimed to work across a family identifying and addressing barriers to enable all members of the family to be receiving tailored support which would enhance their employability and job readiness.

The '*Whole Family*' Approach used had several characteristics such as:

- Understanding household dynamics including caregiver and young person at risk interactions.
- Providing a holistic and family led approach.
- Providing support with barriers and needs of the household.
- Based within the caregivers home and utilising local community settings where appropriate.
- Working with a range of external partners where required such as local schools.
- Sharing information within the Making it Work partnership to allow practitioners to be providing joined up provision to families that have experience of multi-agency involvement.

Overview of Evaluation

This evaluation ran over a period of 2017/18 Academic Year. The aims of the evaluation were to understand:

- How does the *Whole Family* approach of Making it Work make a difference for families in Fife? (Practice and values and outcomes of the project)
- What lessons can be drawn from the ‘Whole Family’ Approach to inform policymakers and practice both in Fife and beyond? (Lessons learned)

Methodology

This evaluation used a qualitative approach collecting data from the families targeted by the service but also through written reflective logs by the practitioners employed across the partnership agencies. Through this two fold approach the evaluation generated an understanding of the effectiveness and impact of the ‘Whole Family’ model from families targeted by the service and practitioners in the delivery and support.

Four families targeted by the programme were selected to be tracked longitudinally across their service experience. Semi structured participative one-to-one interviews were used. One to one interviews with families took place with young person or persons at risk and the parent/caregiver in the household. Interviews were conducted separately within the household to account for sensitivity of household circumstances and to objectively explore multiple perspectives on family life. With the young person’s interviews, participative ‘Life jigsaw’ tools were employed to explore more sensitive areas of discussion.

Families were interviewed at two points – at the commencement of project support to capture baseline experiences and at a second point when they had been in receipt of around 7-8 months of intensive project support and activities.

The interviews explored the following issues:

- Money and Life in the Household: To understand the financial stability and financial circumstances of the families involved, with a focus on income maximisation and welfare reform.
- Aspirations and Destination of the Household: To understand the aspirations, destinations and pathways of the household in terms of employability.
- Health and Wellbeing in the Household: To better understand the household in terms of wellbeing (physical and mental) with a particular focus on risk taking behaviours.
- Relationships and Communication: To understand the coping strategies, dynamics, participation and relationships of those living within the household.
- Wider Community Connections: To understand engagement in community life and interactions with wider services.

Household Sample

This sample information was obtained at first stage baseline interview.

Household One	Parent caregiver (31) with 13 year old, 11 year old, 9 year old and 7 year old.
Household Two	Parent/ caregiver (31) with 14 year old, 11 year old, 7 year old and 5 year old.
Household Three	Parent/caregiver (38) with 16 year old, 14 year old, 8 year and grandchild aged 4 months.
Household Four	Parent/caregiver (36) with 14 year old, 11 year old and 2 year old and previous recent involvement with delivering kinship care.

In addition to this process of tracking, fieldwork was conducted with two additional families beyond the original selected tracked household through a paired interview to ‘Sense check’ emerging themes from the Whole Family Approach.

Using Reflective Learning Logs, practitioners from across the partner agencies were asked to provide reflections on any issues and challenges they faced

when delivering the Making it Work project and the 'Whole Family' approach it adopted. Reflective logs were kept over two points in the project to enable a variety of issues to emerge and a richer data set to be created on the multiple agency perspectives. In total 23 reflective learning logs were collected as part of this process.

When exploring an 'issue or challenge', practitioners were asked to explore it and its contributory factors as well as reflecting on the project model approach in relation to the issue.

Executive Summary

- The 'Whole Family' approach delivered by the Making it Work for Families Partnership provided an important anchoring point for families to work through the complex and persistent issues they were experiencing. The referral criteria for this project were families who were out of work and with a young person (aged 14-19) in the household "at risk" of not achieving a positive destination.
- The 'Whole Family' approach provided a non-traditional approach to employability. The project focused on providing support and tackling multiple issues with all members of the households (parents and caregivers and their dependents) as opposed to the targeting of specific member or problem experienced by a member in a household. The provision was targeted to include all children within the household to improve destinations and attainment in the household as whole.
- The structure of the 'Whole Family' approach allowed issues affecting the household to be examined in various ways and to understand collectively the issues different members of households were experiencing as well as the support required for effective and sustainable solutions. While families targeted by the project had previous experience of agency involvement, this project was designed to provide a more in-depth, long term and universal intervention.
- Families targeted by the project experienced a number of complex and long standing barriers to employment including trauma, domestic violence, childhood sexual abuse, low income and other financial issues, mental ill health, behavioural issues including risk taking behaviour and school refusal.
- Making it Work for Families was distinctive in terms of an intervention project. The project targeted households that were affected by multiple issues, delivering a range of support and providing an important preventative role. The project was designed to work with different types of families and household sizes and support provided particularly beneficial to larger households.
- The 'Whole Family' approach provided inclusivity and 'voice' throughout the family allowing for differing perspectives, reactions, experiences and

expectations within the household to be harnessed in a positive and equitable way.

- The project focus on an 'at-risk young person aged between 14- 19' allowed for broad targeting of those pre and post 16. Self-referral indicated a degree of increased engagement in the project. However it is important to note that self-referral was a barrier to some household's engagement with the project.
- Several conditions enabled the project to contribute to transformative change within households- these included the pace of any interventions, trust between household and practitioners, persistence with the delivery of the intervention and coordination of support. The 'Whole Family' approach employed by Making it Work provided a new and distinct way for the four agencies in the partnership to work together.
- The 'Whole Family' approach provided 'at risk' young people with opportunities to forge a new identity through the project with the space to reflect, establish direction and help with their own lives. The whole family approach released young people from difficult emotions knowing other family members were being supported and wider issues within the household were being addressed. This holistic approach also benefited the adults within the households allowing them space to consider their own issues as opposed to that of their dependents.
- Practitioners provided important leadership in being able to model and support families to achieve sustainable change across their household and to help families identify and establish goals and progression within different areas of their lives.
- Household in this evaluation study experienced fragility within their financial situation and the financial assistance provided through the project enabled families to avoid, or respond more quickly, to income crisis or other financial issues. Achieving financial change within households was enhanced by the homeworking aspect of the service and allowing family's access to support whilst balancing wider caring responsibilities and other commitments.
- The framework of a 'Whole Family' approach provided a structure to support and address different health and wellbeing needs. It provided an

important point for coordination and referral onto other services such as parenting support classes for teenage parents and counselling.

- The project served to provide more direction and progress towards employability goals across participating families. Both parents and caregivers reported engaging in activities that enhanced their employability such as placements, and certificated classes e.g. food hygiene. Young people reported progression including goalsetting, changing intentions for staying on at school, career interest and registering for college courses. The project also provided an important role in providing space for employability to be considered and supported within the household.
- The 'Whole Family' approach to employability showed that families achieved progression at different rates, that progression required support and addressing of underlying issues such as confidence and self-esteem, values and belief , and issues such as emotional and financial wellbeing and underlying issues such as trauma.
- The 'Whole Family' approach allowed the project the opportunity to understand how emotional issues were being communicated and expressed across the household, their coping mechanisms and points whereby intervention was required. The focus on relationships and communication helped to address and build family resilience levels.
- The project provided a crucial role in the reinforcement and rebuilding of relationships with wider agencies and to support families to sustain this. This resulted in improved connections between agencies and families.
- Making it Work activities provided opportunities to support households to engage in groups and settings with other families facing challenges. This had important peer impacts for both parents and young people and caregivers
- The evidence and information gathered from families was constructed in an evolving way through different practitioners' project activities and support. This enabled a collecting of evidence that could be used to harness and improve outcomes for families for example though use of tools such as child wellbeing meetings.

- Making it Work used a Model for Improvement methodology which was used to improve interventions and outcomes for young people within the project.
- Working with wider stakeholders and agencies as intermediaries for families required regular liaison. Greater promotion was required to overcome challenges where interventions by the project had been delayed due to wider stakeholder work. Further promotion of the project was required with key stakeholders.
- Sustained engagement work was required with 'at risk' young people and more focused work could be used to address their employability needs. Flexibility within the project approach allowed additional support to be provided to young people to ensure engagement and progression.
- Further work was required across the project to ensure the 'Whole Family' approach provided adequate support and provision for all age groups within households.
- The Making it Work project required practitioners to have wide ranging skills to address the complexity of working with high tariff families. The 'Whole Family' approach allowed sharing of expertise across agencies and further work was required to build and enhance skillsets and collective approach.
- Managing expectations of the families the project supported was a key challenge. There was an overriding need for consistent messages and boundaries placed on the support that was being delivered.
- The project provided intensive engagement through the 'Whole Family' approach which often represented a shift for the families involved. This resulted in a need for careful management and communication with families to ensure retention and progression.
- Working with high tariff families resulted in needs to use conflict management. Further coordination was required around risk management across the project.

Understanding the Whole Family Approach

The 'Whole Family' approach was framed to provide a collective approach to support. It focused on providing support to, and tackling multiple issues being experienced by all members of the households (parents/caregivers and their dependents) as opposed to the targeting of specific member or problem within a household.

The 'Whole Family' approach was designed to be a distinctive bringing together of a partnership between statutory and third sector agencies, and delivering support in consistent and integrated ways. The partnership created was based on the complexity of the issues households faced and the expertise that each distinct component agency could offer.

This project's structure and ethos provided a mechanism to implement a non-traditional approach to employability, working with all members within a household as opposed to a more traditional approach of targeting a specific person within the household. This allowed the project to be more flexible and innovative in delivering more effective outcomes and change within families. The project served to bring together the different agencies different expertise, ways of working and approaches to work as a collective intervention.

The 'Whole Family' approach and ethos were viewed positively across this evaluation when dealing with the multiple issues and challenges that household faced. Whilst many projects provide 'holistic intensive support', this project was considered distinct by its structural makeup and use of the 'Whole Family' approach allowing more adaptive and in-depth interventions.

'Whole Family' framing provided an important ethos to underpin the work of the project in the sense of providing a pathway for both individuals and the family as a collective recognising distinct individual needs for members of a household but also providing placing importance in cohesive support in the family as a whole. The coalition of agencies working in the project was able to utilise their collective expertise to enable a more agile system of person centred care. This allowed households engaging with the project to be

directive about the support they received with the project providing a consolidated space to access fast and responsive support for various issues.

This project provided an opportunity to establish different solutions for families and to empower all members of the households. Although traditional employability projects provide a focus on outcomes such as employment, the 'Whole Family' approach provided a pathway for households to work towards employability whilst balancing and addressing any barriers and issues they faced. This enabled a broader approach to employability and one that recognised and took cognisance of the fragility and complexity of the circumstances they were experiencing. The structure of whole family enabled issues to be examined and addressed within a multi-agency approach and the support required for effective and sustainable solutions.

Providing an Anchor

Households within this project were facing a number of challenges which affected all family members and had an impact on both their resilience and ability to achieve positive destinations for all. The issues reported by families interviewed in this study included:

- Low skills and educational attainment across households.
- Adverse Childhood Experiences and Wider Trauma including domestic violence and childhood sexual abuse.
- Living on a low income and having financial problems such as debt.
- Mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, agoraphobia, self-harm and eating disorders.
- Behavioural issues including risk taking behaviour amongst young people.
- School refusal on a regular and sustained basis.
- Overcrowded accommodation or poor housing conditions.
- Long term experience of being economically inactive with prolonged periods of being unable to sustain or access employment or other positive destination.

- Offending behaviour including patterns of offences.
- Challenges with attachment across households.
- Physical health conditions impacting on wellbeing.
- Low confidence and self-esteem and related issues such as isolation.
- Wider changes in household circumstances including teenage pregnancy and kinship care.
- Long term conflict and communication issues within households

Families felt that they were often dealing with a number of problems and that the project provided an important 'anchor' point for the household whilst they were navigating these issues. This anchor point provided for some households the first space as a whole they had, to understand and work towards addressing their issues. The project model allowed families a framework of support practitioners with whom to build trust which was critical given the number of issues the sensitivity of the issues they experienced.

The concept of a 'safe space' was emphasized consistently throughout the project, as was the model of information sharing across the project meaning families were not 're-telling' their story and to have reassurance about their information and how it would be acted upon. This increased household's readiness to engage and encouraged families to be open and frank about their issues. In this sense the project also provided an important preventative function by allowing issues that hadn't previously been identified to be addressed and for households to fully identify their support needs. The project was reported as helping households to engage with or 'face up' to issues that they had previously been reluctant to address or struggled to access support. This ability to engage provided an opportunity for the first time, to focus on an issue or to refocus and tailor the support they were receiving.

This 'anchoring' provided a sense of security when dealing with multiple services. As new support was offered the 'anchoring' of the project, encouraged families to engage and critically to maintain their engagement. The anchoring provided accountability and a place to coordinate support as well as addressing families concerns and fears about accessing wider support.

The 'anchoring' role of the project provided an important go-between for dealing with other services thus helping households to make sense of their support but also to reduce the load on households.

Project Identity

Families were recruited onto the project either through self-referral or referral by the school or another agency. This provided the entry point to the project and the 'Whole Family' approach. Referral onto the programme does however need consideration in terms of the effectiveness of different routes of referral and the implications of this.

Some families within this study were unclear about why they had been brought onto the project and were confused about why the model was appropriate for them. Whilst this could be partially attributed to understanding and acknowledgment of the issues the household was facing there was a need for clearer branding for the project.

More consideration needs to be given to how the project identity and the 'Whole Family' ethos can be branded as distinct from the wider work of the services involved in the partnership. Services were still viewed as partly distinct by families rather than being seen collectively as part of the 'Whole Family' approach'.

Other issues around brand identity related to the visibility of the project and feelings about being in receipt of support. Particular reference was made to the transport provided by one partner who drew attention to the young people participating with the project in a school setting.

Referral Points

The entry point of referral onto the programme focused broadly around a young person aged between 14-19 being at risk of not achieving a positive destination for employment training or education. The nature of the issues families experienced impinged on family life, household circumstances and household wellbeing in a number of different ways.

The age criteria of pre and post 16 allowed the project to access a number of households facing a number of difficulties. These included school refusing,

unable to sustain school due to reasons such as teenage pregnancy and those who had suffered other difficulties such as physical or emotional ill health.

Families could self-refer or be referred by a school or other key agency. Evidence showed that the referral route did not appear to influence how households viewed the project. Where self-referral was utilised, knowledge or previous experiences of a project partner helped to increase engagement or get 'buy-in' to the project more quickly but no other distinguishing features were identified. Households in both cohorts of referral reported having motivations to focus on household needs being addressed as a key reason for engagement.

Some households felt that self-referral would have been a barrier for some households who would have lacked the confidence to engage in the project, for example, those with poor mental health.

The referral criteria provided a springboard for families to connect with the project. This was as a particularly important factor in why parents participated in the project's group work. Families reported feeling a sense that 'they weren't alone' in their experiences.

For the young people involved there were mixed views on the referral. Some reported being unclear why the project was helping them. This ambiguity is something that would benefit from further exploration as could how communication could be improved around the reasons for intervention. This should recognise, that for majority of the young people within the Making it Work programme, had had prior long term experience of service engagement which may have contributed to feelings of ambivalence, and lack of understanding as to why the new intervention had been suggested.

Core Components of the Whole Families approach

There were several key factors that were outlined as being pivotal components of the project and to the engagement of families with this programme. Firstly, and most crucially, was the Making it Work Project team. Families spoke openly of the importance of being treated in a positive and non-judgemental way. This was of critical importance to those who had been more reluctant to engage and to help sustain ongoing engagement with the project. The non-judgemental approach and relationships built encouraged honesty and critical

reflection with the families. This allowed for 'buy in' to the project, for households to subscribe to the project values and approach and be motivated to making and sustaining changes in their lives. Families discussed that issues had often been presenting and in some cases escalating within their household prior to project intervention.

A second key factor was the recognition of the family as a whole. The 'Whole Family' approach provided families with the sense of collective support and working *through* the family with the family. Whilst this was a subtle distinction it provided a sense of control and empowerment. Families felt a sense of coordination across their support from the Making it Work partnership and this contributed to a greater sense of feeling in control. This was despite the number of agencies within this project. The 'Whole Family' approach allowed for a voice throughout the family and for differing perspectives, reactions and experiences of the household to be harnessed in a positive and equal way. Within households young people in particular benefited from this approach. The value of knowing a parent /caregiver were being supported allowed them let go of fears and anxiety about their parent's needs and to focus on their own needs and development.

Persistence

Persistence also emerged as a critical factor of the whole families approach. Support delivered through Making it Work was intensive and provided an ongoing and regular opportunity for households to address their issues and needs. Families reported that patterns of behaviour and communication had often become 'stuck' and how to solve issues was clearer with the guidance of the Making it Work Partnership.

For families to have the encouragement and support of Making it Work helped them to identify pathways to change and to be able to sustain these. The 'persistence' of the workers helped the family to maintain progress and create sustainable change across the households. The whole family approach allowed this persistence to be more affective as it was able to communicate and work across the family listening to all members within a household and tailor the support that was required.

Some families reported that young people in the households found it difficult to build relationships with the MIW practitioners during the early stages of their support and at times were opposed to engaging with support. 'Persistence' was crucial in terms of helping to obtain young people's trust and repeated attempts to get beyond oppositional behaviour, whilst respecting the young person's autonomy, allowed the project to get to the deeper routes and origins of issues and fostering connection.

Pace

Alongside persistence, pace was also cited as key to the success of the 'Whole Family' approach. At initial engagement with the project households reported that their household functioning was fragile. Mapping and building an understanding of the issues families faced took time and commitment from both practitioners and families. Working through solutions and identifying priority needs also took time. The pace of the delivery of the support offered and the prioritisation on issues had to be carefully curated in order for families to be able to adopt the support and to have the capacity to engage. Due to the number of issues households were dealing with, this enabled families to not feel overwhelmed.

Pace was also critical when introducing different elements of support. For example, when group work was introduced and when goals were set across different partners, pace enabled better coordination and for a clear plan to be set for families. Some households reported anxiety about engaging with things like group work but this was introduced at a point where it would be applicable to their situations.

As the project involved multiple partners, different aspects of the project were introduced at different points. This phasing allowed the families to feel they were building on the steps they had taken.

Coordination

The issues with which households were dealing required support from a number of services. For larger families this was compounded by the number of appointments and meetings that they were expected to attend.

Making it Work provided families with a place to be able to address and contextualise this wider support and reflect on the implications of this for their

household. It also provided a place in which families could seek additional support from wider services such as advocacy. One area where this was important was in regards to education. Families said that the Making it Work practitioners were able to advocate, reflect their needs and support families communicating their views when required.

Making it Work provided an overarching infrastructure which families trusted and with which they felt safe for support to address household needs. This sense of safety and trust also aided prevention enabling the de-escalation of emergent problems or to promote more rapid responses to sudden declines in parental/caregiver mental health.

Trust

The entry point of the project referral focused broadly around a young person aged between 14- 19 being at risk of not achieving a positive destination. Young people from the target group had often become mistrustful of support and advice or reluctant to engage. Parents and caregivers also reported negative experiences of services citing such factors as not being listened to, or been given inadequate information about interventions.

The 'Whole Family' approach to building trust involved a number of tactics when working with different family members on a one to one basis, starting within the home. The focus on starting within the home allowed families to engage in a space with which they were familiar. In some cases, this proved essential due to some of the problems families were facing such as poor parental mental health or school refusing. It also enabled families to feel more in control during the process.

The attitude of practitioners was also deemed central to building trust. Some families expressed shame or embarrassment at needing support or of the issues affecting their households. The importance of being able to speak openly and frankly about issues in a positive non-judgemental atmosphere was vital especially when working with multiple practitioners. This had benefits in terms of Making It Work interventions that were more challenging to address. Although household members could be receiving support independently at points, the partnership continued the articulation of

the whole family approach for example by 'checking in' or asking about other members of the households.

Young people felt that the practitioners took a 'chilled approach' that was distinctive from what they had experienced with other settings such as school. Practitioners were seen as approachable, knowledgeable, recognised the young people's views and listened to their concerns.

Across all families there was a sense that the project practitioners were committed to helping them to achieve their collective and individual goals and were invested in their success.

Family Perspective of Interventions and Change

Families were asked to report on their experiences of change in terms of the outcomes the project had helped them to achieve across different areas of lives.

- Financial Stability and Management:
- Health and Wellbeing in the Household:
- Aspirations and Destination of the Household:
- Relationships and Communication:
- Wider Community Connections:

Financial Stability and Management.

All of the households interviewed were living on a low income and were in receipt of social security benefits. The financial strand of this project was integral in assisting families to maximise income and to deal with ongoing financial issues the households were experiencing. Households often experienced fragility with their financial situation and the support provided through the project enabled families to avoid, or to respond more quickly, to income crises or other money related issues such as escalation of debts or avoidance of borrowing through being supported.

Support to access crisis or discretionary entitlements such as the Scottish Welfare Fund and Discretionary Housing payment. The demographics of some of the household types within this study for example larger families meant they were at risk of wider reforms such as the benefit cap. Payments helped to avoid escalation of debts, or avoiding borrowing.

Experiencing financial problems caused households hardship and served to constrain the choice in the daily lives of households and had other impacts across the household as a whole. Initially households reported having poor financial capability, poor financial decision making, and poor budgeting. Other factors also underpinned some of the financial issues affecting them. For example, poor mental health affecting a household's ability to make effective financial decisions.

The 'Whole Family' approach utilized within the Making It Work project, the project was able to provide support to address the underlying drivers of poor financial management and help to provide direction. The collaborative approach employed allowed links to be made and to build the understanding of all members of the family contributing more sustainable financial change.

Reducing financial hardship experienced by households had other outcomes such as feeling more in control of money thereby enabling people to have the confidence to engage with other activities such as group work. Other outcomes included parents and caregivers reporting feeling less frustrated and stressed allowing them to work towards more effective relationships and achieve outcomes across other parts of the project.

The integrated approach also served to reduce the need for signposting, whereby families could run the risk of disengagement and waiting lists resulting in quicker and more responsive approaches to financial issues. Timing of support was also important and further enabled a readiness to engage.

“With me being dyslexic, if I don't understand a letter I will give it to support worker and she will pass it to the financial worker and she will come out and discuss it with me...”

(Parent /Caregiver interview)

Also pertinent to the success of this work stream was the focus on homeworking in terms of financial support. This enabled families to be able to access support at time which was convenient and appropriate for them whilst balancing wider caring responsibilities and engagement with other support services. This was critically important given the number and complexity of the issues with which families presented within in the Making it Work project. The Whole Family Approach provided an opportunity to ensure particular risk factors were identified.

Previously families reported being reluctant to seek financial support and employed avoidance behaviour such as not opening bills. Household finances were a sensitive subject for families with feelings of embarrassment and shame being reported about having financial problems. The integration of project activities provided an important counter to this as families could build

a relationship gradually with money advice services. This helped to break down misconceptions, and allay fears, regarding the judgment they thought they would experience. This provided a more 'sociable' way of engaging with the issue. More importantly it allowed families to be more consistent in recognising progress made and reinforced engagement with money advice. This increased the likelihood of families engaging beyond the project further enhancing the sustainability of the approach.

Engaging with financial support however was optional and one household within this study reported still being reluctant to address their financial issues through the project despite knowing support was available. It was suggested that more work articulating benefits of addressing financial issues may help to overcome this. Other contributing factors here included wider wellbeing priorities requiring attention at that point.

Within the project work took place on an individual and group basis to enhance financial literacy. This helped raise awareness of financial products and financial services such as credit unions and also served to help families understand the impacts of effective budgeting with potential financial transition points such as the introduction of Universal Credit. This work also helped to provide a foundation for the employability aspect of the project in terms of serving to establish a more secure financial position within household allowing them to focus more employability options.

Young people reported gaining a greater understanding about money and how to budget and examples were given in household behaviour of younger children being reinforced through activities such as behaviour charts for pocket money.

The range of money issues dealt with across this project included dealing with issues such as unpaid child maintenance, saving, debt, housing transitions such as housing move, partial moving house and bankruptcy.

Health and Wellbeing.

The interconnectedness of the 'Whole Family' approach served to provide a strong structural framework to explore and enhance health and wellbeing. Working with all the members of the family was particularly beneficial when examining the emotional needs within a household. 'Whole Family' provided

the opportunity to understand how emotional issues were being communicated and expressed across the household, the coping mechanisms and strategies adopted and identified points for intervention to address issues. Issues impacting on wellbeing in families included mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, previous experiences of domestic violence, childhood abuse, self-harm, and bullying.

Establishing relationships with the practitioners provided an opportunity to explore and unravel wellbeing issues across the household as a whole. This required digging down and working with families to paint fully a picture of influencing factors. Families were affected consistently by events and circumstances which had adverse impacts on the overall wellbeing and functioning of the households. Addressing and improving health and wellbeing was therefore pivotal for the project to help families address and focus on other issues within the household and to improve families overall resilience.

“I used to go to other groups when I was younger to try and control anger but none of it worked... because we would like never talk to other people .. they would just try and give us methods to control our anger and that but with {support worker} he tried to get us outside doing things , he took us out made us think more about life and also on top of that controlling my anger”

(Young Person interview)

Parents and caregivers spoke of both the complexity involved in managing their own emotional health needs as well as their dependents behavioural and emotional issues. In some households parents/caregivers experienced anxiety and depression which inhibited their ability to address household needs. Prior to the intervention of Making it Work trying to support young people/children within the household had often resulted in long term challenges for household dynamics and day to day life. Families reported often having been at a crisis point and feeling redundant regarding strategies and techniques to address problems. Frequently issues around older children’s behaviour would have ripple effects across households affecting sibling’s behaviour or sibling relationships. The whole family approach provided a break on the escalation of those issues and provided families with an opportunity to reassess and

redirect their efforts. This important preventative aspect of the project enabled earlier identification of other risk factors and enabled support to be employed at an earlier stage.

With complex circumstances, the 'Whole Family' approach provided a framework to enable members of a household to be supported individually and for different needs and issues to be articulated and addressed. Making it Work provided an important point for families for referral, coordination, & navigation of additional service provision and knowledge to upskill families to address issues. Examples of additional support included Incredible Early Years Courses, parenting support for teenage parents, support in understanding issues around attachment, and take-up of counselling services. The trust and strength of the practitioner/family relationship of Making It Work was an important factor in families engaging with and sustaining this additional support.

The 'Whole Family' approach provided those within a household in most immediate need with the most intensive support. This evaluation noted that in one household in this study this had resulted in one family member initially not receiving one to one support but it being implemented when further need arose.

Whilst the reasons for this were unclear, the project should consider the weighting of support provided across the household and the review processes around this. The complexity of household circumstances can mean that progression towards making change is a slow and often fragile process. This delivery process of the project took account of this and provided flexibility whereby support could be increased where required for example to address any issues that may develop. This included issues such as support around contact arrangements, court proceedings and changes in care arrangements.

Project activities provided building blocks for household wellbeing and provided opportunities to engage in activities both within and outwith the home such as family learning or group work. This was seen as invaluable from the of households' perspective. It provided the opportunity to connect with others and to build social networks. This helped to reduce feelings of isolation and to provide time that was enjoyable and a break from the day to day issues

with which households were grappling. The project gave families supported space to speak about issues and their impact within the household.

This was of particular benefit to children and young people within households as they had often previously lacked an outlet to speak about issues and group work with peers served to provide multiple benefits. This included having a greater understanding of coping with emotions and being able to utilise their own experiential knowledge to provide support and guidance to others. This had dual benefits in building young people's confidence and helping to improve their wellbeing.

"... a lot better because of it wasn't for some of the groups Z wouldn't be out at all, she would be in her bedroom"

(Parent/Caregiver interview)

Different components of the project provided different contributions to wellbeing. Addressing financial issues was reported as being one of the most pivotal activities in terms of helping to reduce household stress and helping to obtain outcomes that greatly enhanced wellbeing. One particular positive outcome was helping people move from overcrowded accommodation.

Employability work, such as volunteering, also provided an important focus for families allowing them to visualise and anticipate future employment and upskilling. This was highlighted by families as something they considered in more focused and optimistic ways than what they had prior to the Making it Work project and created avenues for future directions within households.

A particular focus of the project work with young people focused around providing support with life skills and work around issues such as drug and alcohol. Young people reported the usefulness of this being delivered in a community setting instead of school. It meant young people were more receptive to listening to this information and felt the practitioners were more knowledgeable and approachable to discuss issues with them. This evaluation, however, was unable to ascertain if the project had reduced any risk taking behaviours.

Despite this, the project had a critical role in assisting young people with forging a new identity. For young people involved with the project, it served to

provide several benefits. It provided a safe and secure space outwith the household and through one to one support, to express how they felt about the different support services for the household.

Support sessions taking place outwith the home allowed young people important time to process and reflect on their own lives. This gave young people a safe, critical and open space to reflect on their behaviour, choices and emotions and to understand their experiences in an in-depth way.

“Before I used to follow my mum everywhere ... me and my mum was glued together... its not good it’s not healthy we need time apart from each other , so she goes to her group and I go my group”

(Young person interview)

For many young people, the knowledge that their parents and caregivers were being supported was crucial in enabling them to forge a new identity and build resilience.

The young people taking part often had caring or other responsibilities within the households or reported feeling emotional pressure from life within their household. This impacted on their ability to understand themselves and their own needs. The whole family approach provided them with the space to reflect, establish direction and help with their own lives. This was articulated as being important for removing worry or guilt from the young person knowing their parents /caregivers were also being provided with support. This greatly improved young person’s wellbeing and ability to engage in the support being offered by the partnership.

Aspirations and Destination of the Household:

A specific focus of the Making it Work project was employability. This aimed at improving employability for both the young person at risk and the parent and caregivers within families. The whole family approach allowed work to be conducted in parallel across the household. The project provided an important arena for families to think about future trajectories, aspirations and ambitions and how they could achieve these.

All members of families benefited from this focus and the role the project had in developing and identifying routes to achieving change. Families reported

that prior to their involvement in Making it Work they hadn't taken part in work that focused on employability because they hadn't deemed it a priority or an issue they had space within their day to day circumstances to address. Although families had aspirations, their circumstances at the point of referral to the project were overwhelming for them. For the young person at risk, issues such as school refusing meant they experienced a loss of direction and disengagement with future options and choices. Examples were provided of young people only managing a few hours at school a day, school exclusions and patterns of long term school refusing.

"...missed quite a lot missed about a years' worth of school."

(Young Person interview)

For parents/caregivers there was particular concern for the employability prospects of the young person in the household and their being at risk of not achieving a positive destination. This gave parents/caregivers significant amounts of stress and anxiety. Families reported a number of behavioural issues at the point of referral Making it Work, including school refusing and related isolation, misbehaviour/non engagement at school meaning the parent /caregiver would have to attend the school to bring the young person home, young people leaving school due to other circumstances and young people struggling with attainment and peer relationships in school. The follow on effect of this on parents/caregivers reduced their ability to maintain/access employability options due to the regular uncertainty in the households and the emotional impact of dealing with these ongoing issues.

"If Y is refusing to go to class the school want me to run along to get them into class"

(Parent /Caregiver interview)

The focus on employability, was welcomed by the families at early stages of engagement with the project, families felt that progression in this area would require intensive support to enable shifts in this area of their lives. Households faced a number of complex barriers that inhibited progression in employability and required sustained engagement and support to tackle these before steps could be taken to move them forward. The fragility of households resulted in

this having to be a carefully managed process to prevent families feeling overwhelmed. Families emphasised the importance of pace to allow them to engage in employability focused activities.

The 'Whole Family' approach served to provide an important anchor to households to improve their employability prospects. Reasons for households requiring Making it Work intervention related to a number of underlying issues including low confidence and self-esteem, anger management issues, behavioural needs, poor mental health, changing household circumstances and previous trauma. The 'Whole Family' ethos allowed for work across the families to help provide resolution and progress with the issues faced. By providing one to one support and well as group activities, the project assisted in rebuilding households' wellbeing and provided a foundation with which they could engage in employability activity.

The 'Whole Family' approach allowed the phasing of work around employability. At point of referral, families, in particular young people within them, required time to build trust with practitioners and to develop a fuller picture of life within the household. This active listening allowed the project the opportunity to understand the issues and the families' journeys to these issues arising. By establishing this broader relationship and baseline, work could then be developed across the Making It Work project to set goals for both individuals and the family as a whole.

The project delivered a number of employability activities and worked with families in a number of ways to focus and build upon their confidence and knowledge of options available to them. Examples of early stage activities included building up confidence in meeting new people and being in group activities. Both parents and young people reported having anxiety about meeting new people so providing spaces where households felt comfortable was important as a first step to progressing to other activities.

The group work activities provided both parents/caregivers and young people the opportunity to build self-confidence and to become more comfortable with learning and achieving in group settings. One-to-one work and work in informal settings such as the drop in sessions allowed for families to build and sustain this and identify new avenues and areas of interest. The flexibility of

the drop in sessions in particular allowed parents and caregivers the opportunity to fit it around their household needs therefore allowing them to balance the wider needs of their family with the employability work. This helped to remove pressure from parent and caregivers.

Group work and one-to-one work with 'at risk' young people helped them rethink their capabilities and to consider their options in a different way. Young people reported that activities that took them outside their comfort zone and where they felt supported, allowed them to reflect on their interests and needs and identify routes to progression they wished to pursue. In some cases the project assisted with subject choices, in others identifying and accessing college placements. The importance of small and manageable steps that helped to sustain engagement was emphasized. Young people also benefited from access to opportunities and activities they wouldn't have previously had due for example due household income or other barrier. This provided an important factor in maintaining engagement for both the young person and for the parent/caregiver. Parents and caregivers reported benefiting from seeing young people's confidence increase as a result of activity that took place.

"They got her involved to help me get a cv so I could even like just find a part-time job until to college or something ; they going to help me build up my confidence so I can go and stuff like that"

(Young Person interview)

"They were getting 35 punishments in the space of three months – and now they have reduced to three in the space of a month"

(Parent/ Caregiver interview)

The whole family approach allowed a joined up approach to assisting with improving employability. For example use of money advice aspect of the service provided parents/caregivers with calculations around the value of potential employment which enabled them to assess potential employment. They were also supported to take part in additional learning activities such as food hygiene and other certificated courses. This therefore increased the qualifications of parents and opened up additional employability avenues.

“They goes to school next year and I want to be working I don’t want to be on the dole forever .. I actually want to do something that means something”

(Parent/Caregiver interview)

One core theme to emerge from the evaluation was the importance of the project in terms of understanding and supporting families to pursue their own issues and choices. For example one parent mentioned having an interest in psychology and being encouraged to download an online app for their mobile phone. This enabled them to consider the subject more fully and was a useful format to explore it in a way that fitted in with their caring responsibilities. Work experience was also highlighted as one of the most useful aspects of employability support. It allowed parents/caregivers to pursue previously unconsidered options. Placements were organised in accordance with their interest and provided an opportunity to explore and assess the suitability of this type of work. Both work experience and certificated course provided material for listing on curriculum vitae.

In terms of raising aspirations, the project, provided a crucial role in giving families and young people the support to explore routes of interest and for barriers they were experiencing to be removed. Young people reported seeing the ‘bigger picture’ in terms of how employability options could provide them with a sense of achievement and independence. The ‘Whole Family’ Approach allowed the respective interests for the parent/caregiver and young person in the household to be directed and supported. The project provided fresh energy and thinking for the families about their options and helped them to identify future routes of interest. This in turn increased wellbeing and represented an important step in feeling empowered. The whole family approach was also beneficial in that it was able to pick up emerging issues and barriers and to ensure that these did not undermine employability goals.

Relationships and Communication

The ‘Whole Family’ approach allowed for an extensive focus on relationships and communication within the household. Across all the families interviewed, the project team were perceived as being pivotal to their experiences of change and of the progress they had been able to achieve. The intensive approach of the project engagement and the whole family approach allowed

households the opportunity to build relationships and to be able to implement actions and behaviours to bring about change.

For families that had suffered sustained and persistent challenges, communication within the household had often become a source of difficulty. Re-establishing positive communication took time to allow emotions to be expressed and tension to be resolved. This was not a quick process, and the modelling and intervention work by the Making It Work practitioners gave households a space to address individual and collective concerns. The individual aspect was particularly important in giving space and tools such as coping strategies to work on issues such as anger.

“ we did games where you had to pick bit of paper out a bag and it was like tell me a memory that makes you happy ,that was really good actually made us sit and talk”

(Parent/Caregiver interview)

“she {support worker} is good at calming me down and offering different solutions to stuff”

(Parent/Caregiver interview)

The workers were important role models. Family learning was reported as pivotal for families to engage in meaningful time together to build relationships and communication. This supported positive communication and increased knowledge and understanding of issues the household was facing. Being in receipt of this support with enabled them to feel empowered and better equipped to deal with it. Families had reported that relationships and communication prior to the intervention of the Making it Work, were often under pressure including instances of conflict. To deal with this positive interaction was stressed.

“X is Suffering from bad anxiety; we cannot get them out.... occasions where they sit in their room, doesn't want to go out ... It's hard to motivate, so I have got that kind of stress at home and when I want to go and do something , they don't want to do it”

(Parent/Caregiver interview)

The relationship tensions experienced included sibling, parent and teenager, relationships, peer to peer for the young person at risk, stepfamily members and kinship care.

The focus on relationships was viewed by families as a core factor in terms of their engagement within the project. Although the project had different components such as money advice and employability, working on relationships within the household provided the key impetus for the parents/caregivers to engage with the project. This also served as an important common denominator for families engaged in group work. It was important for the at-risk young person and the parent/caregiver. Families felt that just knowing that others were also experiencing problems with relationships and communication helped to reduce isolation and maintain engagement in group work activities.

Fundamental to the success of the progress the project was able to achieve on relationships and communication, related specifically to trust. Having trust allowed for sensitive relational issues such as experiences of domestic abuse to be discussed and addressed. Several examples were provided by parents /caregivers of feelings of blame and guilt about their household's experiences within and the issues that had flowed from this such as poor attachment within households. Making it Work's non-judgemental approach was critical in allowing families the safe space to be able to discuss their journey prior to involvement within the project.

Family learning activities were widely discussed as being one of the most helpful aspects of project for rebuilding and reconnecting households. The family learning worker was an important intermediary as well as introducing new activities and ways of communicating across the family. These activities provided a structured space in family life with pre-determined activities designed to promote fun and better understanding across households. This was seen as highly valuable as it provided leisure time and relaxation time across the family. Families' spoke about these activities providing something different from what they had previously undertaken as a family and gave families new things to talk about. Wider group activities in the project also served to provide this in terms of reducing the isolation households has been experiencing before the project intervention.

One to one support was also viewed as useful way for support to be delivered to families. The flexible nature of the project model meant that families could receive one to one support very quickly enabling them to manage issues as they arose. Examples included being able to request additional time for a young person when they required time out as result of anger issues, opportunities to deal with crisis issues such as when a young person required local authority care and when self-harm presented in young person.

The project was able to provide more creative and innovative approaches to addressing issues. It was able to work creatively to address flash points within households where communications could face particular strain or challenge. For example a family reported that a support worker would arrive in the household early to provide assistance with school run activities and to assist with helping a young person, with history of school refusing, to attend school.

Making it Work activities provided tools and strategies for working with difficult emotions and findings ways to support families to have positive attachments and better communications. Workers were able to serve as a point of contact and reference for reinforcing strategies and to help provide feedback and reflection.

For young people involved, the Making it Work project provided clarity for them to deal with difficult emotions or feelings. Some young people reported feeling more confident and more at-ease with emotions, such as anger, with which they had previously struggled. Crucially one of the contributing factors to the project's success was its focus on building work around emotional issues into a wider programme of activities. This was distinct from previous support young people had experienced which had focused solely on their presenting issue. The wider project activities reinforced positive behaviour and transferred this into other contexts.

The projects holistic approach for example with money advice built into the project helped to assist with removing wider stress from households. Money was often reported to add/build issues into existing tensions within households and therefore achieving control in this area also helped with overall household communication.

Wider Community Connections

An important function of the whole family approach was helping to achieve sustainability for families. Examples included building resilience within households, improving their links with the wider community, and building family capacity to access support. The project also provided links to other agencies through referral and signposting. Where families reported a lack of local support available for particular issues, the project supported them to find and access information and other resources applicable to their circumstances.

“I’m getting sent to the Incredible Early Years for strategies for myself and for strategies to work with Y”

(Parent/Caregiver interview)

The project provided reinforcement with, and occasionally rebuilding of their relationship with wider agencies. Where relationships with wider agencies had been strained or had broken down the project provided a mechanism to review what factors had brought about this dissatisfaction or non-engagement and what steps could be taken to resolve them. Making it Work was able to provide a ‘listening ear’ and to unpack and explore issues critically. In some situations the form of support provided previously hadn’t been suitable, for example telephone support or support provided in a setting that was difficult for a family to access. Making it Work therefore was important tool for rebuilding connections across different services and broadening the support families were able to access.

This was important in securing longer term resilience and sustainability in family circumstances and progression. Examples were provided of relationships being rebuilt with core services such as education and this had broader outcomes in terms of more effective dialogue and satisfaction in households. Families also reported in this providing additional value in terms of helping them to feel more assertive about their rights and entitlements.

The project supported families maintain connections with services or establish connections during transition points such as moving house. In crisis situations the project was also able to act as a source of encouragement when accessing new services. This encouraged momentum and pushed people to access support with which they might otherwise not engaged.

Making it Work through its programme of activities, helped to engage people in groups and settings which they previously been unable to do. Activities such as the walking group and homework club built confidence and helped broaden perceptions of community activities. They provided an important point for reconnecting and reinforcing wellbeing and connected people to others in similar situations to their own. Several participants mentioned making new friendships from the groups and having a broader network of people within the locality.

Alongside its own programme, the project provided an important 'connecting' role. Examples included families being referred to additional support such as Incredible Years support for parenting, Counselling and other support. These were critical as they avoided duplication of services activity and in some cases provided activity that was beyond the scope of the Making it Work project. Families reported that, without project involvement, their knowledge of wider services available to them would have been limited. Project workers were able to provide additional support to address fears or other barriers that might impact on engagement. This resulted in added value when accessing support on more sensitive issues such as mental health or trauma.

The broader work of the project, through activities deigned to improve confidence and self-esteem, helped families achieve wider outcomes such as the ability to articulate their needs when dealing with other services. Examples provided included being able to inform Jobcentre Plus staff of issues such as dyslexia which previously they would have been afraid to do.

The Practitioner Perspective ‘The Whole Family Approach’

The whole family approach utilised within the Making it Work project represented a new partnership and way of working within the project and the agencies of Clued Up , Fife Gingerbread , Supported Employment Service and Citizens Advice & Rights Fife were delivering a new model of support.

Although the project was well resourced, the initial approach to the delivery of the work required adjustments to ensure balance across the partnership and to maximise the partnership’s, to improve communication across the project and improve effectiveness of the programme for families.

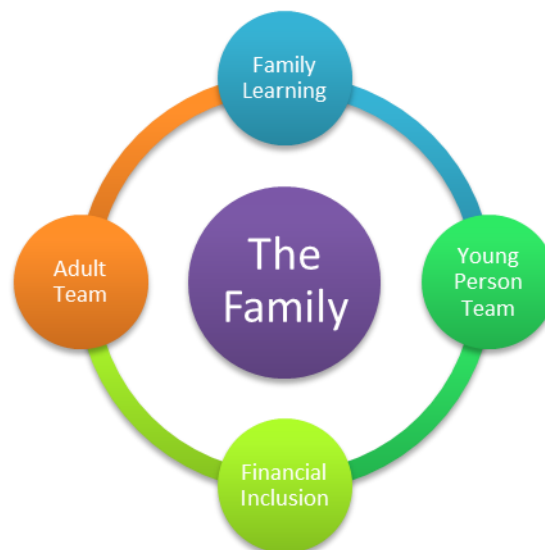
The project incurred several phases in building the ‘Whole Family Approach’ and its delivery processes. At initial formation the project went through a developmental phase, whereby the workers began to adapt to the new approach and to build relationships with intended recipients of the project. This required new ways of working and operating within the respective agencies. The distinctiveness of the project required a ‘bedding in’ period to allow it to establish roots, and to implement this new model of intervention.

After this developmental stage, the focus turned to improving the effectiveness for families and capacity within the project which resulted in a restructuring within the project. This was to address the constraints of the initial model which focused on the immediate needs/circumstances of the household which meant that families were initially having less involvement with the Supported Employment Service. This was remodelled to create a new infrastructure which created teams clustered across adults and young people. This enabled more and better coordination and communication regarding the support families required and also allowed the whole family approach to be more tailored.

At initial delivery, the model of the intervention had been anticipated to be linear in its approach with journeys and progression happening in a staged and structured approach, with employability support from the Supported Employment Service (SES) introduced following engagement and support from

other partners. This process was viewed as not making full use of the service and therefore a new model was proposed. This delivery shift involved another transition period for the project but one which resolved issues in terms of capacity and balance of support across the project.

However, more capacity building is required across the practitioners' project team to improve the effectiveness of this model to ensure staff, are able to operate and achieve project goals effectively. The new model produced different clustering across the project and provided new opportunities for collaborative working. Underpinning this shift was a Model for Improvement to consider how the project could be realigned to be more effective applying the 'Whole Family' approach.



Evidence and Communication within the Whole Family approach.

Structurally the 'Whole Family' approach of drawing upon multiple sources of information collected by different practitioners within the partnership enabled a more detailed evidence base of the families core needs and issues to be created. This helped achieve more effective outcomes for families through practitioners being able to collectivise this evidence and utilise structures such as a child wellbeing meeting to harness better outcomes for families and address core needs. The 'Whole Family' approach was therefore well placed to apply leverage to addressing long standing problems and to be able to achieve intervention in a faster and more effective manner. The 'Whole Family' approach was distinctive and its intensive relationship building with families

resulted in a more considered process to how support and solutions could be applied for the family.

Examples were provided through practitioner reflections of how this was used to alleviate long term housing issues such as overcrowding, which in turn, increased wellbeing for all members of a family. More consistent and greater mapping and sharing of best practice across the partnership would increase outcomes for families and build a knowledge base on applying a whole family approach.

Information obtained from families was of assistance in contributing to the success of the project and in terms of achieving positive interventions. Evidence gathering from the families was constructed in an evolving way through relationships established with different practitioners across the project, and through both one to one and group activities. In this sense the 'Whole Family' approach was particularly advantageous as it allowed information to be elucidated in different ways when families including young people felt able to discuss sensitive issues. The project however had competing priorities in terms of requiring information to be collected at specific points to provide evidence of needs and eligibility as well as establishing baseline information for the project to work towards as a whole.

When initially working with families, and whilst establishing trust with families there was often fear and suspicion directed towards the project, and initial relationships were often fragile and family engagement sporadic whilst establishing trust with families. Families needed to feel they were in control and their voices were being respected for engagement to be maintained. Introducing paperwork too soon could result in families becoming overwhelmed and not engage with the project. The project may wish to consider how more creative and non-intrusive approaches could be built into this aspect of the process.

The project also underwent a process of upskilling staff around the collection of information though utilising a Model for Improvement methodology. This was intended to build staff confidence around working with outcomes tools more effectively specifically around collecting information from young people. This involved using an existing measurement tool from a partnership service

then applying in the young person's team to assist with designing more effective interventions. This was beneficial to the project once it was employed as it provided a fuller evidence base on areas of improvement for the at-risk young person. The learning from this process showed that greater time and capacity was required to assist with implementing new recording tools and to ensure ownership and buy-in from the staff.

Working in Wider Context of External Partnership

The Making it Work project existed in a wider context of external partnership working which included statutory agencies such as education and social work. The project provided an important liaison and advocacy role for families within these services and offered an important intermediary and mediating role for families. Maintaining families' progression required regular liaison with wider agencies. When working with high tariff families this could include challenging agencies expectations of family progression and needs. Examples were provided of intervention work the project had undertaken which had not been effective for example due to responsiveness and perceptions of wider institutions in working with the project. This had resulted in delays in support for families. Further work is required around wider partner's collaboration with Making It Work project and the 'Whole Family' approach it employs. Greater promotion of the project with wider stakeholders, and clarity of escalation procedures where required, would overcome particular challenges being faced by the project.

Whole Family approach and Age provision.

The whole family approach was broadly targeted at the 14-19 year old age group. However children outside this age groups could be found within households, and activities such as family learning could be adopted. Despite this, the age range of children/young people within households was challenging for the project to support. Gaps in provision were raised as a concern by practitioners within the whole family model. Some children/young people in the household were provided with support as a collective rather than receiving the individual support they may have merited. In some situations, this cohort may have been close in age to the at-risk group, for example 11-13 year olds, but the structure of the project meant it was limited in the support it could offer here. Further work is required to consider how the project could

work more coherently with this age group on a preventative approach. The project had identified this is a key concern and sought to address this through exploring it with wider stakeholders in order to ensure support was provided through other sources. This remains however a limitation of the 'Whole Family' approach the Making it Work model could provide.

The project did however maximise the use of the family learning of the project to ensure it was fully supporting the family within the project structures. This evaluation recommends further work mapping and building relationships with wider stakeholders to increase support routes for one to one support for family members who fall out with the at-risk 14-19 years old age range.

Employability Needs and Progression

The project was targeted at families with a member aged 14-19 who were at risk of not achieving a positive destination. Across practitioner reflections, issues were raised about the challenges of supporting and achieving progression for the target cohort. Practitioners reflected that it took a period of sustained engagement to build strong relationships with family members including young people. Given the nature of the referral issues, this required sensitive handling and pace of work. Sustained engagement was fundamental to addressing and working towards employability outcomes and milestones.

For some individuals being supported by the project, their capacity to engage and progress towards employability goals was limited, for example having difficulties with concentration and their readiness to engage with employability was further away than the project had initially anticipated. The whole family approach had flexibility to ensure that the additional programmes of support such as family learning and working could address wider needs as they emerged. In doing so the whole family approach was able to ensure that outcomes were achievable and could be sustained. This helped reduce the risk of disengagement and frustration for the at-risk group in receipt of support.

Skillset and Competencies of Practitioners

Working with families, the practitioners were required to have a multi-faceted skillset to deal with the severity and complexity of the issues with which a household presented. This was particularly the case when working with

families that may be classed as higher tariff. By bringing together the practitioners from a variety of organisations, approaches and expertise, the project underwent phases of organisational learning and in some cases upskilling of practitioners. This upskilling included staff learning about strategies and approaches to work with different issues and/or demographics that were different from what they had experienced and received training and advice from other partners in the project. In this sense the 'Whole Family' approach enabled a cross fertilisation of ideas and expertise to be used and refined to working with families. Across the reflective accounts, it emerged that further work was required to ensure staff were sufficiently skilled to deliver effectively. Although there were opportunities to learn and review experiences within the project, more time and capacity was required to build practitioners abilities and responsiveness and for a skills audit to be conducted regularly to ensure practitioner's needs were being met and the expertise of the respective partner were being used efficiently.

It was also discussed within the project reflections additional work was required around representation and advocacy support for families. As different members of families could be supported by different workers across the project, this resulted in significant resources being used for example if two workers were required at a meeting to provide support for a parent/caregiver and a young person. Ensuring family trust with Making it Work practitioners as well as avoiding unnecessary duplicity /use of resources was a difficult balance for the project to strike. Where possible the project should focus on supplementing /collectivising evidence to assist in ensuring the collective views of the household are expressed and maximise resources within the project. Additional work to supplement and enhance the evidence base being collected across the household would enhance the opportunity to implement this.

Family Expectations and Understanding of the Project

Practitioner reflections discussed several issues relating to families' understanding and expectations of the project. For example, the number of practitioners and services within the project could be difficult for families to understand resulting in some miscommunication across the project, how the whole family approach was applied and the limits to support the project was able to provide.

In some examples, reassurance was required for families to ensure that they felt their needs were being addressed and aspects of their support needs were being fully communicated. Different households had different expectations of the service and this required more regular revisiting to maintain engagement. There was a need for consistency across the Making it Work partnership about messaging and to reinforce boundaries of the support that was being delivered. This was important, given the number of services involved in delivering the 'Whole Family' approach.

The complexity of the households and of their previous service experiences shaped their views and expectations of project. The Making it Work approach requires to take cognisance of feelings and perceptions families may hold towards engaging with support services. In addition further staff training and reflection is required to ensure Making it Work practitioners were able to apply boundaries in situations that may challenge their comfort zone and where behaviours may be particularly challenging to address. A continual programme of review on household dynamics and demographics would provide partners within the project the opportunities to build practitioners' confidence and maintain clarity of boundaries.

Also raised in practitioner reflections was the importance of wider connections between the project team and other support services operating in Fife. Concerns were raised about ensuring there was avoidance of duplication of support which could result in the work of the Making it Work project being undermined and the effectiveness of the goals for the families reduced. For example accessing financial support from another service whilst working on budgeting issues with the Making it Work project.

It was noted that this required careful management with families with more complex circumstances or with higher tariff families. It was felt that Making it Work had the potential to help address and challenge more difficult and intensive patterns of behaviour by taking a leadership role within such scenarios. For example, being continually reflective on the sensitivities of the support they were delivering including, reinforcing boundaries and working on the underlying causes of behaviour.

Engagement/Retention of families

Maintaining engagement with families was a challenging process for the project. The whole family approach resulted in families engaging with a number of services and practitioners and receiving intensive support. Whilst this level of support was required due to the complexity of the presenting issues, this could often represent a significant shift for families in terms of the volume of service involvement within their lives and the focus on addressing their presenting issues. It was reported that there were examples of this resulting in families feeling overwhelmed and being potentially vulnerable or displaying signs of disengagement. The vulnerability and fragility of the households meant that this could happen very quickly, for example due to parental mental health condition worsening or through another change impacting on the household.

To avoid disengagement by families required the project to 'pull-back' and minimising the number of contacts with families. This served to provide a deepening of the relationship with the nominated practitioners and a process of stabilisation and continuity whilst maintaining involvement of the household. In doing so the project was able to establish trust with the families and to provide reassurance and mitigate potential disengagement. The whole family approach allowed this to be addressed in a fast and responsive way thereby maximising retention rates and ensuring continuation towards family goals and objectives.

It was suggested that greater consideration was required across the project regarding monitoring systems which could help anticipate where such scenarios may be more likely to occur. This would enable patterns of peak activity with households to be more carefully managed and risk of disengagement identified at an earlier stage.

Challenging Situations and Risk management

Challenging situations could arise from working with the families including episodes of aggressive behaviour or conflict. The complexity of presenting issues meant it was difficult to fully anticipate flashpoints and triggers as to when and where this could occur. This illustrated a need for greater support and training on de-escalation and conflict management techniques across the Making it Work staff to ensure that risks could be more carefully considered

and minimised. The project developed particular expertise in providing a voice for young people and ensuring within households, that the young person 'at risk' was listened to therefore enabling household communication to be reframed.

Project activities were designed to be safe spaces, the importance of which was paramount to the ethos and approach of the project. Risk management and clarity of communication were therefore important considerations to ensure the continued engagement of families with the project and also to ensure staff were equipped and supported to be able to manage and address situations as they arose.

In the context of a pilot project bringing together four different agencies, approaches, and systems etc required establishing a collective approach to risk management. The project could benefit from looking at work within other high tariff service delivery within Fife and drawing on wider best practice. The project may also wish to consider the designation of a 'named practitioner' within the partnership to provide leadership around this area.

Case studies

Case Study 1

Carrie is a single parent with four children. She has been involved in receiving support from statutory and third sector agencies for a number of years and has been moved onto the Making it Work Programme to address issues with Charlie, a young person living in the home who is struggling with behavioural issues at school affecting his attainment and progression. Charlie is also suffering from poor mental health and has anger issues following trauma. This affects Carrie's wellbeing and management of her depression, resulting in difficulties in supporting siblings within the home. Behavioural issues are also reported with two of those children and assessments are taking place with CAMHS for one of the children.

Through the 'Whole Family' approach, the project was able to assist with intensive emotional support for the family as a whole including assistance with family leaning to enable time to reconnect and work on rebuilding communication and attachment. This was coupled with intensive support for the young person to address emotional well-being and helping them to establish goals for school and post school transitions and intensive support for the Carrie in terms of managing depression and maintaining employment. Wider support helped with addressing arrears, child maintenance and other financial issues she experienced to achieve a more sustainable financial situation.

Case Study 2

Elizabeth is living with three children, the oldest being Isabelle who is aged 14. Elizabeth is also providing ongoing support to another child with whom she was a kinship carer. Isabelle has struggled to establish positive peer relationships at school, experienced bullying and is becoming withdrawn and isolated which is impacting on her emotional wellbeing and she reports feeling highly stressed. This has resulted in her struggling at school and having irregular attendance. Isabelle had also begun refusing school for up to four days at a time. Elizabeth is unclear how to support Isabelle with her confidence

and to help her to re-engage with school and peers as well as focusing on her own goals and wider caring responsibilities.

The 'Whole Family' approach enabled family work to take place in the home where Isabelle felt able to engage and spend time with her siblings. The project also introduced intensive one to one support for Isabelle supporting her to work on peer relationships and after a period of time introduced her to group activities which built her confidence and peer relationships and reduced her isolation. Elizabeth was also able reflect and focus on her aspirations to return to work, to take part in CV building activities such as certificated course and take part in a voluntary placement to provide her with an opportunity to undertake the vocation to which she aspired. This provided her with experience on her CV after a long term period of unemployment. This also provided her with an enhanced sense of well-being and confidence about in terms of supporting Isabelle.

Conclusions and, Looking forward at the ‘Whole Family’ approach and Recommendations

The Making it Work project brought together four agencies; Clued Up, Citizen Advice Rights Fife, Supported Employment Service and Fife Gingerbread. The ‘Whole Family’ approach employed by Making it Work provided a new and distinct way for the four agencies within the partnership to work together.

This multi-agency partnership project implemented a ‘Whole Family’ approach to working with families where there was a young person aged 14-19 at risk of not achieving a positive destination. This section of the report presents conclusions and recommendations for the project and for wider employability stakeholders.

Thinking differently about Employability

Across the Making it Work project the ‘Whole Family’ approach provided a new approach to family intervention and a collectivised approach to support and employability.

The flexibility and intensity of the support allowed for sustained engagement and to address the complexity of the issues with which families were presenting including long term economic inactivity, school refusal, and mental ill health. It was highlighted within this evaluation, of several core attributes of this work that enabled support to be effective. For example, the opportunity to engage with services and build relationships that worked across different settings.

The core components of the project created a context for transformative change within households. These included: the pace of the interventions, establishing trust between households and practitioners, and persistence with the delivery of the intervention and coordination of support. The ‘Whole Family’ approach and the project ethos were received positively and increased progression for households through the empowerment it gave to members of households in terms of addressing their needs and goals. Both parents and caregivers and ‘Young people at risk’ benefited from the inclusiveness of the approach and members of the families being supported in tandem which in

turn created space for families to identify and engage in activities to address their barriers.

Across the evaluation families reported a number of positive outcomes from participation in the different strands of the project including increased financial literacy, support with accessing entitlements, addressing wider financial transitions and issues such as debt and arrears. Families also benefited from increased health and wellbeing, resilience and relationships through activities which helped address barriers, improve communication, and improve attachments. The project also helped families connect and sustain engagement with wider support services and build social networks to reduce isolation. The project also provided an important arena for families to achieve progression and rethink their capabilities including re-engaging with education, identifying career areas of interests and attending placements and certificated courses.

The Making it Work project provided an important brokerage role for families in terms of re-establishing long term engagement across statutory agencies such as education. The 'Whole Family' approach allowed evidence and information gathered through activities to be utilised to greater effect in improving outcomes and progression for families.

The project developed and refined its model of delivery across the duration of the project and identified a number of core areas to build upon the 'Whole Family' approach employed. Further work is required to ensure the use of evidence and best practice gathered across the project to ensure best outcomes for families. The wider context in which the project operates was also important. The project needs to continue building partnerships with wider agencies to increase the responsiveness and effectiveness of its interventions. Paramount to the success of the project in terms of improving employability, is sustaining relationships with high tariff families and ensuring clear communication across the partnership and with families themselves ensuring boundaries and expectations are managed effectively to retain engagement. Continued work is required to improve the skillset and competencies of the workforce and developing a shared approach to risk management across the agencies

Looking forward: Next steps

The Making It Work pilot was targeted at around 60 families. This caseload number was allocated on the basis of allowing practitioners the opportunity to provide focused and targeted support. The nature of the issues the families were experiencing and the intensity of the support being provided means that scaling up of the programme will need to be carefully considered to ensure the quality of intervention work. The project needs to maintain a focus on the components and attributes of the project which allowed it to achieve success such as trust and pace of work.

The nature and complexity of the presenting issues of the household will take sustained support to improve their wellbeing and capabilities across the household. Within this evaluation the Making It Work project deconstructed and gained an understanding of barriers beyond the initial referral issues and worked to support emerging problems some of which that had not previously been subject to interventions. This would need to be reflected in the capacity of the project to ensure quality of support.

Further work is needed to consider the weighting of the 'Whole Family' approach. The project was limited in the support it was able to provide to different age categories and therefore needs to review and reflect on provision for children and young people out with the '14-19' year age category and also ensuring balance and recognising sub categories of age i.e. pre and post 16 within work for the '14-19' at risk group.

Information sharing also requires some improvement although it was generally efficient and timely. This requires Making It Work staff to be in regular communication and to have balance with caseloads that provide the opportunity to respond and target the intervention effectively. The project should draw up a strategy for sharing learning and practice from the project more consistently both internally and externally. A review should also take place on improving relationships with wider stakeholders to improve outcomes with intervention work. Branding and project identity are important in terms of communication of the project both to families and wider stakeholders of the distinctiveness of the 'whole family' approach.

Further work is required in terms of families exiting the project to ensure a carefully managed approach to maintain stability but also to empower families and build resilience.

In line with recommendations from the Christie Commission, it would be advisable for the project to focus on how it could introduce co production more efficiently to ensure the service delivery model is more reflective of the needs of those accessing it.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Based on the learning from this project, there are a number of recommendations this evaluation will make.

- The project provided a clear message on the importance of understanding and supporting the wider household context when addressing employability needs.
- Fairstart: The development of this new agency needs to recognise the learning and experiences drawn from the project in working with high tariff families.
- Development of new ways of working and meaningful protocols to ensure coherence for families engaging in employability work.
- Development of financial services including a financial health check to reflect the lessons from the approach used within Making it Work including delivery of support within the home.
- When looking at wider work on reducing isolation, and for Scottish Government and other stakeholders to recognise the value of the 'Whole Family Approach' in particular for the 14-19 age group who may not traditionally be considered within this area.