



Improvement

Customer led transformation programme Case study – Darlington Borough Council

Whole area approach to service delivery

46/58

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The Customer Led Transformation Programme

Darlington Borough Council's work has been funded under the customer led transformation programme. The fund aims to embed the use of customer insight and social media tools and techniques as strategic management capabilities across the public sector family in order to support place-based working.

The customer led transformation programme is overseen by the Local Government Delivery Council (supported by the Local Government Association).

The fund was established specifically to support collaborative working between local authorities and their partners focused on using customer insight and social media tools and techniques to improve service outcomes. These approaches offer public services bodies the opportunity to engage customers and gather insight into their preferences and needs, and thereby provide the evidence and intelligence needed to redesign services to be more targeted, effective and efficient.

About Darlington

Darlington is a market town in County Durham, North East England. It forms part of the Tees Valley sub-region, which is made up of five unitary authorities with a total population of around 650,000 people. Darlington is a compact area of some 197.45 km², comprising of the town of Darlington itself plus a number of surrounding villages.

The borough has a population of 105,600 people living in 46,700 households. 24 per cent of the population are under 19 years of age. (2011 Census)

The town owes much of its development to the influence of local Quaker families during the Victorian era and it is perhaps best known as the location of the world's first public passenger railway, which opened in 1825. Today the public sector provides work for very significant numbers of residents in the area and Darlington faces a major challenge in making the transition away from this reliance on public sector employment.

According to Indices of Deprivation 2010 (ID2010), Darlington contains some of the most deprived areas in the country – it is ranked the 75th most deprived local authority out of 326 in England. Furthermore, 39 per cent of Darlington's lower super output areas are in the most deprived 30 per cent nationally (there are 63 LSOAs in Darlington). Overall, Darlington has 16 per cent (10) of its LSOAs in the most deprived 10 per cent of LSOAs in England and appears to have become relatively more deprived since ID2007.

Background

Darlington Borough Council's focus has been on identifying families with multiple needs. Darlington BC and partners have assembled and analysed information on these families, on their behaviours, the lives they lead and the services they use in order to better understand how public services can make the best use of resources available to them to improve outcomes for society, for the state, and for members of these families.

The project is focussed around early intervention (early recognition of those families most at risk) and on bringing together the required services through the appropriate facility at the earliest opportunity (prevention). The information developed through this project is being used to help re-engineer services so that service provision better meets need through:

- understanding levels of need for services within each locality
- understanding the children and families who use and need services, with services being delivered in the most appropriate, accessible and effective way
- communicating with the target groups in the most effective way (see Figure 6: New CAF Materials for Families).

These customer-led initiatives have culminated in a redesign of the Darlington's Common Assessment Framework (CAF), launched in June 2012, and produced an evidence base which is shaping the council's approach to working with families with multiple needs.

This has the potential to improve both individual life chances and significantly improve societal conditions, whilst reducing unnecessary and 'duplicate' expenditure.

Text box 1:

Geo-demographic data segmentation

Segmentation is a process of looking at the population or 'market' to identify distinct sub-groups (segments) that may have similar needs, attitudes or behaviours.

Populations can be differentiated by their characteristics and this can be expressed in geographic terms. Segmentation can be a powerful tool in helping to understand diverse sub-groups and focus resources where they are most needed.

The purpose of segmentation is to define a small number of groups so that: all members of a particular group are as similar to each other as possible, and the groups are as different from the other groups as possible.

Darlington uses the CACI Acorn classification system based on socio-demographic data and mapped at a household level.

Key partners are Darlington Borough Council's Early Intervention and Prevention Team, NHS Foundation Trust (formerly the Primary Care Trust), Darlington Community Safety Partnership, Durham Constabulary, universal and targeted health and other local authority services. The partners recognised that there was a vast range of information – both qualitative and quantitative – available that could help them to generate a richer picture of these families and their needs.

These initiatives have been initiated under a previous high-level data sharing protocol approved with a range of other agencies including the police, NHS and Jobcentre Plus in 2006. This protocol is currently being reviewed and reworked.

The key insight component is the use of CACI Household Acorn data through the InSite analysis system. The Local Information System (LIS) brings together a range of social, demographic and service information, including geo-demographic (Household Acorn) data to provide a single point of access. The Darlington LIS is available at <http://lis.darlington.gov.uk/>

Geo-demographic data (see Text box 1) provides a useful starting point by enabling the classification of current clients who are identified by appropriate trigger points, such as having children who are often absent from school, or who exhibit anti-social behaviour.

Darlington's customer centred research has identified the trigger points or 'toxic mix' of factors that lead to the need for intervention, particularly in identified areas of the town. The aim is to prevent families from reaching these points and thereby improve their life chances and avoid costs both to society and public services.

Through undertaking these exercises they learnt of the need for:

- more joined up working
- better information sharing between partners
- improvements to the CAF.

Objective

The objectives of the project were to:

- improve data use within the council and make use of geo-demographic data to understand citizens lifestyles and behaviours in Darlington
- identify families with multiple needs, and the trigger points that drive the need for services
- provide more effective and efficient wraparound early intervention and prevention services for vulnerable children and families
- inform the design of services which target the needs of families with multiple needs
- reduce the costs both to the state and society of families with multiple needs
- improve the life chances and outcomes for members of families with multiple needs, both immediately and in the long-term.

Darlington Borough Council recognise that many of these objectives can only be realised and assessed over the long term – ie five to 10 years – and that the role that the insight work plays is to inform and shape the design and foundation of the services that will ultimately deliver these objectives in the long term.



Approach

The overarching ambition has been to understand needs better, to identify people with needs at an earlier stage, and then to provide the correct interventions for those people. The intention is that by early intervention, Darlington will prevent families reaching the trigger points identified – and hence prevent costs arising to both society and the state.

Darlington Borough Council and its partners – including the police and NHS – have pursued a series of related and complementary customer insight initiatives which have in turn been shared across the partnership.

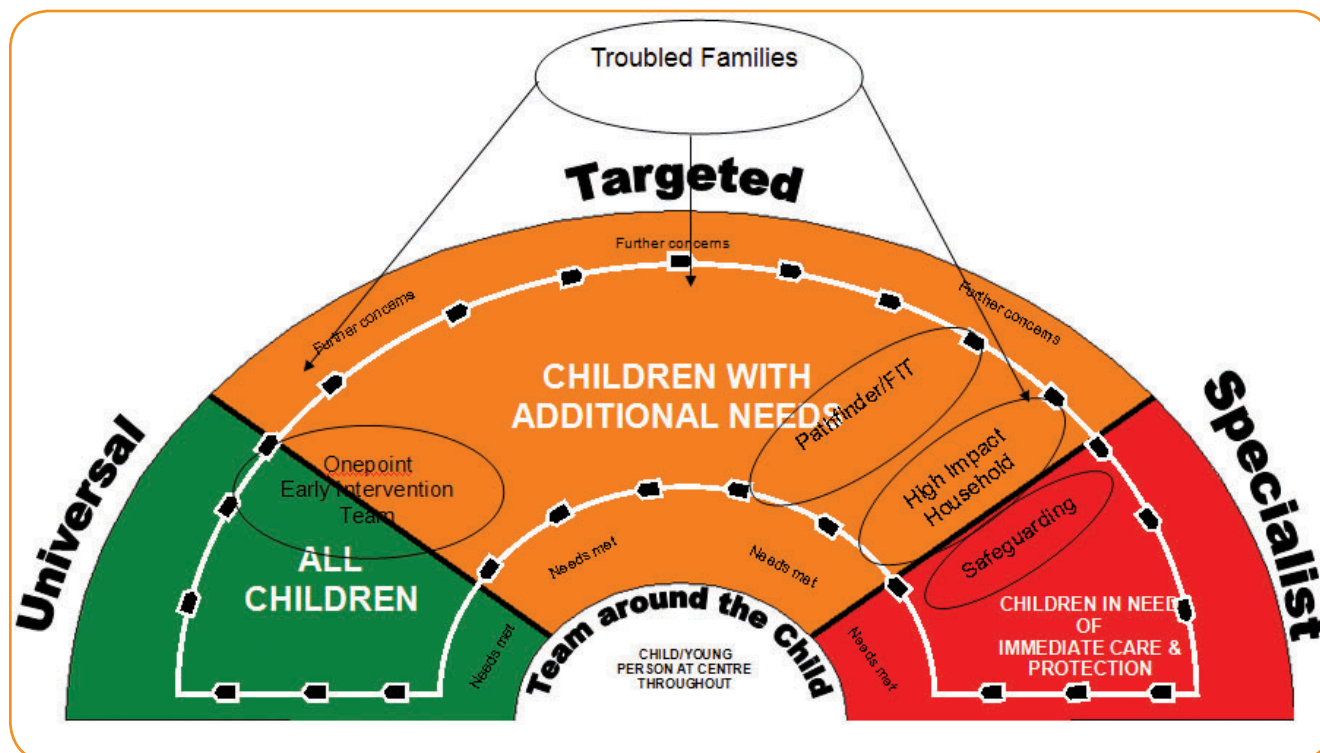
Officers from Darlington Borough Council have used a range of different customer insight tools and techniques to better understand and engage with customers as part of this project.

This included:

- interviewing families to evaluate the Family Intervention Team
- interviewing staff providing early intervention services to families
- reviewing and analysing service related data to identify families with multiple needs
- mapping customers and service data to geodemographic data
- beginning the 'Troubled Families' initiative in response to Government directive
- mapping family case histories as part of the 'High Impact Households' pilot
- reviewing and redesigning the CAF process and associated tools.

Each of these work-streams is described in more detail under 'Approach'. For a diagrammatic representation on how these initiatives interrelate, see Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 Managing the workload through early intervention



By better understanding families and their needs, the council is seeking to provide more effective early intervention and thereby prevent a household's needs growing and escalating to the point where more expensive specialist services are necessary. The figure opposite 'Managing the Workload through Early Intervention', maps the spectrum of services Darlington provide – from 'Universal' to 'Targeted' and 'Specialist' (with unit costs tending to rise as the service span from left to right). The diagram also highlights where Troubled Families, High Impact Households and the Family Intervention Team (FIT) operate..

Interviewing families and their service providers

During late 2010 and early 2011 Darlington commissioned social researchers to conduct a total of 27 face-to-face and telephone interviews to evaluate the success of their Family Intervention Team (see Text Box 2). The researchers interviewed five families, 10 members of the Family Intervention Team, and 12 members of staff from other key service providers including:

- the assistant director of children, families and learning
- a children's commissioning manager
- head of the youth offending team
- a County Durham police inspector
- an anti-social behaviour manager
- children and families team manager
- a social worker
- a children's commissioning officer
- a housing estates manager
- a probation manager
- a mental health services manager
- a child and adolescent mental health support (CAMHS) officer

Text box 2: Darlington's Family Intervention Team (FIT) works with some of the most challenging families in Darlington to provide support to help them make positive and sustainable changes in their lives. The Darlington FIT uses a 'whole family' approach which includes help for families to address the causes of behaviour, alongside supervision and enforcement tools to provide them with the incentives to change.

The FIT works with families where interventions from various agencies have failed to result in long term change. Hence, the FIT provides a 'proof of concept' relating to the benefits of early intervention and prevention with families experiencing multiple issues.

The type of questioning adopted for all interviews was semi-structured and designed to achieve the research objectives within the context of a fairly flexible discussion.

The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with members of five families. the format covered the following key areas:

- participant(s) background and circumstances
- nature of first contact with the family intervention team
- clients assessment of the support provided
- review of the support and interventions received
- feedback on the impact that the intervention team had delivered
- views and reflections on the services received to date
- suggestions for improving the family intervention team.

Although detailed discussion guides were followed to focus the discussion, open-ended questions were also used. These allowed research participants to express their thoughts and feelings, and to describe their views, attitudes and ideas, in their own terms and vocabulary. Finally, case studies were constructed for the five FIT families.

These interviews provided families a rare opportunity for their voices and opinions to be heard. The research discovered that some families had as many as 19 different agencies working with them. The research provides a rich picture of the circumstances surrounding these families, and the range of positive feedback on the efficacy of the 'joined up' early intervention approach embodied by the FIT.

The feedback from the families interviewed was extremely positive. Parents in particular commented on the difference that the 'joined up' approach had made to their families' lives. The research also helped Darlington Borough Council to enhance their definition of the 'toxic mix' and the importance of information sharing. (For further details, see 'Findings'). The insight generated by this feedback helped shape Darlington's approach to subsequent phases of insight activity.

Gathering and analysing service data

Based on the findings from these interviews as well as Darlington's on-going work with families with multiple needs, an understanding of the 'toxic mix' of factors affecting families began to emerge.

Darlington's Customer Insight Team worked with the head of family support and children and families team to begin to identify the services that the families they worked with typically received, and began to assemble service data relating to the following key factors:

- persistent absenteeism from school
- youth offending
- antisocial behaviour
- pupils receiving free school meals
- permanent exclusions.

The above factors were agreed to be the leading indicators in potentially identifying 'Troubled Families'. The Customer Insight Team subsequently considered service data relating to:

- basic skills – literacy and numeracy
- under 18 conceptions
- life expectancy
- current smokers
- binge drinkers
- obesity
- council tax band
- households receiving income support
- working age population receiving benefits
- children and families receiving key benefits
- crime rates
- fire service incidents
- police recorded incidents
- children in workless families
- educational attainment
- JSA claimants by age.

This assembly of the service data from a range of partners has been facilitated by the Multi-Agency Information Sharing Protocol between local public service organisations (including Darlington Borough Council, NHS County Durham & Darlington, Durham Constabulary, and Darlington Youth Offending Service).

The next stage was to cross reference Darlington's service data with geodemographic information to:

- identify areas in Darlington where these troubled families were more likely to reside
- gain a richer picture of the lifestyles, behaviours and preferences of families identified in this 'Toxic Mix', as well as to
- identify areas where there may be families with needs that are not currently accessing services and are hence unknown to public service providers.



Mapping service and customer data to geodemographics

Darlington Borough Council used geodemographic data provided by Household Acorn. This classifies all the households in Darlington into 64 socio demographic types (broadly in order of increasing disadvantage and deprivation).

Each type describes the key characteristics of the household in terms of age, work, incomes, health, and leisure interests etc. A Pen Portrait of Type 47 – 'Families and Single Parents with Financial Uncertainty' is provided in the Text Box Adjacent.

An initial analysis of service data looked at 15 families with children who were persistently absent from school, were in receipt of free school meals, were known to the Youth Offending Service, exhibited anti-social behaviour, or were permanently excluded from school.

The location of these families was then used to produce maps through the Insite System. An extract of the resulting analysis is shown in Table 1.

Based on this incorporation of service related data with geodemographic data, the council can now produce a range of graphs for the different levels in the hierarchy of Household Acorn: Category – Group – Type, in increasing level of detail.

Table 1. Extract from an Excel spread sheet of household acorn data for families with multiple needs

Type code	Type description	Number of households	% of households	Number of households in Darlington	% Types in Darlington
47	Families and single parents with some financial uncertainty	4	22.2	3945	8.8
48	Singles and couples in small terraces	3	16.7	2424	5.4
49	Elderly social renters	0	0.0	2701	6.0
50	Over-stretched social renting families	3	16.7	865	1.9
51	Squeezed social renting	2	11.1	1061	2.4
52	Constrained home-owning families	3	16.7	1102	2.5

Data copyright CACI

Type 47: Families and single parents with some financial uncertainty

These families and single parents typically live in terraced houses. While a few will be renting, most of the houses are being bought with a mortgage. In a few cases these houses may be being purchased under shared ownership. In addition to their mortgage, most will have loans or credit card debt which some will be struggling to repay. Some will have been refused credit in the past.

GCSEs, O levels and trade apprenticeships are the typical educational level, although a few will have had further education. Employment is typically skilled or partly skilled work. Household incomes are generally average or below average and in some cases will be supplemented by income support, child benefit, child tax credits and working families' tax credits. Some of these families experience occasional difficulty in their financial situation, with a small number facing severe difficulties.

Leisure interests might include football, watching TV, music, cinema, pets and gambling. Holidays may be of the less expensive self-catering variety. They may use the internet for shopping for clothes and music, social networking and playing games. The newspaper is more likely to be a Red Top Tabloid. **They are generally in good health.**

The majority of these people will have had some form of contact with the police in the past year, whether meeting around the neighbourhood or reporting a crime. A relatively high proportion, although still few, of these people are likely to have been arrested at some time in the past. In some cases people may feel their local neighbourhood issues include vandalism, or teenagers hanging around, parents not taking responsibility for their children, lack of respect for others or drink related problems. (source CACI copyright)

This analysis informed the more detailed work conducted in partnership with the police on High Impact Households (see 'Analysing family case histories' below), as well as the development of Darlington Borough Council's approach to early intervention and prevention.

Based on the combination of geodemographic and service-related data, Darlington Borough Council can now identify the localities where Troubled Families are most likely to reside (for further information and maps, see 'Findings').

Reviewing and analysing case histories

The data Darlington compiled also contributed to the assembly and analysis of case histories relating to two of the most 'high demand' families in the area.

Following the murder of local homeless man George Akers by two teenagers who were long known to local services, Durham Constabulary launched the 'High Impact Households' pilot project in conjunction with Darlington Borough Council and a range of other partners.

The Head of Family Support was both Darlington's nominated lead for the Troubled Families agenda, and Darlington's representative on the Project Management Board for the High Impact Households analysis led by the Police.

The analysis incorporated and complemented Darlington's analysis of the 'Toxic Mix', but instead of focusing on the geography of service use across the Borough the pilot focuses on the history of service use within two particular households.

In addition to Darlington's 'Toxic Mix', the case history analysis also incorporated data relating to criminal behaviour, violence, neglect and mental health. The analysis began by gathering relevant service related information on members of the family. This was then assembled in chronological order, creating a visual representation of how each service or intervention related to the various members of the family. Two examples of the visualisation of these case histories are included under 'Findings'.

This in-depth analysis has generated significant insight into the behaviours and backgrounds of these families and highlighted the need for a proactive and collaborative approach across public services.

Text box 3. High impact households

High Impact households are identified as those that have a disproportionate impact on partner agencies as either perpetrators or victims of crime or anti-social behaviour.

Some families experience complex health, social, economic and behavioural problems which can pass from generation to generation.

The associated behaviour can then impact upon individual wellbeing and the wellbeing of those they live in close proximity to.

These households often contain 'victims' and 'offenders' and require the support of a wide range of services. For a small minority who fail to engage, sanctions will be required to protect neighbours and the wider community.

Findings

Multiple, complex needs

The review of case files as part of the evaluation of early intervention with families revealed that the main reasons for referral were poor parenting and anti-social behaviour, although there was often a range of issues – and services – involved.

The research discovered that some families had as many as 19 different agencies working with them. According to one family's case-notes, the issues included:

- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)
- a child protection plan is currently in place
- poor school attendance or attainment
- children considered at risk of offending
- relationship conflict or family breakdown
- parental substance misuse – at risk and previously
- parental mental health issues
- domestic abuse – previously and at risk
- parental longstanding worklessness
- parental history of offending behaviour
- poor housing conditions.

Moreover, it was found that there was no communication or collaboration between services, with the result that families were getting a high number of services that were neither joined-up nor co-ordinated.

“FIT have been good linking with other agencies and got some involved that I never even knew about. I've got access to agencies and services that I didn't even know existed. Without FIT I would never have got all that help.”

Mother, Jones family

Understanding where and what

The combination of service related data with geodemographic data has enabled the council to identify areas of Darlington where families who may benefit from early intervention and prevention are likely to reside.

The geodemographic profiling also offers an analysis of lifestyles and behaviours which will support proactive engagement of families in these areas going forward. This has enabled Darlington to conduct their own analysis of families with multiple needs within their area.



Figure 2. Map showing the location of Household Acorn Types 47, 48, 50, 51 and 52 households in Darlington

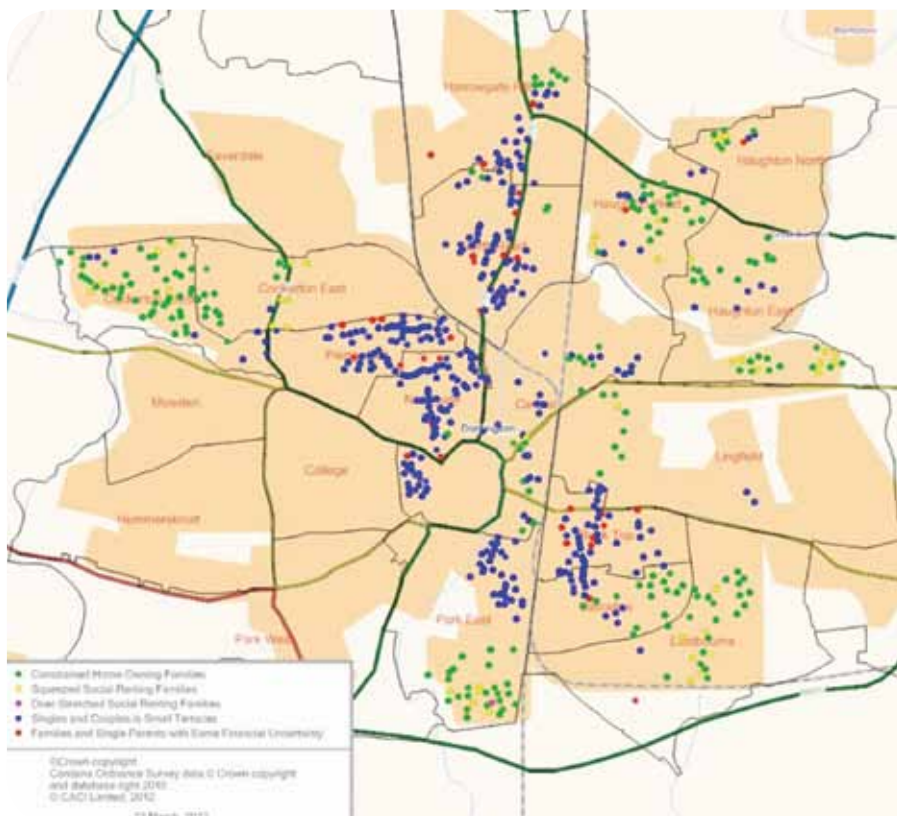
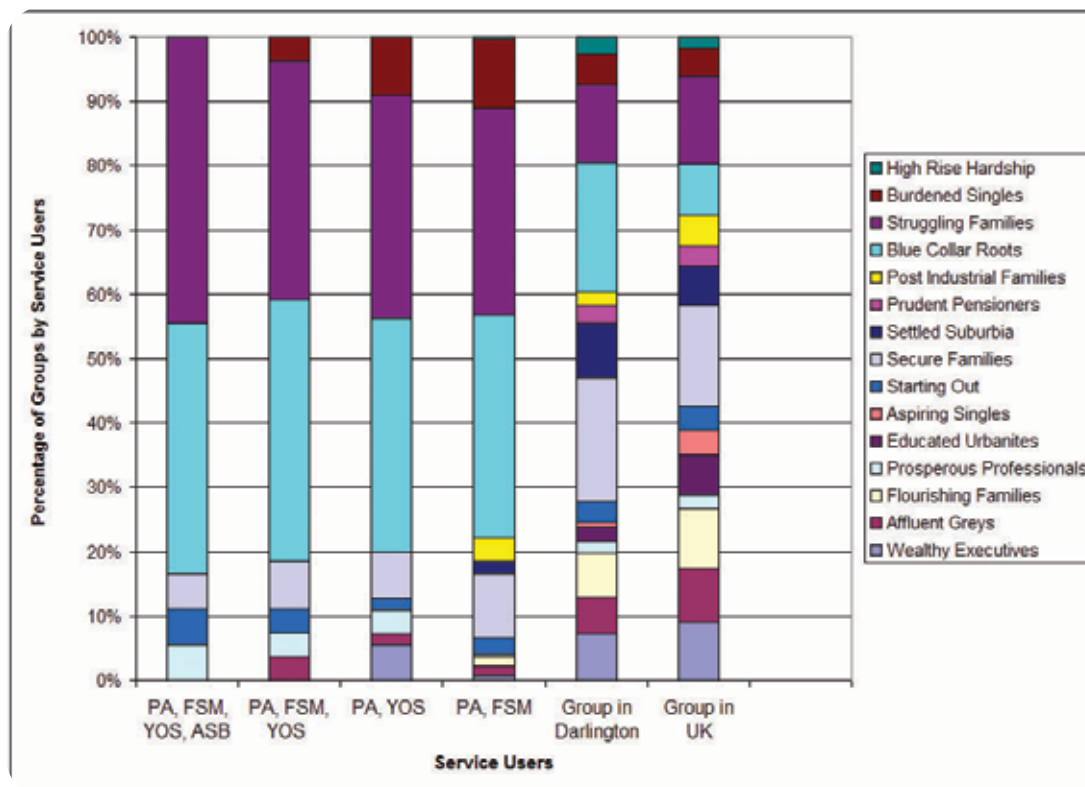


Figure 3. Chart showing the Household Acorn Groups for the families being worked with and their characteristics (persistent absence, free school meals, known to youth offending service and anti-social behaviour)



Sources: Darlington data and CACI copyright

Coordination is key

The interviews with customers for the FIT evaluation, and the findings from the Family History and Impact Map (overleaf) developed for the High Impact Household pilot, demonstrate the need for a holistic approach to a family's problems based on joined-up, collaborative multi-agency working.

The holistic, multi-agency approach taken by the FIT project has successfully reduced anti-social behaviour, and a 'proof of concept' for approaches based on early intervention (see 'Benefits').

The insight generated by the family histories resulted in a number of learning points or 'principles' that Durham Constabulary, Darlington Borough Council and Darlington's Community Safety Partnership have incorporated into the design of the High Impact Household pilot. These include the need for:

- working with families to help them decide their own outcomes, and to help them overcome their problems themselves
- prompt information sharing and communication between services
- joint decision-making between agencies
- a joint approach to communicating with families, to ensure that all service providers are sending the same messages.

The High Impact Household pilot has also helped the family that was worked with in the pilot to reduce their incidence of ASB (see also 'Benefits').

For further details on what the Family Intervention Team and High Impact Household pilot's approach entails, see Text Box 2 and Text Box 3 respectively.

Treat families holistically

Durham Constabulary have developed family a case history for each family depicted in Figure 4 overleaf (the family history has been anonymised). The diagram illustrates the relationship between family members as well as the factors which make them 'High Impact'. In this family's case, this includes domestic abuse, violence, child neglect, poor home living conditions, criminality, anti-social behaviour and lack of parental control.

Figure 5 illustrates the impact that one member of the family – Julie, the mother – has on the local community. Although High Impact Households represent 'Troubled Families' with the highest levels of demand for public services, many of the lessons to be learnt by these public services – such as the need to take an holistic approach, share information across the frontline and take a joined-up approach – also apply to the larger cohort of 'Troubled Families'.

"The FIT has promoted multi-agency working. This is a model that could be rolled out on a wider basis. We need to provide a framework and culture for providing it. I think that [the FIT] can act as some sort of catalyst – bringing agencies together for families and agencies. We've developed a coordinating role. In one instance we realised that there were over 16 agencies dealing with the family. The coordination role is something we champion."

Front-Line Practitioner

Figure 4. Family history

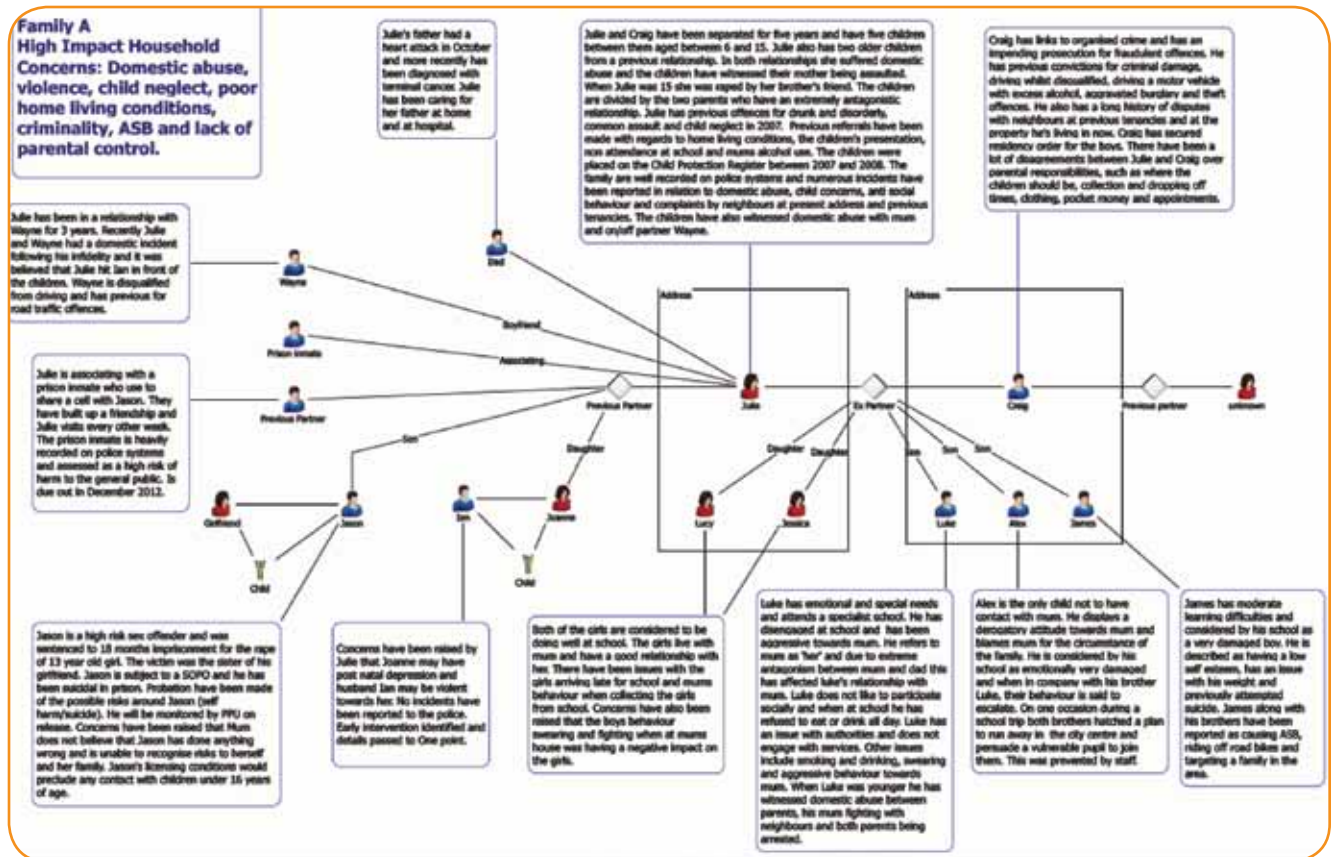
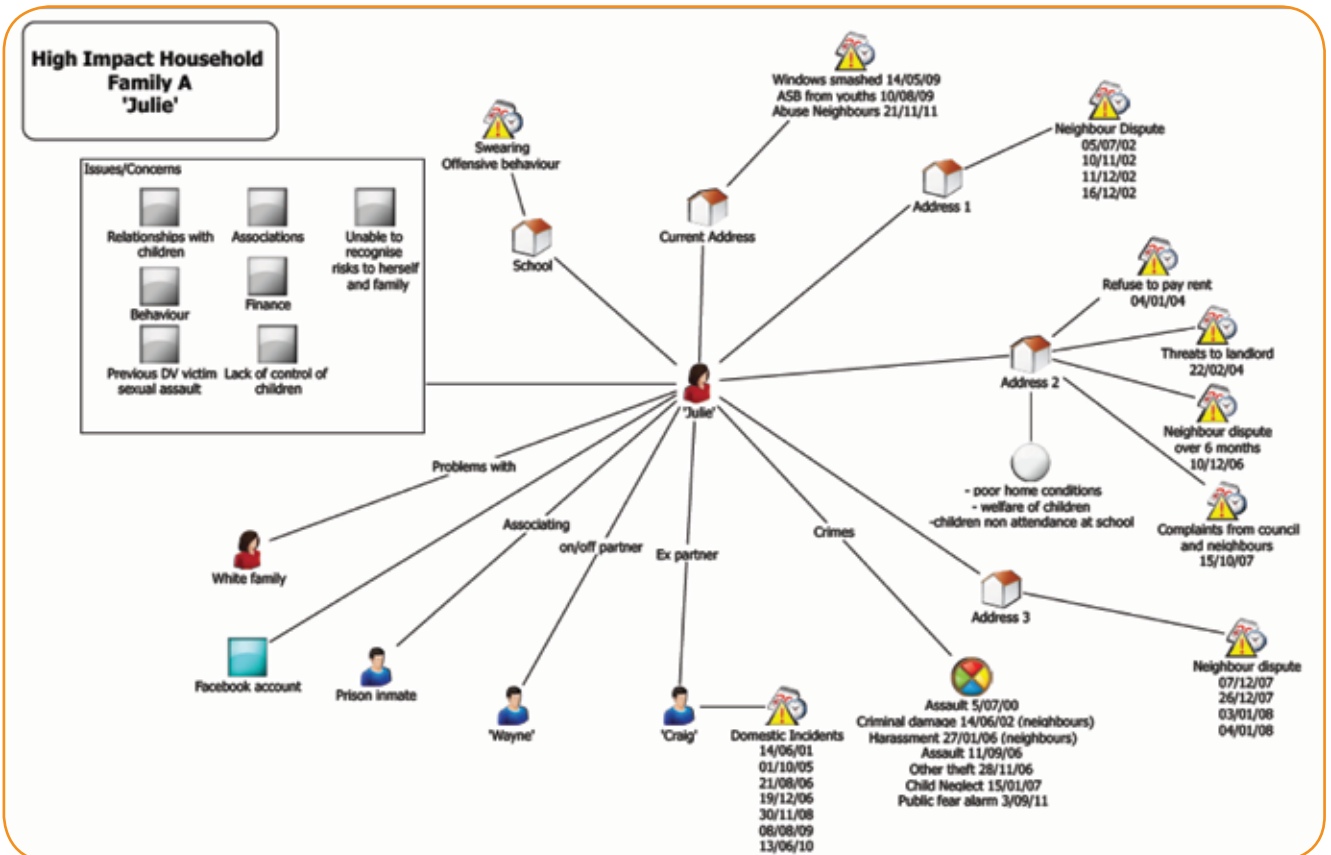


Figure 5. 'Julie's' impact on the community



Outcomes

Redesigning the CAF

The Early Intervention Team began redesigning the CAF in January 2012 and the new CAF was launched in June 2012. The redesign has been based on the evidence and insight generated by the geodemographic profiling, by feedback from families collected from the evaluation of early intervention and by analysis of High Impact Household case histories. Most of the participants in the CAF redesign process had previously participated in the evaluation of the FIT and were aware of its findings.

Prior to the redesign, the CAF was underperforming with the number of CAFs steadily decreasing. This was due to the perception that it was an unwieldy and laborious system. Meanwhile, the ratio of contacts to the Duty Care Team being converted into a Child in Need case was 1:7 – meaning that the vast majority of contacts were ‘waste’ – adding pressure to a limited resource.

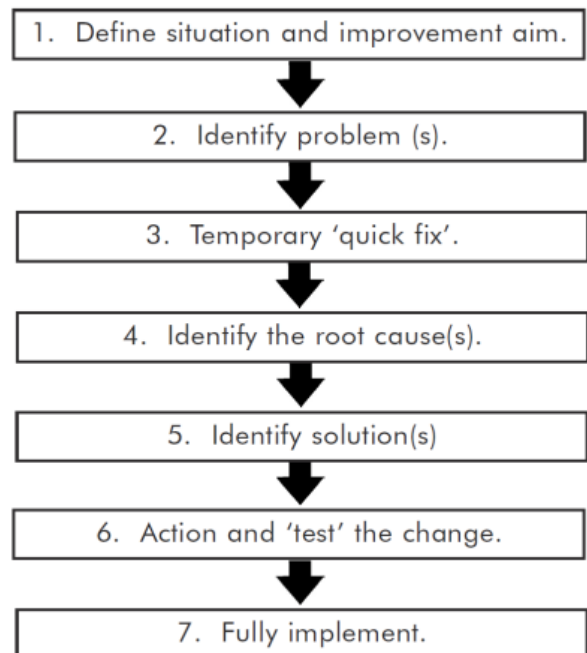
The main objective of redesigning the CAF process was to enable a more targeted approach to the identification of families’ in need of early intervention, thereby reducing referrals to specialist services. This will simultaneously reduce the costs to public services whilst delivering better outcomes to families. A better CAF will both help prevent families becoming ‘troubled’, and help to better manage those that already are. One of the findings of Darlington’s analysis of Troubled Families data, using the InSite system, was that very few of them appeared to have any existing contact with social care.

The ambition of the redesign is to produce a single process that meets all the needs of families while facilitating communication and information sharing between service practitioners.

The CAF redesign process has used a Rapid Process Improvement methodology (see Text box 4). This took the form of a week-long multi-agency Rapid Process Improvement Workshop. The workshop ran for five working days in succession (Monday to Friday) with a total of 18 participants drawn from the following agencies:

- Darlington Borough Council
- family support service
- duty team
- housing
- workforce development
- safeguarding board
- transformation team
- youth offending
- health
- schools
- CAMHS
- probation.

Text box 4:– Rapid process improvement methodology



The workshop applied the LEAN methodology, collaboratively defining an outcome and progressing to identify the core issues associated with the existing CAF and seeking to identify a range of possible solutions.

The participants collaboratively agreed the following outcomes (see also 'Benefits'):

- increase the number of CAFs
- increase the accuracy of the CAF data
- decrease contacts to duty team
- decrease child in need referrals
- increase percentage of duty referrals progressing to initial assessment
- decrease percentage of repeat referrals.

A number of key actions emerged which were pursued and delivered by the participants following the workshop.

Participants agreed to revise the:

- CAF forms: creating a single assessment form, a closure form, a 'Team Around Family' action log, and guidance notes
- process flowcharts: CAF, Step down from specialist services, and team around the school
- brand name for children, young people and families, from CAF to 'support for children, young people and families'
- leaflets into one, user-friendly summary leaflet (see figure 6)
- database to capture more detail more readily
- training and development programme for CAF.

One of the main aims of the programme was to improve communication with families, and so Darlington has designed a new set of materials for families that are in plain English and avoid so-called 'council-speak'. The team designing the new materials reviewed the geodemographic profiles presented by the InSite System to help shape their approach.

The programme also agreed to develop:

- a quality assurance framework
- a CAF champion role
- a communications plan.

Participants agreed the following outcome:

"To improve outcomes for children and young people in Darlington by preventing their entrance into specialist services through the improved collaborative working between agencies and early intervention."

Figure 6. New CAF leaflet for families

How will this support help me?

- By listening to you
- By listening to your family
- By coming up with some ideas to support family life
- By introducing you to other support workers

YOU REMAIN IN CONTROL AT ALL TIMES

After listening to you we will suggest the right people to invite to a meeting with you and your family.

At this meeting you can decide who you would like your lead worker to be, this is the person that will keep you informed, listen to your views and plan and co-ordinate the services you wish to support your family.

After a little time you should feel supported and able to move on with fewer worries.

Who will see my information?

We record information on a form so that we can understand what help you and your family may need. We will only share this information with your permission with the people that can support you.

In order to provide support you will need to give your consent by agreeing to sign the form.

Support for Children, Young People and Families is voluntary , you and your family can choose to be involved.



Local Information System (LIS)

Darlington's work has been driven by the desire to better understand families impacted by multiple and complex factors by assembling and analysing relevant data from across a range of services and different partner organisation. .

As a result of this project, Darlington has identified the need for a system to help the council and its partners produce, share, access and analyse data from a range of sources relating to the area, as well as outlining the key challenges to be faced when moving forward.

The key criteria for Darlington Borough Council was that the system should support the council's own service related data in order that this could be analysed alongside geo-demographic data.

With this in mind, Darlington has developed a Local Information System (LIS) that brings together a range of data sets that can be combined with geodemographic data.

The InSite System, using Household Acorn data, provides Darlington Borough Council and its partners with a richer picture of the needs of families with multiple needs and of the localities in which they live. Having been developed to support the families with multiple needs agenda, the InSite System provides Darlington with the platform for other customer insight work and has enabled Darlington to:

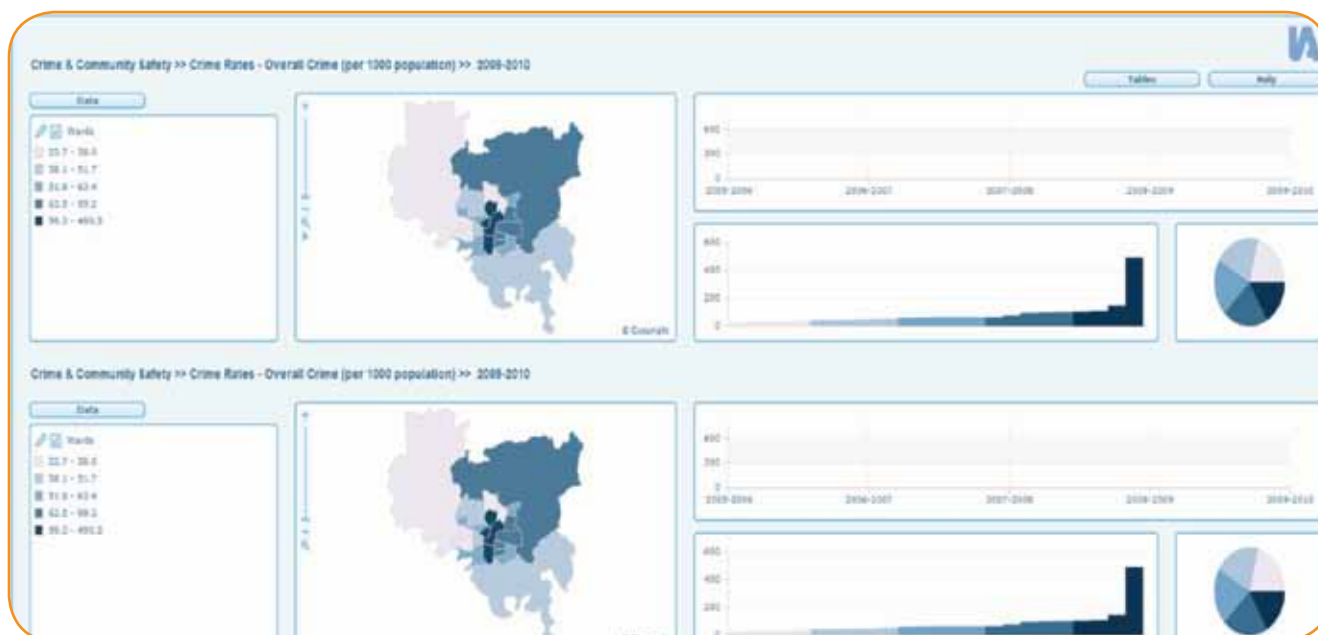
- plan and prepare for the effects of welfare reform
- develop the on-going business case and pricing strategies for local leisure services.

The Local Information System for Darlington became operational on 3 July 2012. So far, the main users of the LIS are the council and its partners, although the majority of the data is available to anyone.

"I welcome this development. The local information system for Darlington is beginning to meet the needs of the voluntary sector for easy access to varied, up-to-date data for a range of purposes."

Karen Grundy, Executive Director of eVOLution Darlington

Figure 7. Screenshot of the LIS - showing crime rates by ward



Reduction in the number of assessments

Following the positive feedback from families documented by the evaluation, rather than going through further assessments with families and asking the same questions, practitioners from the FIT now take the approach of using assessments from referring agencies and only reassessing where that original assessment seems incorrect or where the intervention needs to be tailored. This saves both the service and the family time, and helps to build a rapport with the family. This has contributed to the improvements reported under Benefits.

“What are you going to find out that’s any different? Often nothing and you wasted that time irritating the people you’re trying to work with. So, in terms of relationship building with the family you’ve already started off on the wrong foot. So we’ve taken the step of reusing the information that the other agency has already collected.”

David Mason, Head of Family Support, DBC

Before the FIT there were different people at meetings who would be writing notes. They kept changing so I had to keep saying the same things again and again. I said it would be better if they stayed the same – I told them that. It would save time and I wouldn’t have to keep saying the same stuff again and again. It’s good having [the FIT].

Father, Smith family

Interventions and support

Depicting all the data from the case files diagrammatically as part of the High Impact Households pilot revealed the number of different issues the family in question faced as well as their impact on the community. This resulted in the partners offering the families the following support:

- domestic abuse service for ‘Julie’
- mediation services to start parents communicating again
- family support to address basic issues, such as establishing household routines
- mental health services for the sons, alongside mediation to improve the relationship with their mother, after school activities, and training
- engagement with the police to ‘tag’ family addresses to ensure the services were aware of the wider picture
- engagement of the early intervention, alongside employment and housing services.

Although it is early in the process and work with the family is continuing, the High Impact Households pilot’s work with Family A has delivered some successes. The two sons involved in the first HIH project have not been involved in any incidents of anti-social behaviour since November 2011, having previously been regularly involved. The two parents now communicate about childcare arrangements and routines, whereas previously communication had broken down.

Darlington Borough Council and the transformation team have been pivotal from the outset with Durham Constabulary's High Impact Household project. The provision of information by the council has been instrumental in the targeting of families for the early intervention work. It has enabled us to develop the real full picture and enabled us to focus on the right families and use our resources and funding to target issues appropriately to each family.

The partnership working which commenced from meeting the transformation team has been truly vital to helping to ensure that we are sharing the information accurately and timely, and has led to a number of successful outcomes for the family. This has also been used as best practice working with other officers, with various partners, other social services departments, because the data sharing agreement that we had in place has been formalised to be used in other areas, so really it's been a tremendous step forward for Durham Constabulary, and I think that being able to access such low level information sometimes has meant that we've been able to recognise and acknowledge other issues, which will be instrumental in the targeting of families for the early intervention work.

Detective Sergeant Hannah Bell, HIH Project Manager, Durham Constabulary

Outcomes from collaborative working

The Family Intervention Team (FIT) is a collaboration between multiple disciplines, comprising officials with various backgrounds including health, social work, mental health, family therapy, education, housing, and criminology. It also has links with probation and police. are basing their approach to Troubled Families on this model going forward.

One family had had 20 different services involved with them over the last few years. The family was referred to the FIT to look into the mother's suspected learning disability. The oldest child had been taken into care due to child protection issues with the father, and the other two children had behavioural difficulties and were subject to Child Protection Plans. The second child was also suspected to have a learning disability and was excluded from school, and the third was at risk of childhood obesity. The father had been on probation. There was also a history of domestic violence between the parents.

The FIT worked collaboratively with the family together with the Learning Disability Service, CAMHS and the Health Improvement Service. A particular focus was how the couple communicated with each other, and how their behaviours influenced the children. The outcome of this collaborative working, was that:

- learning disability services discharged both the mother and the middle child
- the middle child came off the child protection plan and was no longer excluded from school
- the mother is now on a programme to support her into work
- the service now working with the father on his anger management issues.

Helen Nash, Health Visitor with the Family Intervention Team, and qualified Family Therapist with County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust, NHS

Benefits

Improvements in social care workflow

By improving the CAF processes and increasing the number and accuracy of the CAFs processed, Darlington's objective is to facilitate greater early intervention and prevention. The redesigned CAF supports better distribution of the workload between universal services and the higher-cost specialist services.

Although the new CAF was only launched in June 2012, Darlington BC has been engaged in a programme of training practitioners in the nature of the new process and how to approach CAF since January 2012. Over 350 practitioners drawn from the Police and Health have participated in training.

Darlington BC has also promoted the importance of proper assessment by partners through its participation in the High Impact Household project. The evaluation of the Family Intervention Team and the promotion of the feedback from families and findings have also improved the assessment process.

“When we are taking the lead role, we don't see ourselves as a health worker, social worker, or housing officer. We're just thinking, but who is the best to lead and which services we need to invite in? It is about working collaboratively with partner agencies, and also about being seen to be joined up from the service user's perspective.”

Helen Nash, Health Visitor with the Family Intervention Team, and qualified Family Therapist with County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust, NHS

As a result of these activities, performance began to improve even in advance of the launch of the new CAF in June 2012. For example:

- Between January and June 2012 inclusive, there were 255 (40 per cent) less Child in Need (CiN) referrals than in the same six month period in 2011. To illustrate the value of these improvements, if we apply estimates of unit costs¹ of an Initial Assessment (of a child not previously known to social care) this equates to a saving of £69,700.
- Between January and June of 2012 inclusive, there were 88 (76.5 per cent) less repeat referrals (ie referrals to assess children who are already known to social care) than in the same six month period in 2011. Again, applying estimates of unit costs for illustration purposes, this equates to almost £24,000 in costs avoided.

Reduction in anti-social behaviour

Darlington has also enjoyed a reduction in the incidence of youth related antisocial behaviour of 14 per cent (or nearly 500 incidents) per year by the end of March 2012. The cost to a Local Authority of intervention following these incidents ranges from warning letters costing approximately £66 compared to £230 for an Acceptable Behaviour Contract and £3,100 for an Anti-Social Behaviour Order. Darlington estimates the saving to the council from the reduction in anti-social behaviour to total £38,200.

¹ Based on research by the Centre for Child and Family Research at Loughborough University

Increase use of the CAF

Darlington is aiming to increase the number of CAFs completed during 2012 by 50 per cent when compared with 2011. There were 188 CAFs completed in 2011, so the target amounts to 282. In the first seven months of 2012 (ie until 31st July), Darlington and partners had completed 182 CAFs, which is slightly above target.

The rationale for increasing the number of CAF referrals is to reduce the number of Children in Need referrals and consequently the numbers of families in the more expensive targeted and specialist services.

“The new CAF form has been easier to complete and looks less daunting to parents when it is introduced. Having a secure email to send it to directly is much better as well. Instead of typing up minutes of meetings,

I can update the form and keep a copy in our records as well as sending on the new one. Other staff have also found these forms easier to read and understand. Overall, I feel the new CAF form has been an improvement”

Melanie Pitchford, Assistant Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator, Hurworth Secondary School

“Education practitioners were formally quite reluctant to engage with the CAF process, mainly because it was so time-consuming. The form was 11 pages long and took over an hour and sometimes two to complete. The form was quite repetitive and some of the boxes quite intrusive.

On the new form the boxes grow to accommodate whatever information that you put in there, so it might start off at four pages and end up at eleven, but it's not as intimidating when you initially look at it.

The practical side of the form is that you can now fit on up to four children in a family, so instead of it being focused on one individual child it's focused on the entire family which means that you don't have to replicate the form for each individual member.

It also uses much more family friendly language, so instead of saying 'You are providing basic shelter and warmth and emotional support' you can say 'Do you spend some time together? Are they happy at home? Did they tell you about what's going on at school?'"

Paula Humphreys, School Home Liaison Officer, Darlington BC

How the New CAF has changed the life of a family

“The new CAF has been employed with one family in which the child was living with his aunt and uncle as a result of social services intervention several years ago. The child was about to transition into year seven and hence move to secondary school. He was well behaved at school, but the aunt visited one day and broke down in tears saying that she couldn’t cope with his behavioural issues at home.

We talked through the CAF process with the aunt and she agreed to become involved. We also got the child engaged by talking to him about the process and how I could help his family situation. The School Liaison Officer visited the family at their home to help them fill out the form so they were in their own surroundings.

As a result of the CAF, the CAMHS team started working directly with the child, and an Adult Social Worker began working with the aunt because there were issues that had begun to impact the child’s behaviour directly. The CAF also triggered the involvement of housing because they were issues such as damp that needed to be addressed.

The Liaison Officer also involved the Student Support Officer and the school councillor from the secondary school that the child would be attending next. This meant that the child could build a relationship with them before transitioning over to Secondary School.

As a result of the new CAF, the Housing issues have been resolved completely and the child is now working through his issues with a qualified CAMHS Worker, and the aunt is scheduled to go on a Parenting Programme in the near future.

As part of the initial CAF assessment, both the aunt and the child had rated themselves on the form’s ‘wellbeing’ scale (where ‘1’ equates to a feeling of low wellbeing, and ‘5’ equates to high wellbeing) with a low score of ‘2’. Although the CAF is still open, following these changes both the aunt and the child re-scored their wellbeing at ‘4’ and ‘5’ respectively.”

Paula Humphreys, School Home Liaison Officer, Darlington BC

Governance

The project which delivered the InSite System and LIS reported to the Chief Officers Board, and on to the Transformation Board, which consists of Assistant Directors, Directors and the Chief Executive.

The Children’s Trust Board had overall responsibility for agreeing changes to the CAF, for embedding the changes into operational practice and for communicating the changes to all agencies across all sectors. Darlington’s Safeguarding Children Board, specifically its Performance Sub-Group, have responsibility for the quality assurance of the outputs and for monitoring the performance of the new system.

Resourcing

The findings and outcomes outlined in this case study result from the investment of staff time and resources from the council and partners. The funding from the Customer Led Transformation Programme (CLTP) enabled the requisition and development of the InSite System, with Household Acorn data, and the LIS which supported the subsequent stages of the project work.

The funding from CLTP was invested as follows:

Item	Allocation
LIS acquisition and development	£37,588
Analysis tools and data (Insite System)	£12,723
ICT infrastructure	£8,258
ICT equipment	£624
Additional data packages	£6,807
Total	£66,000

Challenges and lessons learnt

Information sharing remains a challenge

Feedback from practitioners on their experience of working with the Family Intervention Team indicated that not all agencies were effectively sharing information. The reluctance was partly due to uncertainty over what could be shared. Also, the use of different databases by different agencies meant that much information was unnecessarily duplicated.

As a result, Darlington recognised the need to develop of a single information system, possibly with differing levels of access. The LIS sought to address these issues, and has successfully assembled data from a range of partners. However, DBC continued to encounter challenges in obtaining data, particularly health-related data from the NHS. There is currently on-going negotiation with Health around data sharing at a local level in terms of person related data.

The research also indicated gaps in information sharing across the referral process. There were concerns about the gaps in information provided by the referring agency on the referral form. Improving the accuracy of the information captured on the new CAF form has been a key focus of the CAF re-designs process, and a copy of the form is available from the LGA Knowledge Hub.

“I think information sharing is the big thing. They are scared. They just keep waving the Data Protection Act. If we want this integrated model across the borough working successfully we need to look at how we do this. I think the bureaucracy is amazing. The access to data needs to be much more widely available. My view is if we are going to work properly together we have to have that ability to look at information.”

Family intervention team manager

Next steps

Darlington are looking to develop a 'People Vision' which sets out a five year vision for Adults and Children's Social Care, that enables a 'right place, right time' approach that will ensure vulnerable children, young people and adults receive the services they need at a time when they need them.

They are also seeking to develop an economic model which will support communities and build resilience within the provision of universal services that allows early intervention where individuals, families and communities require additional support to meet their needs, whilst limiting demand for more expensive and potentially less effective specialist services. The use of 'Insight and Information' will be used to develop this vision and to communicate appropriately with Service Users across the Authority.

The availability of geo-demographic data and the general availability of a wider range of data through the LIS will form an important input to the development of the Vision and its subsequent implementation through service and action plans. Therefore more widespread use of such data is planned. Further development of the LIS to improve access to a range of data with the facility to analyse the relationship(s) between different datasets is also planned.

Darlington and partners are also developing a data use strategy to identify data to be provided, output structure and proposed use. This is to be framed within a broader information strategy that links with the current data quality strategy, currently under review.

A performance framework is to be developed to measure the impact of the prevention and intervention in an on-going basis. The intention is that this will use quantitative indicators supported by qualitative statements.

Darlington will also continue to monitor the CAF Metrics identified at the Rapid Process Improvement Workshop to ensure that key targets and outcomes are achieved.

The High Impact Household pilot culminated in the partnership providing intensive, multi-agency wrap-around support to ten High Impact Households from September 2012.





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