



CIRCLE ANNUAL LECTURE 2015

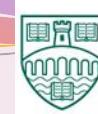


DOING THE BEST FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WHEN TIMES ARE HARD

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Presentations: Professor Brigid Daniel, University of Stirling

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Doing the best for children and families when times are hard



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Professor of Social Work,
University of Stirling

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Images of children from 'Early Years' ©NHS Health Scotland, 2011 and from approved image sources

What does ‘hard times’ mean?

- Absolute or relative poverty?
- Material resources or broader measures of living standards and social inclusion?
- Subjective measures of child wellbeing?



OR...

...is debating definitions a sleight of hand distraction from getting on with doing something about it?



Scale in the UK

- in 2013-14 there were 3.7 million children living in poverty in the UK
- Child relative poverty predicted to rise to 4.3 million by 2020.
- In Scotland more than one in five children live in poverty.

(CPAG, 2015)

Effects on children

- ‘Children from higher income families significantly outperform those from low income households at ages 3 and 5...’
- Three year olds in households with incomes below £10,000 are 2.5 more likely to suffer chronic illness than children in households with incomes above £52,000
- There are strong links between the experience of child poverty and poor mental health...’

(CPAG Scotland)

‘Poverty kills children. Equity saves lives. Social protection is life-saving medicine for the population. It is a grave injustice that British children do not enjoy the highest standards of health, wellbeing, and of chances to fulfil their individual potential in life. That children in the UK may die unnecessarily should be a matter of national shame.’

(Why Children Die, Wolfe et al., 2014, pp. 24-25)

Austerity hits the poor most

‘...the welfare reforms will hit the poorest parts of Britain hardest. After all, one of the reasons why some places are so poor is that they have so many people claiming benefits. On the other hand, the welfare reforms extend well beyond just those who are out-of-work to include large swathes of the employed population as well...And just how much harder will the reforms hit the poorer parts of Britain than more prosperous areas?’

(Beatty and Fothergill, 2013, p.4)

- Changes to the tax and benefit systems disproportionately hit the most vulnerable families. The negative impact is perversely greater for families with more vulnerabilities, particularly affecting families with four or more vulnerabilities present in their lives :
 - Worklessness – no parent in the family is in work;
 - Housing – the family lives in poor quality and/or overcrowded housing;
 - Qualifications – no parent in the family has any academic or vocational qualifications;
 - Mental health – the mother has mental health problems;
 - Illness/disability – at least one parent has a limiting long-standing illness, disability or infirmity;
 - Low income – the family has low income (below 60% of the median);
 - Material deprivation – the family cannot afford a number of food and clothing items.

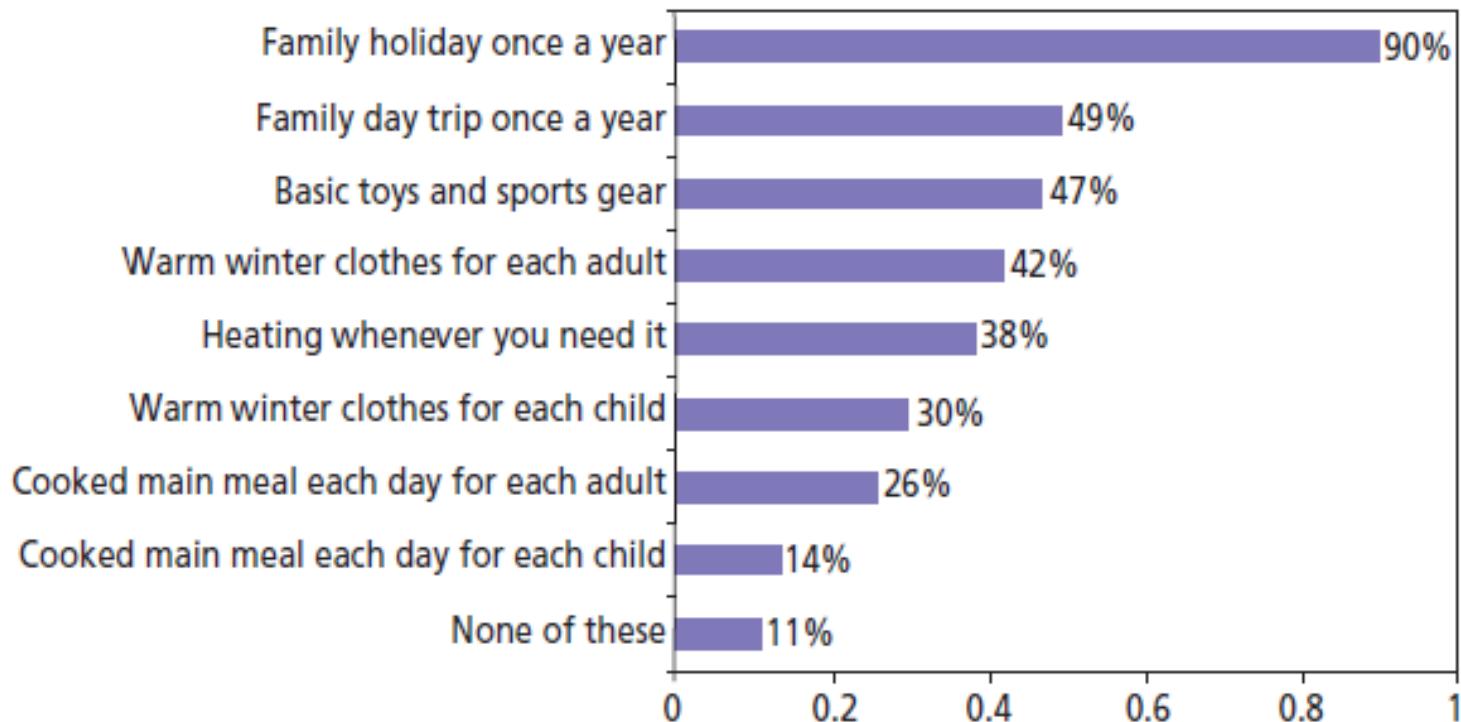
(Reed 2012, p.x)

But what does it actually feel like for parents and children?



Hooper et al's study: *Living with hardship 24/7*

Figure 3.1: Parents saying they could not afford the listed items



Living in poverty...

- ‘...undermined people’s ability to live up to their own aspirations as parents, leaving them often feeling guilty and inadequate...Even going to the park could cost too much when the expectation of an ice cream was included.’ (p.19)
- Children were most often stressed by their parents being stressed. Many knew that poverty was a key source of that stress, and tried to alleviate it by hiding their needs and wishes and/or giving or lending money they had received from other family members(p.56)

Views of people with experience of the system

It's really hard to manage on the money even if you're working. If you're a single parent with one child you are better off working, but if you have more than one child you're not

Our area is not one which you could let the kids play out by themselves. One park has a warden, which is fine, but others are strewn with needles and broken glass and teenagers often use the parks at night. We also have to move into areas where we don't have family or friends.

(Burgess, C; Daniel, B. et. al 2014)

The parks are often shut or have signs saying “no ball games” on the green bits – children have to play in the road.

If you’re on benefits, even if you’ve always worked in the past, you’re treated like scum.

Please don't judge my parents, just because they are struggling doesn't mean they are bad...



The Government needs to listen and sometimes even to angry people as there could be really good reasons underneath about why people are angry.

Poverty and effects on parenting

- To parent effectively in situations of poor housing, meagre income, lack of local resources and limited educational and employment prospects requires a high level of organisation and determination:
'...parents who...have very limited parenting skills are often attempting to meet the needs of their child in a context that even the most competent parents would find challenging.'

Horwath 2007: p. 38.

When poverty tips into harm to children

- Review of over 30 years of studies
 - ‘there is overwhelming evidence that poverty and low income are strongly related to child abuse and neglect as well as to the severity of maltreatment.’
(Pelton 2015, p. 30)
- Avon longitudinal study of parents and children matched to records of CP investigations
 - ‘the indicators of poverty come out as the strongest risk factor both for investigation and registration’ (UK)
(Sidebotham et al., 2002, p. 513)

Dilemma of balance of recognition and danger of stigmatisation

Professionals' experience

- Online survey of professionals from all key disciplines
 - 66% of those who responded (n=243) gave 'greater poverty/deprivation in the area' as their top reason to account for increases in suspected child neglect.

(Burgess et al. 2014)

The impact endures – harm-> poverty

- NSPCC's prevalence study, interviews with 2,689 18–24 yr olds.
 - Young people in semi-skilled or unskilled employment were 3X more likely to have suffered serious physical abuse and 10X more likely to have experienced serious absence of care in childhood than those in professional jobs.
 - 34% per cent of all respondents but **65%** of those who experienced serious physical abuse and serious absence of care agreed: 'there were always a lot of worries about shortage of money' in their families when they were children..

(Cawson *et al.*, 2000)

Inequality and state intervention (us)

- Relation between county-level income inequality and rates of child maltreatment in the 3142 US counties.
 - **Poverty** is associated with higher rates of maltreatment
 - AND higher **inequality** is associated higher rates of maltreatment.
 - In particular there is a significant *linear* effect of **inequality** on maltreatment.

(Ekenrode *et al.* 2015)

Compare inverse effect of austerity and - Health inequalities

- Inverse care law: ‘that the availability of good medical care tends to vary inversely with the need of the population served.’

(Tudor Hart, 1971, p.411)

- Less affluent populations with greater health needs, tend to receive less good services than more affluent populations with less health needs.

Coventry study

- 14 Local Authorities in the Midlands, routine data for all CPP and LAC and Index of Multiple Deprivation.
 - Children who live in the most deprived 10 per cent (decile) of neighbourhoods have a 10 times greater chance of being on a child protection plan and an 11 times greater chance of being taken into care than children in the least deprived 10 per cent (decile).
 - Every step increase in deprivation brings a step increase in intervention rates.

(Bywaters et al 2014; 2015; forthcoming)

An ‘Inverse Intervention Law’

- Drilled down to neighbourhood level and sorted by deprivation:

Overall a child's chances of an extreme child welfare intervention is much greater at higher levels of deprivation, but **for a given level of deprivation a child in a more affluent local authority is more likely to be on a CPP or to be a looked after child.**

The question is: do services *alleviate, perpetuate or exacerbate* inequalities?

Demand – struggle, stigma, shame
Supply – thresholds resources

Paradigm shift - Child welfare as an issue of social inequity/equity

‘Child welfare inequity occurs when children and/or their parents face unequal **chances, experiences or outcomes** of involvement with child welfare services that are systematically associated with structural social disadvantage and are unjust and avoidable.’



(Bywaters *et al.* forthcoming)

Identifying and understanding inequalities in child welfare interventions: comparative studies in four UK countries. A two year research project funded by the Nuffield Foundation

Principal Investigator

Professor Paul Bywaters,

Coventry University

April 2015 – March 2017

Funder: Nuffield Foundation

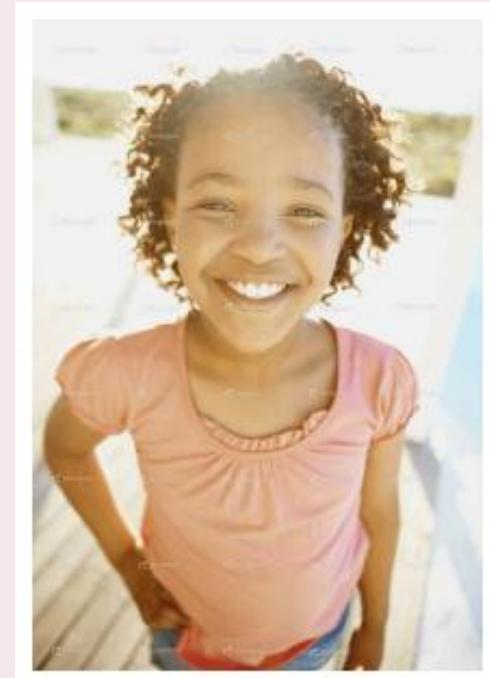
Advisory Group Chair

Sir Harry Burns

<http://www.coventry.ac.uk/child-welfare-inequalities>

What does ‘doing the best’ for children and families mean?

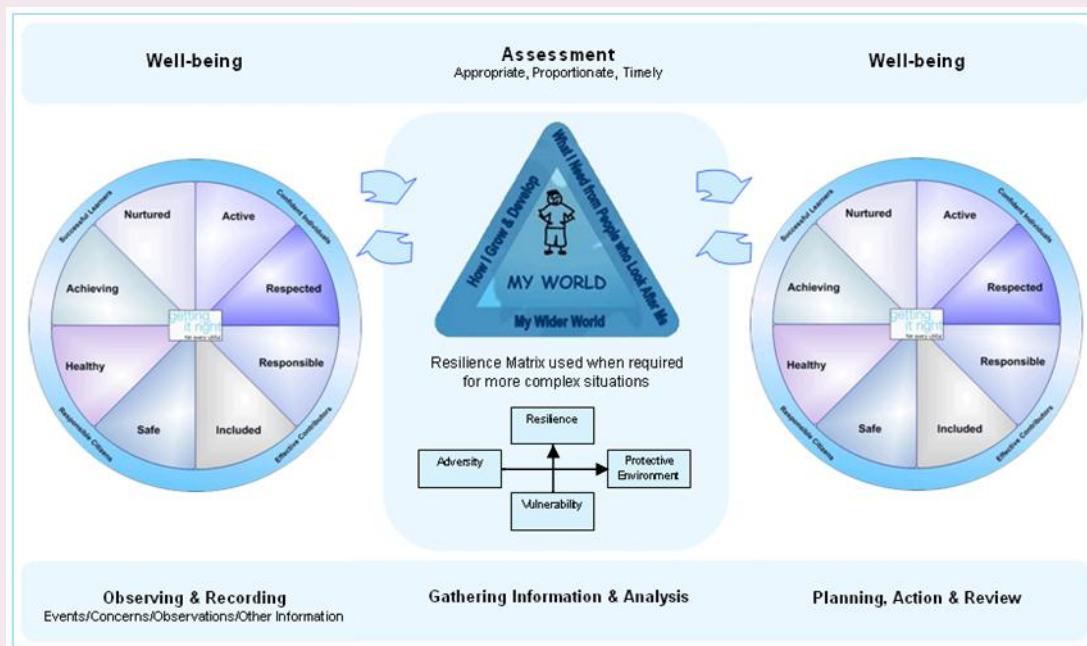
- Listening to children and families?
- Offering early family support?
- Protecting children from harm?



There is still a tendency for bifurcating pathways rather than one seamless journey to help

Intervention at all stages has to incorporate both 'child protection' and 'family support' -

'Effective family support is protection, effective protection is supportive.'



Focus on the child

Authoritative practice couples empathic support for parents with an unwavering focus on improving children's lives.



Parent and family resilience and structural factors

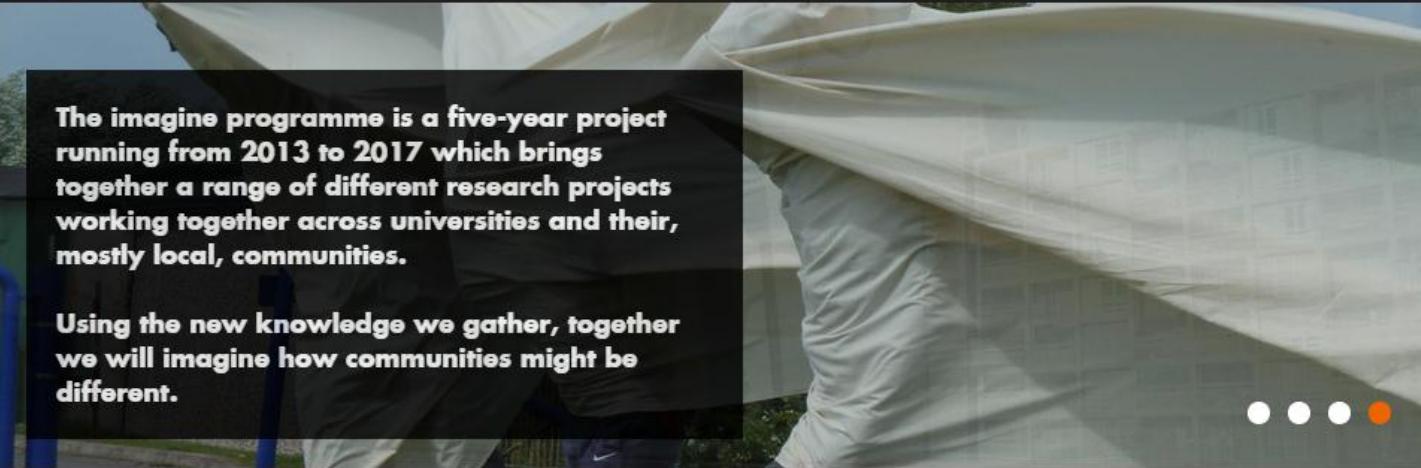
- Nurturing Resilience is intrinsic to Girfec.
- Many projects aim to nurture child, parent and family resilience.
- Resilience approaches criticised for being overly individualised and maintaining inequality.

A ‘fifth wave’ of resilience

‘overcoming adversity, whilst also potentially subtly changing, or even dramatically transforming, (aspects) of that adversity...When adversities are linked to inequality and disadvantage there is potential for resilience-based interventions to have an emancipatory function...’

(Hart et al, 2013)

<http://boingboing.org.uk/index.php/what-is-resilience?id=50:defining-resilience&catid=1>



The imagine programme is a five-year project running from 2013 to 2017 which brings together a range of different research projects working together across universities and their, mostly local, communities.

Using the new knowledge we gather, together we will imagine how communities might be different.



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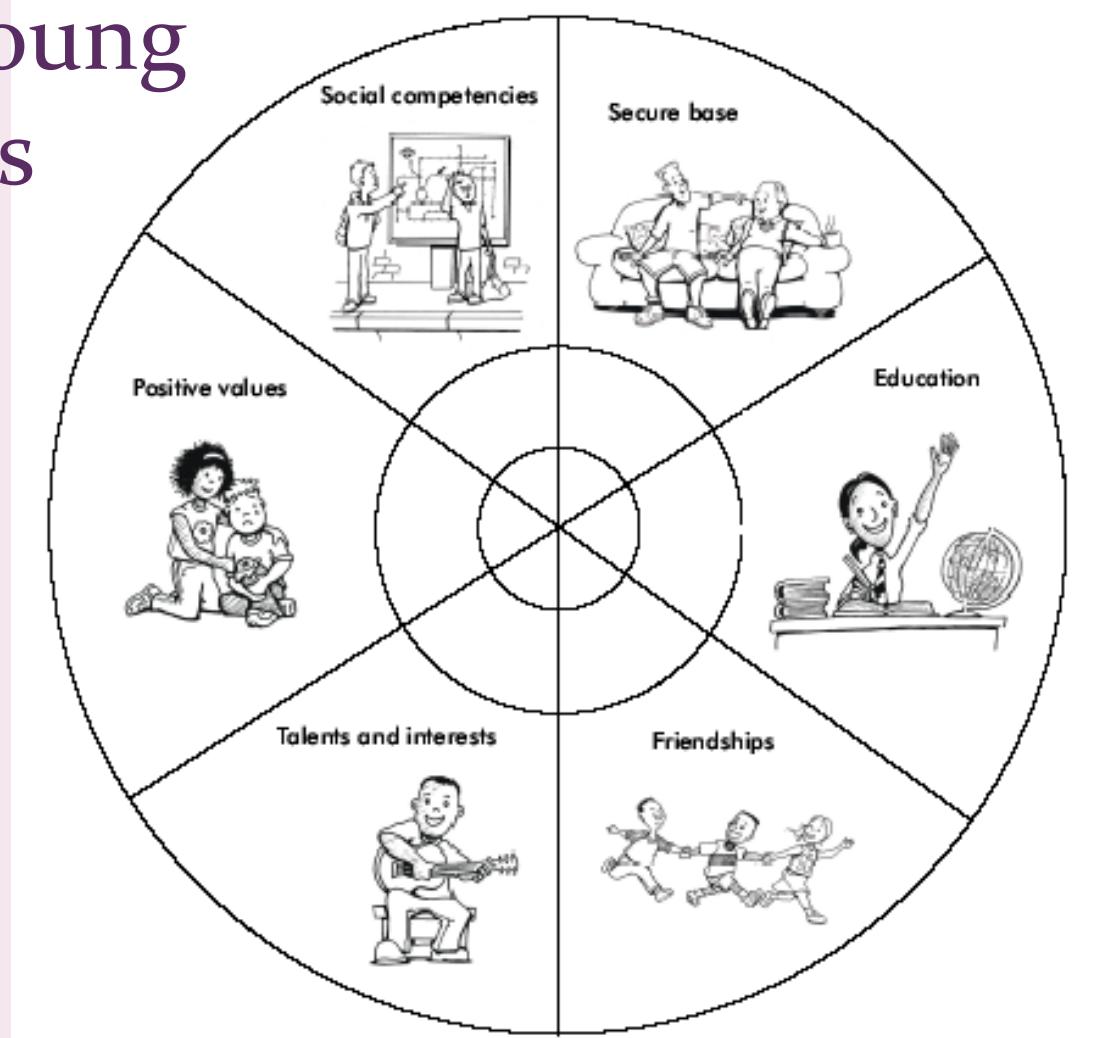
Work Package 1:
The Social Context



Work Package 2:
The Historical Context



Scottish project with young parents



Mixed experiences of friendships
Talents and interests so easily thwarted
Importance of listening and being authentic

(Daniel and Wassell, 2002)

In our review, the general public:

- Wanted services for families to be funded.
- 62% wanted projects which support families before problems get worse.
- 47% wanted **health-based** services.
- 42% **school-based** services.
- 41% **preventive** services.

(Burgess, C.; Daniel, B. *et. al* 2012)

Lots of examples of support on offer from universal services

Box 1. Local practice in health

Examples of local practice in health where early help is given include:

- Nursery nurses part-funded by Sure Start Children Centres and health to support families;
- Health visitor drop-in sessions and advice-giving duty teams at children's centres;
- Work with "Lads and Dads";
- Health visitor services supplemented by staff in a family support or lay health worker role; and
- Parenting groups and community child minders who provided an enhanced service for vulnerable families.

Box 2. Local practice in schools

Examples of where schools are delivering early help include:

- Breakfast clubs and after-school activities;
- Provision of food, clothing and showers and food banks run from schools;
- Nurture groups and Circle Time which encourage expression of feelings, and work to promote self-esteem and improve peer relationships;
- 'Wrap-around care' for children thought to be vulnerable;
- Work on social norms – to try to challenge what is perceived as acceptable family life within the local community;
- Older children mentoring and caring for younger children at lunchtimes;
- Counselling and pastoral care for children;
- Parenting groups such as triple P;
- Adult literacy/numeracy for parents and advice about helping with homework, run at school; and
- Family Support, Home School link workers or other outreach staff, whose role is to visit families at home and offer support for educational, practical and social issues.

Box 3. Local practice by police, housing and other universal services

Examples of where the police, housing and other universal services are supporting early help include:

- Community police work with teenagers, usually activity-based; helping children who run away or go missing – sometimes as a result of neglect - by way of return home welfare-type interviews (Scotland);
- Housing staff are providing support which could benefit children at risk of neglect in the form of budgeting and benefits advice for parents. One area described direct contact with children in homeless accommodation to plan what they required from forthcoming permanent housing (England);
- Youth worker being part of a restructured Children's Service which will establish early intervention teams, including youth service staff, in each of the four localities (Scotland); and
- Outreach youth workers going out on the streets to speak with young people and to identify those who were unhappy at home with a view to joint working with Children's Services (Wales).

It's a fine line between asking for help or not – will it look like I'm struggling? Will they think I'm struggling too much and take my bairns away?

They need to listen – do they really hear that you want help? Sometimes it feels like they are on a different roundabout

It's hard for us to know where to go for help when things start to get difficult. Sometimes we ask for help for ourselves so we can look after our children better but this is sometimes taken the wrong way and people think that we are putting ourselves first.

It is really difficult to get help, you go to somewhere and then you don't meet the criteria, but we don't know what the criteria are, no one ever tells us

...[being] shown how to parent not just telling us where we go wrong.

My family support worker just sat and listened and asked ‘how can I help?’ rather than telling me what I needed – or what they thought I needed.

They could show empathy about the causes of our difficulties.

Being a social worker is not just a name, you have to have some heart.

We always imagine that you professionals have a ‘perfect life’ where nothing ever goes wrong

The best kind of help is what some family projects are able to do for us - that is, understand our problems and talk over the important things we can do for our children. And also help us with practical things like housing and sorting out our bills. Some courses they lay on can also be good, like the Parenting Courses, when you meet other people in the same situation as yourself and learn how to have routines and be a less uptight parent.

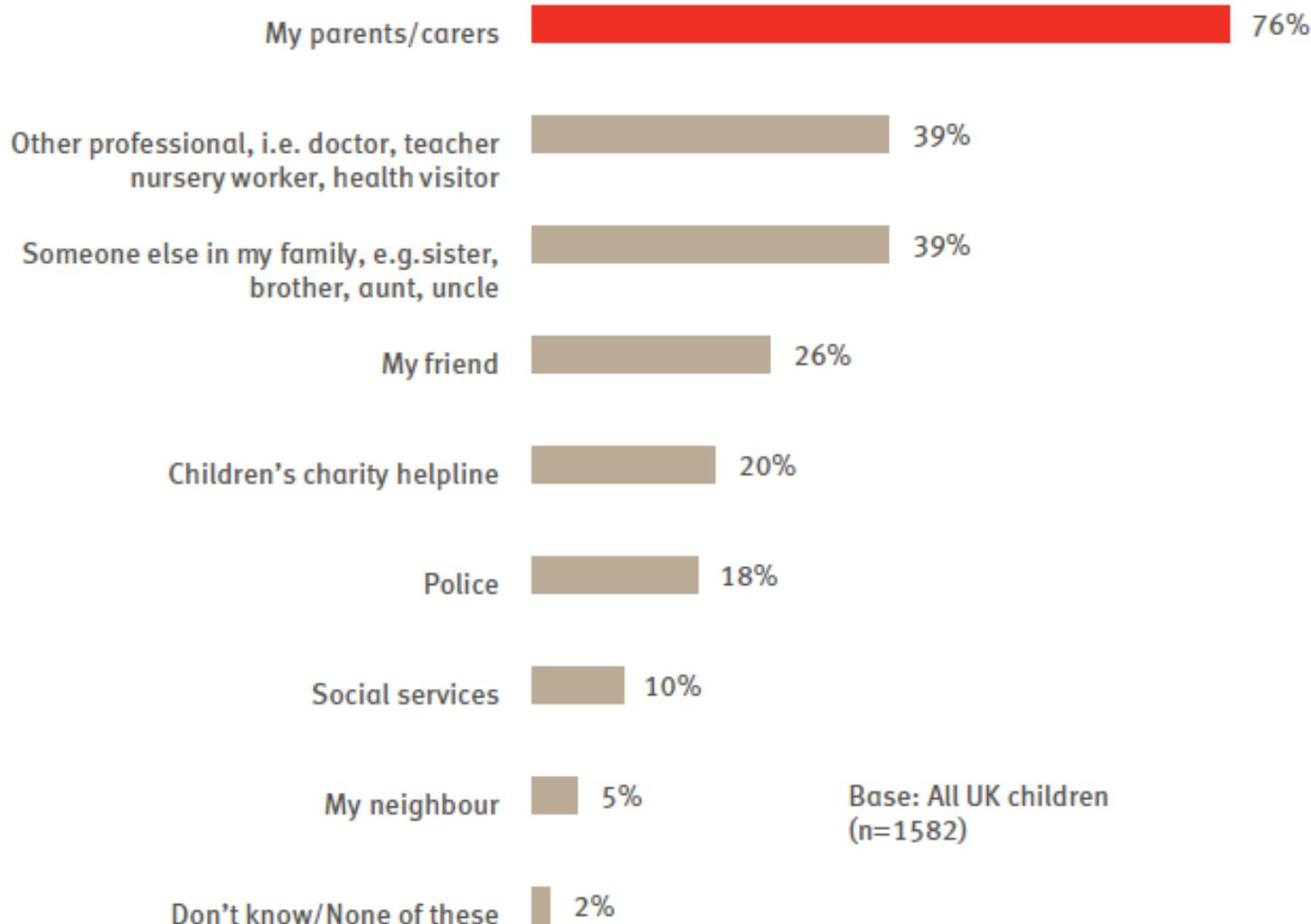


Supportive protection: providing authority

Sometimes voluntary support is not enough

But we'd like you to know that, even though it can be a pain at the time and we may really hate you when you're on our backs, some of us look back and think that the threat of Child Protection Plans and having our children taken away did make a difference to us and made us get our act together. And also having to go to Child Protection meetings meant that people did their jobs properly and did what they said they would

And who would children turn to?



I think it's the adults who need to approach children if they think something's not right, it's not up to the children to approach them. It can be a big burden for a child to ask for help



Some children are told by their parents not to tell or talk to other adults – so it's up to the adults who work with children to notice'.

A young person's blueprint for services



A building with staff who people can go to for help. Help for everyone for everything, the lobby would be all nice and painted; they would be very nice and kind, ask what the problem is and then help to sort it out. So you don't have to go to all different places.

RECOVERY ESSENTIALS PROJECT



FreshStart
helping people make a home for themselves



CROSSREACH
providing a caring future
SIMPSON HOUSE

GRASSMARKET
COMMUNITY PROJECT
Providing Sanctuary • Giving Support • Developing Skills



Edinburgh
young carers
Project

the
CASTLE
project



circle
Supporting families in Scotland

THE BIG
ISSUE

TURNING POINT
SCOTLAND

NEDAC

BIG LOTTERY FUND
LOTTERY FUNDED

If you are struggling financially, how does this affect you?

Get stressed,
depressed,
agoraphobic and
isolate myself

Causes me to
consider drug
use

Can't leave the
house sometimes
which affects
keeping
appointments

Affects my
recovery

Embarrassed

Depressed,
worthless,
failure

Socially
isolated

Agitated,
suicidal,
depressed,
angry

hungry

Financial inclusion work:

- Help with making benefits claims and appealing benefits decisions
- Help with understanding changes to benefits and their effects
- Increased confidence in handling money
- Budgeting advice
- Opening a bank account
- Help understanding utility bills
- Help with debts such as rent and utility payments

What our partners have said....

Many of our clients would not access help if it was not offered on site

The additional help with appeals and assessments is invaluable – without this direct advocacy, a positive outcome is difficult to achieve

My clients would have less food & money as well as be less able to focus on their recovery without this service

The stress of debt and financial hardship can often push people back a step in their recovery

I am now able to focus on recovery focussed work with clients

The welfare system is getting more complex and people need more help to deal with it which is time consuming.

Longer term solutions....

- Help with savings and savings goals
- Group work focusing on:
 - Fuel poverty
 - Recycling
 - Budgeting
 - Behaviour change
 - Communication skills
- Recruitment and training of peer support volunteers
- Accessible information tools

Client comments....

I now feel confident managing my benefits and making phone calls

My adviser makes me feel good because she shows me how it is done, she does not do it for me all the time

I had help to attend meetings I would not have attended

[the service] helps people get out of the cycle they are stuck in because of their addiction

Without the service I could not deal with these issues

I have had a great weight lifted

- Many come to us by word of mouth
- Almost all in client survey reported an increased sense of wellbeing
- Most said that they would not have accessed other sources of help



Contact us:

We will share information online:

- Web: <http://www.evoc.org.uk>

Contact us:

- Email: recovery-essentials@evoc.org.uk
- Twitter: @evoc_Finclusion
- Facebook: Recovery Essentials Edinburgh



Useful info:

- Turn2us – benefits calculator and grants search
 - www.turn2us.org.uk
- Money Advice Service – www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk
- CPAG helpline for advisers (benefits) – [0141 552 0552](tel:01415520552)
- Shelter helpline for advisers (housing and debt advice) –
[0344 515 1310](tel:03445151310)
- NHS Quick guide to crisis response in Edinburgh