

Birkenhead Foundation Years Project: statement of purpose

The project's purpose is to reduce child poverty. By supporting children's early development we aim to increase the likelihood that they will do well at school. We seek to reduce the developmental gap that currently emerges between better-off and poorer children at a very early age. We are working to prevent poor children becoming poor adults. We will do this by seeking to influence those factors which impact on early learning and development: the home learning environment, parental warmth and sensitivity, and parental mental health and well-being. These factors are significant for all children and families but poorer families have fewer resources to draw upon, both to avoid difficulties and to do something about them if they arise.

How the Birkenhead Foundation Year's Project will work

This plan is designed as a test of a transferable model of family support with the flexibility to complement local strengths and supplement local weaknesses. The plan takes account of the reorganisation of Wirral Children and Families services and the prioritising of support for the Intensive Families Intervention Project (IFIP) and therefore focusses work at the universal level. Local service experts (commissioners, managers and front-line staff) have had a central influence on the thinking behind this business case¹. We will:

- Work to complement and supplement existing services; deliver services for families at the universal/Level 1 and 2, with resources concentrated on those in most need. Recognise the principle that those families at the higher levels of need are currently engaged with IFIP services; work respectfully and in the spirit of multi-agency collaboration.
- Be guided by local expertise and seek to establish specialist groups to inform the development of Project services.²
- Where possible commission Project pilots from partner organisations, to test how easily the service can be introduced to an established local infrastructure. This contributes to value for money.
- Situate pilots so that they are visible and accessible at places where popular universal services are located e.g. alongside the Health Visitor clinics.
- Aim to bring a questioning and reflective voice that champions early learning, child development and family support with the ultimate aim of addressing inter-generational poverty.

¹ See the consultation tracker.

² For example 6 VCS organisations, recruited by open invitation to the sector, met to scope the nature of the Project's volunteer mentoring pilots.

- Draw upon the Trust's Advisors to bring fresh ideas and a UK perspective to the Wirral, through their advisory role, seminars or conference opportunities.

“It takes a village to raise a child”³: what does extending community capacity and strengthening universal services mean in practice?

The project’s purpose of reducing child poverty means that it has to reach as many families as possible. In particular those families which don’t seek help; those which feel unconfident about their own education and unambitious for their children; and those which are suspicious of officialdom. We aim to create as many opportunities as possible for ‘accidental engagement’ with services.

Example:

Early Explorer PEEP groups

These are play activities for babies and toddlers, run in public places (in the same room as a Health Visitor Clinic, in a GP’s surgery, in a shop where queuing happens etc.). The parent and child will be there, waiting to get a baby weighed or to see a doctor, and there is an opportunity to occupy a bored child. Play staff offer free fun and encourage parents to stay as long as they like, sign-post to other services, and build relationships. See (1) below.

Extending community capacity and strengthening universal services can involve a single resource.

Example:

A DVD for all parents at the antenatal stage

A locally produced DVD, showing local parents playing with their babies and demonstrating how very new babies are able to benefit from being talked to and their capacity to respond and enjoy stimulation. This idea is based on a long-standing and widely admired service developed in Tameside. See (3) below.

Services with a wide reach are expensive unless the impact can be multiplied by same messages being delivered by statutory and voluntary sectors, by community and faith groups and crucially, by influencing how everyone from parents to grandparents, neighbours and friends all ‘raise the child’. Extending community capacity involves drawing upon awareness, knowledge, skills and enthusiasm for early learning embedded within communities.

Example:

Training and learning opportunities

Parents move on from receiving services, to volunteering, to training and into paid work. See (7-9) below.

Existing faith/community-based services collaborate and share their skills and are strengthened and benefit from training and resources. See (2) below.

³ A version of an African saying, quoted by Hilary Clinton.

The Birkenhead Foundation Years Project will make a difference to Birkenhead families by influencing factors which impact on early learning and development

Where and how the project makes a difference	Home learning environment	Parental warmth & sensitivity	Parental mental health & well-being
<p>Extending community capacity & strengthening universal services</p>	<p>Parent & child play in public places:</p> <p>(1) Early Explorer groups in Health Visitor clinics or other facilities (Jan 14 onwards, in development)</p> <p>There is the potential to develop further activity in other public places, in the light of the experience with the pilots above.</p> <p>(2) Support for un-funded faith and other community play groups with training and resources.</p>	<p>Antenatal resources:</p> <p>(3) DVD and booklet for all families – a Merseyside-wide development (longer term aspiration)</p>	<p>Giving parents a voice – focus groups, interviews and web-based opportunities; publication and dissemination:</p> <p>(4) Perinatal consultation with 30 mothers (July – October 13)</p> <p>(5) 6 months – 2 years (May – September 14)</p> <p>(6) 3 – 5 years (May – September 15)</p>
	<p>Training and learning opportunities:</p> <p>(7) Multi-agency PEEP Practitioner training for staff and volunteers with optional accreditation (Oct 13)</p> <p>(8) PEEP Practitioner network linking Children's Centre PEEP trained staff with staff and volunteers from the voluntary sector (March 14, and thereafter)</p>		

Where and how the project makes a difference	Home learning environment	Parental warmth & sensitivity	Parental mental health & well-being
	<p>(9) Multi-agency PEEP Practitioner training for additional staff and volunteers, subject to evaluation and demand (Oct 14)</p> <p>Influencing parent-centred approaches and multi-agency collaboration in the delivery of services:</p> <p>(10) Foundation Years Seminars (Feb 14 onwards)</p> <p>(11) Issue-based working groups (in development)</p>		
Open access groups and services available to all	Parent & child play groups: (12) Baby and Toddler Peep Brassey Gardens & St Werburghs Parish Centre (Nov 13 onwards); Rock Ferry (Jan 14 onwards)		Parent volunteer support: (13) St James Centre project (in development)
	Parent and child reading groups: (14) Reader Organisation open group e.g. based with church play group (March 14 onwards)		Parent volunteer support: (15) Bump-Start: Home-Start volunteer-delivered perinatal support up to 1 year of child's life (potential for extension if pilot phase successful, April 14 onwards)
Proactive and targeted support	Parent and child reading groups: (16) Reader Organisation perinatal group (Feb 14 onwards)		Parent volunteer support: (17) Bump-Start: Home-Start single parent perinatal support project (Oct 13 onwards)
	Parent volunteer support: (18) Home-Start volunteer support for disabled children in groups (Oct 13 onwards)	Parent volunteer support: (19) Tranmere Community Project Young Mums project (in development)	

Where and how the project makes a difference	Home learning environment	Parental warmth & sensitivity	Parental mental health & well-being
		Parenting programme: (20) Antenatal PEEP (Feb 14 onwards)	
		Parent volunteer support: (21) Volunteer doula/birth partner support (longer-term aspiration)	

Budget Summary, Years 1 and 2 September 2013 – August 2015					
		Activity	Cost	d Committe	Projected
Extending community capacity and strengthening universal services	1.	Early Explorer groups	18,600		√
	2.	Support for community groups	1,500	√	
	3.	<i>Antenatal resources Y 2</i>			√
	4.	Giving parents a voice	2,200	√	
	5.	<i>Giving parents a voice Y 2⁴</i>	500		√
	6.	<i>Giving parents a voice Y 3</i>			√
	7.	Multi-agency training	9,000	√	
	8.	PEEP network	400	√	
	9.	<i>Multi-agency training Y 2</i>			√
	10.	Foundation Years Seminars	1,600	√	
	11.	Issue-based working groups	250		√
Open access groups and services available to all	12.	Baby and Toddler PEEP	20,000	√	
	13.	St James Centre	4,930		√
	14.	Reader group church	3,000		√
	15.	Bump-Start (open)	25,500		√
Proactive and targeted support	16.	Reader group perinatal	5,100	√	
	17.	Bump-Start single parents	5,000	√	
	18.	Volunteers and disabled children	5,000	√	
	19.	<i>Young mums Y 2</i>			√
	20.	Antenatal PEEP	17,420		√
	21.	<i>Doula support Y 2</i>			√
Project management		Staff salaries (director, family and volunteer co-ordinator, administrator), office and equipment costs.	133,495	√	
Total			253,495	208,795	44,700

⁴ Activity completed in Year 2 but information gathering and some costs incurred in Year 1.