

Conversations for Change

Family Rights and Inclusion for families
affected by substance use in East Lothian

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With a Foreword by the Minister for
Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing



October 2020

A companion summary to the Conversations for Change resource which can be found on Circle's website:
www.circle.scot/family-rights-and-inclusion

“ Systems change does not happen on its own, it requires the support and encouragement of everyone involved to develop and embed it within everyday practice. ”

Foreword

Joe Fitzpatrick, Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing, Scottish Government

“ We recognise and welcome the findings in this report and I would like to give my thanks to Circle and MELD and the families involved in undertaking this test of change. I note that many of its conclusions reflect the thinking of the whole family approach/family inclusive practice work already underway through our Rights, Respect and Recovery Strategy.

Specifically, our Rights, Respect and Recovery Strategy sets out that supporting a better response to those harmed by alcohol and drugs is one of the hardest and most complex challenges we face as a country. The harms are real and will persist alongside the often inspiring stories of lives saved. It ought to be the work of all of us, together, to improve our response – recognising: the rights of people, their families and their communities; the need to treat people with respect; and that all individuals will be supported on their own, unique, recovery.

Scottish Government are currently working with partners to develop approaches which:

- ensure family members will have access to support in their own right and, where appropriate, will be included in their loved one’s treatment and support;
- ensure all families will have access to services (both statutory and third sector) provided through a whole family approach, in line with the values, principles and core components of GIRFEC (Getting it right for every child);
- involve children, parents and other family members in the planning, development and delivery of services at local, regional and national level. ”



Family Inclusive ‘Test of Change’

With funding gratefully received from Scottish Government through Corra Foundation, we set out to follow a ‘plan, do, study, act’ cycle over the course of one year to gain an understanding of families’ experiences of three service systems (Recovery Orientated Systems of Care (ROSC), Children and Families and GIRFEC) and professionals’ views on family inclusive practice. Circle and MELD felt we had strength in being co-located in both adult recovery and children and families’ services in East Lothian.

In partnership we were able to view the same or similar agendas through the distinct lens of each service, getting a slight sense of what families feel when several agencies are involved, with different but interlocking agendas. It is safe to say if we were to do this again, we would start with just two service systems and build in a third, however we have included many professionals in this pack to give a broad perspective on family inclusive practice.

How we did it?

Firstly, we brought all the partners together to agree the plan, create a partnership agreement outlining our values and aims and clarify what each partner could bring to the table – implicitly and explicitly. Meeting quarterly, each agency described how they would like the respective service systems to change to be more family inclusive, what got in the way and how we could achieve our collective aims. We also facilitated conversations with family members and loved ones using a semi structured schedule of questions and asked professionals via surveys and practice examples to comment on their experiences of family inclusive practice. We had intended to facilitate a dynamic conversation between family members and professionals by holding a conversation café, however the pandemic prevented this from happening. We have therefore gathered together views of both family members and professionals and these can be found on Circle’s website:

www.circle.scot/family-rights-and-inclusion

We had the following aims in mind:

- Family members’ views and needs are better represented and met in service delivery responses (i.e. ROSC, Children and Families and GIRFEC);
- Staff involved in key processes (ROSC, Children and Families and GIRFEC) better understand when, where and how to identify and meet family members’ needs;
- Services show increased willingness to embrace more family inclusive working.

Change is possible

This ‘test of change’ set out to gather both families’ and services’ views about **family inclusive practice, whole family approaches and family rights** in the context of substance use, providing an opportunity for services to reflect on their current family inclusive practice and identify where there is good practice and areas requiring development and systems change. In seeking answers, we asked the following questions to each family member and professional:

- **What are the barriers and challenges that face families affected by substance use in East Lothian?**
- **What are the solutions that those families need from their community and the services that support them?**

Our questions were met with an openness, honesty and humility that allowed us to air some of the big fears both families and professionals face. We were, after all, talking about systems change. We were humbled by the commitment of the professionals to make this happen, particularly when unbeknown to us, a pandemic was around the corner!

Family resilience has become the utmost of importance as families became the default support for many. Family resilience is defined as having two characteristics: (1) the family’s ability to maintain established patterns of functioning after being challenged and confronted by risk factors (elasticity), and (2) the family’s ability to recover quicker from a trauma or a stressful event causing or requiring changes in organisation of the family (buoyancy). (Kalil, 2003).

The pandemic has shed light on the preventable economic and health inequalities faced by ‘loved ones’ and their families. This has been an unavoidable catalyst for change, and services have had to adapt and innovate to reach the most ‘vulnerable’ and there has been an amazing collective effort.

When we set about this ‘test of change’ project we identified a distinction between transformative change and structural change:

- Implicit – in our mental models and concepts of family
 - Semi explicit – relationships, connections and power dynamics
 - Explicit – structural change, i.e. practice, policies and resources (Kania, Kramer and Senge, 2018)
- www.circle.scot/family-rights-and-inclusion

In relation to the process we offer the following key points of learning to share with others embarking on 'family inclusive' systems change:

- Recruiting and supporting staff with lived experience
- Values clarification, e.g. strengths-based, family rights and inclusion, solution-focussed.
- Defining 'family' in the widest terms and the importance of 'loved ones'
- Ensuring a strong partnership agreement with committed members who have an open mindset
- Placing families at the heart of change and facilitating live 'conversations'
- Mapping levels of support and family inclusive practice
- Developing tools alongside family members to support the work: family leaflet; survey for families; survey for professionals; template for conversations; consent forms; database for contacts and data protection commitments
- Regularly revisiting the original 'test of change' questions
- Enlisting the added capacity of a volunteer with a specific skillset and interests
- Involving wider partners as it became clear family inclusive practice is reflected in a variety of ways
- Acknowledging shortcomings, e.g. we have not reflected all universal services offered
- Identifying specific workforce development, practice tools and participation structures
- Documenting meetings and groups as part of evidence
- Sharing results and raising awareness along the way

“We were wanting to show there is life after addiction and for people to see how it could and does happen to anyone in our lives. We wanted to celebrate life on the other side of addiction and how all is not lost, it is never too late and for people to have understanding, hopefully looking at people with addictions in a different way to their pre-conceptions. We had tears, laughter, pride, cheers and new friends and contacts made.”

Gill Last, Support Manager, The Ridge

“To make The Promise a reality, an equally radical new approach to design and implementation is required. Scotland must now come together to collectively make the changes that children, families and the workforce need.”

Independent Care Review, Fiona Duncan, CEO, Corra Foundation 2020

In relation to themes from this ‘test of change’ from both families and professionals, we offer the following reflections:

- We need to increase awareness of families’ rights to health, free from harms caused by substance use and to support in their own right
- We have to agree ways to co-produce solutions across service systems alongside families
- Partners should have a guiding set of values, principles and assumptions to underpin family rights, family inclusive practice and whole family approaches
- Families should be able to ‘reach in’, not be ‘referred to’ support in a timely and accessible manner
- Values came up again and again: dignity; respect; fairness; non-judgemental support; solidarity; going the extra mile and never giving up. This needs to be factored into workforce development and commissioning
- Stigma and feelings of shame affecting the whole family arise throughout these narratives, as well as how powerlessness is played out - in and between - informal and formal systems
- Families turn to their family first and in the absence of family then community groups help tackle social isolation
- Trauma, adverse childhood experiences and the importance of trusted attachment and trauma-informed relationships, supported by service structures and workforce development, are highlighted. Just under half of professionals want more training
- We already have some tools available to us: Signs of Safety, Parents Under Pressure, Video Interaction Guidance and CRAFT. Around a third of professionals would like more
- We have frameworks that seek to work with the whole family in the context of domestic abuse, e.g. Safe & Together and The Caledonian System
- There is a gender element to the supports on offer and positive discrimination should be adopted, e.g. fathers’ workers and women’s drop-in groups
- We can learn from the Independent Care Review, the local Champions Board and from existing peer support to really value the living and lived experience. This way of working can act as a significant catalyst for change
- Professionals want more information on family rights and inclusive practice
- Co-location is helpful for the provision of holistic support and professionals are working hard to transcend traditional silo-based models and to work collaboratively
- We offer a range of flexible services that change according to need, but families have vocalised they would like to see more ‘family peer support’
- Professionals felt trust in services was a prominent issue. In the same vein families need support to be able to access services, e.g. bus passes, childcare, ‘speed dial’ phone support
- There are many ways to connect with families: food, music, poetry, art, tea, a smile and being able to bring along pets. And the importance of places in the community to connect: Starfish Recovery Café, The Ridge
- We must always ask the questions – ‘what are the rights of family members? What are the views and needs within this family, individually, interpersonally and in terms of family functioning? What is getting in the way of support in the family system, the service system and the wider ecology? How can we help this family become more resilient and importantly, stick with them through crisis? What resources and advocacy might they need?’

Looking to the future

This project set out with ambitious aims and we know that we have, in some way, achieved all of these. Perhaps some not to the extent we would have wished. We hope this 'awareness raising' resource touches on each of the aims, identifying practice that is family inclusive as well as acknowledging barriers, challenges and solutions from both families' and professionals' perspectives.

We have discovered we need to foster an understanding of family rights and inclusion, develop more opportunities for co-production and manage change within and across service systems (implicitly and explicitly), locating our responses alongside families and within communities. As Joe Fitzpatrick, Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing, has outlined in the Foreword, the Scottish Government "recognise and welcome the findings in this report." "It ought to be the work of all of us, together, to improve our response – recognising: the rights of people, their families and their communities; the need to treat people with respect; and that all individuals will be supported on their own, unique, recovery."

Partners and Funders



Circle

Improving the lives of children by strengthening families.



MELD

Providing locally accessible, confidential and non-judgemental services to promote recovery and reduce substance misuse-related harm to individuals, families and the wider community across Midlothian and East Lothian.



MELDAP

MELDAP's primary aim is to co-ordinate the design, commissioning and delivery of alcohol and drug services across East Lothian and Midlothian, to ensure that these services are needs led, recovery focused, based on evidence of what makes a difference and are delivered in an effective, efficient way.



East Lothian Children's Services

Aim to work in partnership with children and their families to ensure they are safe, nurtured and able to reach their full potential.



East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership

