

## Home–Start South Hams – Self Assessment Report (Post year ‘ Reaching Communities’ Grant April 2013)

Time period: From September 2010 to April 2013

Activity	Intended Outcome	Actual Outcome	Source/Evidence	Evaluation
<b>Volunteers</b>				
1. Recruitment of local volunteers through local articles, posters, adverts, presentations, websites and from past beneficiaries and other volunteers. Offer volunteers training and life and employment skills development and support including accreditation options.	Recruit and train a base of 90 volunteers representing the diverse nature and needs of the community thereby increasing community activity and support available to families in need. Volunteers to report having increased skills. All to receive regular supervision and up to 30% to achieve accreditation	Recruitment and training of more than the intended 90 volunteers over the period. 100% have received supervision with 30% securing employment or education opportunities and 45% completing an accredited qualification and 95% attending 1 or more awareness raising training.	Record of publicity activities. Information on how volunteer came to apply gathered and recorded at interview stage. Question regarding volunteering in the future included on End of support questionnaire for families. Information collated and entered onto database for future contact if family not immediately ready to	<b>Strengths</b> With an expansion into an urban area we undertook some research into the demographics and reasons why people might want to volunteer. It is clear that offering the opportunity to develop skills and gain accreditation has been successful, in particular in the urban area with good recruitment figures and a high level of

			<p>start volunteering. Supervision records and database of reasons why volunteers leaving. Copies of references provided. Training records. Copies of certificates.</p>	<p>volunteers moving on into paid work or education. We have also seen an increase in volunteers coming to us through the volunteer websites and job centres (which are links we also worked to develop). We have seen a good number of families who have chosen to get involved with the service post support. (10%) Take up of training has been high with excellent accreditation results which has been a major factor for volunteers in</p>
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				<p>developing their careers. Turnover has been higher than previously but the majority have left to go into employment or higher education which is a positive outcome.</p> <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>As mentioned above retention rates have been lower which creates a need for more aggressive recruitment but is also a strength. The number of families joining the organisation post support is not as high as previously but this is in part due to the increasing complex</p>
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				nature of the families we are supporting.
2. Train all volunteers to use diary sheets to direct focus of support and record activity	100% of volunteers to attend training and to use the weekly diary sheets to focus support, in particular around accessing services. All volunteers to complete the diary sheets as a method of monitoring and recording support and activity with the beneficiary.	All volunteers have undertaken the training and all are completing the diary sheets. The diary sheets have been used by the coordinator during reviews and supervisions to direct and manage the support. This has been entered onto our database and has given us information on the activity and progress of the support.	Diary sheets, review visit forms and supervision records. Database. Training records.	<b>Strengths</b> Volunteers have a good structure to record progress and the layout of the forms encourages volunteers to remember the focus of the support. The information gathered has given the Coordinator a clear framework to evaluate and manage the support and we have been able to demonstrate the effectiveness of the support in terms of increasing community activity and building sustainable links for

				<p>families. The information produced has been full and detailed.</p> <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>The diary sheets create a large amount of data and therefore create an increased amount of administration, which we were not fully prepared for. The system is a national database, managed by Home-Start UK. This has created difficulties as we have not been able to adjust the fields to our requirements and at times have not been able to retrieve the data when and</p>
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				how we need it.
3. Train volunteers to offer specialist 'buddy' support.	Train a minimum of 10 volunteers to offer specialist buddy support such as 'Maximising Income'	We have trained over 25 volunteers as either Maximising Income or Parent Buddy specialists.	Training records. Specialist diary sheets and Maximising Income tracking records	<p><b>Strengths</b> We have been able to respond quickly and adapt the specialist support needed to suit the 'gaps' or 'needs' within our different communities. The switch to more targeted, specifically trained volunteers has given volunteers wider training and development opportunities and has highlighted our key strength – i.e. our rich and multi-skilled volunteer base.</p> <p><b>Weaknesses</b> The Maximising Income specialist</p>

				have proved strong but how best to use the parent buddy has been a 'trial and error' exercise which has resulted in a conclusion that it works best as a reinforcement to a parenting programme and not as a 'stand-alone' support.
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**Families - method of delivery**

4. Offer families support to increase their financial resilience through one-to-one support, linking them to services and offering 'Maximising Income' sessions.	100 parents will report living in less poverty and with greater financial resilience as a result of support.	In excess of 100 families have received support in the form of one to one practical help, linking to an appropriate service or a maximising income session. All reported the service helpful and the majority reported	Diary sheets identify activity which is collated on database. Family review and closing paperwork - collated on database. Maximising Income session tracking record.	<b>Strengths</b> It was clear that for many families this was a difficult issue to discuss and the diary sheets indicated that, through the building of a long term, trusting relationship families where in many cases
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improve financial situation as a result of support.

empowered to accept support.  
The ability to conduct benefit and grant investigations in families own homes or a very local venue was successful, especially where the family had additional health needs.  
We were able to respond quickly to the need for a clinic at a community venue – e.g. if an existing provider of the service was no longer available.  
**Weaknesses**  
Only 50% of families identified this as a need.  
For families whose

				<p>only contact with our service was a Maximising Income session it was more difficult to track the long term effects of the advice and support.</p> <p>The need for sessions at community venues varied greatly depending upon the other services active in the area – this is very inconsistent across the area.</p>
<p>5. Engage families with their local communities and services</p>	<p>200 parents to report or demonstrate a more active involvement with the community and to build links with wider services. To engage, in particular 'hard to</p>	<p>We supported in excess of that number. Volunteers focused their support on signposting and supporting access to the community and services. This was</p>	<p>Volunteer weekly diary sheets</p> <p>Review visit and end of support paperwork and interviews</p>	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>Diary sheets demonstrated the effectiveness of a one-to-one volunteering in engaging families with services. The</p>

	reach families' with the local Children's Centres.	<p>tracked and took place on over 1,000 occasions over the period.</p> <p>At end of support interviews 85% of families reported feeling less isolated and more linked to services. A minimum of 50% of our beneficiaries were in the more complex needs category and we successfully engaged with traveller families.</p>		<p>long term nature of the support gave families time to gain confidence and establish patterns. The targeted nature of the diary sheets kept volunteers focus.</p> <p><b>Weaknesses</b> None identified.</p>
6. Offer 'Stepping Stones' courses around targeted groups or subjects as required by the local community.	Work in partnership where appropriate to offer gentle, heavily volunteer supported 'stepping stones' courses to vulnerable families with the aim	We initially offered a 'Next Steps' course aimed at building confidence towards taking up employment, education or	Course outlines, initial interviews, evaluation paperwork and closing interviews. Posters and flyers. Attendance registers.	<p><b>Strengths</b> The courses had good retention rates and high success when measured against individual's outcomes and this was in large</p>

	<p>of building confidence and skills and eventually engaging families in mainstream services.</p>	<p>volunteering. Over the period we offered 5 courses with 70% of participants going on to achieve their stated goal (e.g. accessing education).          We developed and delivered them in partnership with Jobcentreplus and Children's Centres. We also offered an initial Cook and Eat. In 2012 we worked with Health Visitors and Children's Centres to develop a 'Stepping Stones' approach group for mum's experiencing depression (in response to local needs and a gap in</p>	<p>Follow up reports. Booklet (included on our and Children England Website)</p>	<p>part due to the intensive involvement of volunteers which enabled us to give very tailored support to vulnerable beneficiaries. The gentle and supportive nature of the sessions also ensured that participants felt confident to keep returning. We were able to adjust the content and target group for sessions, whilst keeping true to the 'Stepping Stones' approach, thereby enabling us to target local needs and gaps in services. The sessions gave</p>
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		provision)		<p>volunteers the opportunity to work in a different way and develop their own experience.</p> <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>The work depended to a degree on partnership working in order to identify needs and potential beneficiaries and also as the intention was to build vulnerable families confidence to engage in mainstream.</p> <p>This was hampered by the changing priorities and budgets of our natural partners and the general complexities of partnership</p>
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				working. This led to delays and frustrations as we all tried to provide for the needs of beneficiaries, whilst being aware of organisations targets and the need to avoid duplication.
7. Offer targeted 'buddy support'	To support families for a time limited period around specific issues (e.g. parent buddy)	We trained buddies to offer Maximising Income support and Parenting support. The Maximising Income was offered as one or two appointments at the families own home or a local community venue. We supported over 60 families using this system. In 2011 we began	Training records, specialist diary sheets, maximising income tracking record	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>The use of trained volunteers gave volunteers an opportunity to develop their skills and experience. The Maximising Income proved particularly useful in rural area (including the edges of the city) where other services are not accessible. When</p>

		<p>training parent buddies. Initially we offered the support as a stand-alone service but this was refined, during the 12 month pilot, to work during or post a parenting course as a reinforcement where families were unlikely to succeed alone.</p>		<p>conducted in the families own home it was possible to 'dig deeper' as the environment was relaxed and beneficiaries had all the necessary information to hand. It also provided for the utmost confidentiality. A families one-to-one volunteer was often the instigator of the appointment and able to entertain the children, in their own home, while the appointment took place. The parent buddy, when combined with a parenting course</p>
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			<p>offered the family extra support and reinforcement thereby increasing the chances of success. As a result of discussion with other services around the training of specialist volunteers to offer targeted support the Jobcentre and job clubs suggested an 'employment buddy' would be useful.</p> <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>Ensuring that we reached the families most in need with both services was the biggest difficulty as it depended upon other services knowing about and referring to</p>
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				us. This improved over the period, especially with the maximising income but we did experience some resistance from some services and, perhaps a concern that we were aiming to duplicate or copy their parenting programmes.
<b>Management/Strategic</b>				
8. Links with other services	Extend links with other services, particularly in the new geographical areas, through locality meetings, training opportunities and networking	Project actively involved with Children's Centres and multi-agency meetings. Training delivered to staff and volunteers by other agencies including CAB, Drug Teams and Mental Health services.	Meeting agendas and minutes. Training records. Course materials 'Stepping Stones'	<b>Strengths</b> Increase in partnership working. Greater involvement in CAF/CIN/Safeguarding processes. Improved awareness for staff and volunteers (and thereby families) of

		<p>Co-creation of targeted course for parents which included input from other agencies (Adult Learning, Volunteer Services, Employment Service).</p> <p>Attendance at, and involvement in 'trouble families' and 'fulfilling lives' meetings.</p> <p>Involvement with 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector forums and training both locally and nationally.</p> <p>Higher number of families with multi-agency processes in place and in which we were actively involved.</p>		<p>services available. Increased promotion of services has resulted in an increase in self-referrals.</p> <p>Involvement in broader partnership working such as 'troubled families' has influenced our own strategic planning and service development.</p> <p>Involvement with other 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations and training has contributed to a 'sustainable enterprise' model for the future</p> <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>Time. As our project has grown being</p>
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				actively involved with such a broad range of events and services is a challenge.
9. Development of a sustainable future	Set up a sub-committee/steering group to investigate long term enterprise opportunities in line with the activities of the charity and which will benefit beneficiaries	The sub-committee was set up and undertook a year-long information gathering and planning process. This has culminated in a report and the development of a costed business plan	Minutes from meetings. Questionnaires and research materials Business Plan	<p><b>Strength</b> The sub-committee have thoroughly investigated the options and developed a strong understanding of the best way forward in the current economic climate. They have considered their findings and recommended a strategic way forward. They have backed the recommendation with a business plan.</p> <p><b>Weaknesses</b> It is now necessary to find funding to take</p>

				the vision forward.
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### Actions Plan (as identified by Self Evaluation Table)

Activity	Action	By Whom/When
<p>1. Recruitment of local volunteers through local articles, posters, adverts, presentations, websites and from past beneficiaries and other volunteers. Offer volunteers training and life and employment skills development and support including accreditation options.</p>	<p>Existing recruitment and volunteer support processes effective. Need to continue to use data to ensure representative recruitment and to meet potentially changing needs of volunteer group, especially if plan to expand into areas of the city with greater ethnic diversity go ahead. When planning training need to take into account the higher level of turnover experienced since expanding into urban area and to continue to consider the best inducements whilst keeping through and safe recruitment practices intact. Increasing the types of volunteering options we offer (e.g. having employment mentors, shop volunteers) will enable us to reach a broader range of potential volunteers and our recruitment plan needs to reflect that.</p>	<p>Scheme Manager in consultation with Strategic Planning Committee On-going</p>
<p>2. Train all volunteers to use diary</p>	<p>Continue to include this training in the initial training with annual compulsory refreshers.</p>	<p>Scheme Manager with support of Staff Team</p>

<p>sheets to direct focus of support and record activity</p>	<p>Continue to state in the volunteer code of conduct that it is a requirement, whilst offering support through one-to-one supervision and at bi-annual Best Practice sessions.</p>	
<p>3. Train volunteers to offer specialist 'buddy' support.</p>	<p>Continue to develop this aspect of the volunteering with the inclusion of 'employment buddies', 'employment mentors', shop assistants, sorting and distribution volunteers, and e-commerce volunteers. Develop appropriate training and support including accreditation where appropriate.</p>	<p>Scheme Manager As part of new project proposal and with the support of the committee and new, dedicated staff roles.</p>
<p>4. Offer families support to increase their financial resilience through one-to-one support, linking them to services and offering 'Maximising Income' sessions.</p>	<p>Continue to offer Maximising Income sessions. Develop the model to fit with the new Scheme structure.</p>	<p>Scheme Manager in consultation with Strategic Planning Committee On-going</p>
<p>5. Engage families with their local communities and services</p>	<p>Continue with focused one-to-one support but look at developing 'stepping stones' approach courses for target groups as appropriate.</p>	<p>Scheme Manager supported by the Staff Team and in consultation with the Strategic Planning Committee. Sub-committee to include service users and</p>

		volunteers
6. Offer 'Stepping Stones' courses around targeted groups or subjects as required by the local community.	As above - develop the model	As above
7. Offer targeted 'buddy support'	In consultation with partners and beneficiaries develop a range of specialists, starting with employment.	Scheme Manager in consultation with Strategic Planning Committee and supported by new, specific job roles.
8. Links with other services	Continue to develop links including with new areas of the city. Continue active involvement with 'troubled families' and 'fulfilling lives' work.	Scheme Manager supported by staff team and committee.
9. Development of a sustainable future	Submit funding applications to support the strategic plan developed by the sub-committee. Continue to consult with beneficiaries, partners and committee to develop future plans.	Scheme Manager supported by staff team, volunteers, beneficiaries and committee.

## Summary

The key points which come from the assessment are that, despite some weakness in our current database set up, we have robust tracking systems which demonstrate the effectiveness of our long term, one-to-one support particularly around up-skilling the community, engaging beneficiaries and supporting people to develop skills and experience. It also indicates that we are highly responsive and our biggest, best asset and unique selling point is our diverse and enthusiastic volunteers.

We have been able to rapidly diversify and adapt to meet our local needs and fill gaps effectively. We offer an attractive package to volunteers and this has been instrumental in our continued recruitment success.

For families, we clearly remain a non-judgemental, non-threatening source of support, whilst being able to be increasingly involved in multi-agency processes and support for more and more complex families. The development of specialist support has had its successes and with the increase in 'targeted work' by statutory services and continued reductions in budgets and services, it seems logical that we continue to develop that flexibility.

The areas of greatest challenge for our service are; developing a financially sustainable future; involving beneficiaries to a greater and greater degree; building stronger and stronger links, especially with the new communities we are supporting and our partner agencies; and remaining responsive and flexible.

## Recommendations

- Continue to develop and diversify our model with the focus on our unique selling point and how it can best be utilized to serve the community and our key beneficiaries
- Pursue funding to create the new structure and model for the service ( i.e. more diverse use of volunteers, greater day to day involvement of beneficiaries; and development of an enterprise model to ensure a sustainable future)
- Continue to develop our monitoring and evaluation systems and address issues with national database.
- Continue to build links and explore funding and joint working opportunities with other services (statutory and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector).