

EAST LOTHIAN PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

Circle's East Lothian Project works alongside families to offer practical, emotional, parenting and connecting support and advocacy. We identify families' rights, strengths, skills and solutions to reduce the impact of parental substance use, and support children and families to achieve their potential.

To achieve the project's aims, our Family Outreach Workers adopt a strengths-based and solution-focussed approach in all of the work that they undertake with the children and family members they support, working on the assumption that families are the 'experts' in relation to their own situation. Circle has the flexibility to work with the whole family, working intensively in family homes and communities.



Some examples of the wide variety of interventions that we carry out on a day-to-day basis are:

- Supporting a loved one's recovery
- One-to-one work with children to increase resilience
- *Parents Under Pressure* (PuP) Programme in family homes (Outreach)
- Championing family rights
- Advocacy and participation
- Improving family life, e.g. communication, organisational skills, family activities, living environment

BENEFICIARIES

The children and families who are supported by this project will be dealing with a variety of challenging circumstances such as poor mental health, substance use, poverty, health inequalities and social isolation. In 2019/20 the project aimed to support 30 families in the Children Affected by Parental Substance Use (CAPSU) service and 12 families in the Pregnancy service.

In 2019/20 we worked with a total of 37 families, made up of family members as follows:

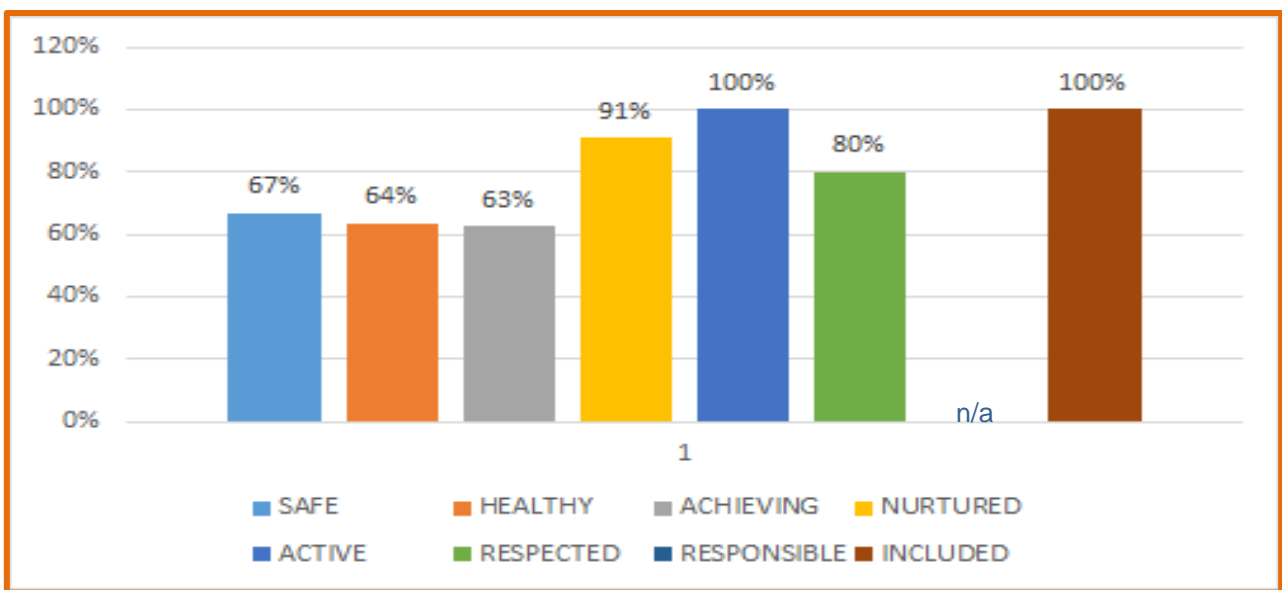
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| Families | 37 |
| Parents | 56 |
| Kinship carers | 2 |
| Children | 73 |
| TOTAL no. of family members | 131 |

OUTCOMES

Circle works alongside family members to identify their specific support needs and concerns, enabling them to work towards improving their health, wellbeing and resilience. We use the *Getting it right for every child* (GIRFEC) approach which supports children and young people to grow up feeling loved, safe and respected and to realise their full potential. At home, in school or in the wider community, every child and young person should be Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included. These SHANARRI indicators are what we use to measure the progress made by the families we support.

There were 14 families for whom service ended in the year, of which 12 have reported outcomes where positive change was made. This is further detailed below:

% of families who made positive change



“Our Family Outreach Worker gives me confidence and I don’t feel judged. I feel she always tries to understand where I am coming from and listens to me without telling me what to do. I honestly don’t think I would have my daughter in my care if I wasn’t working with her.”

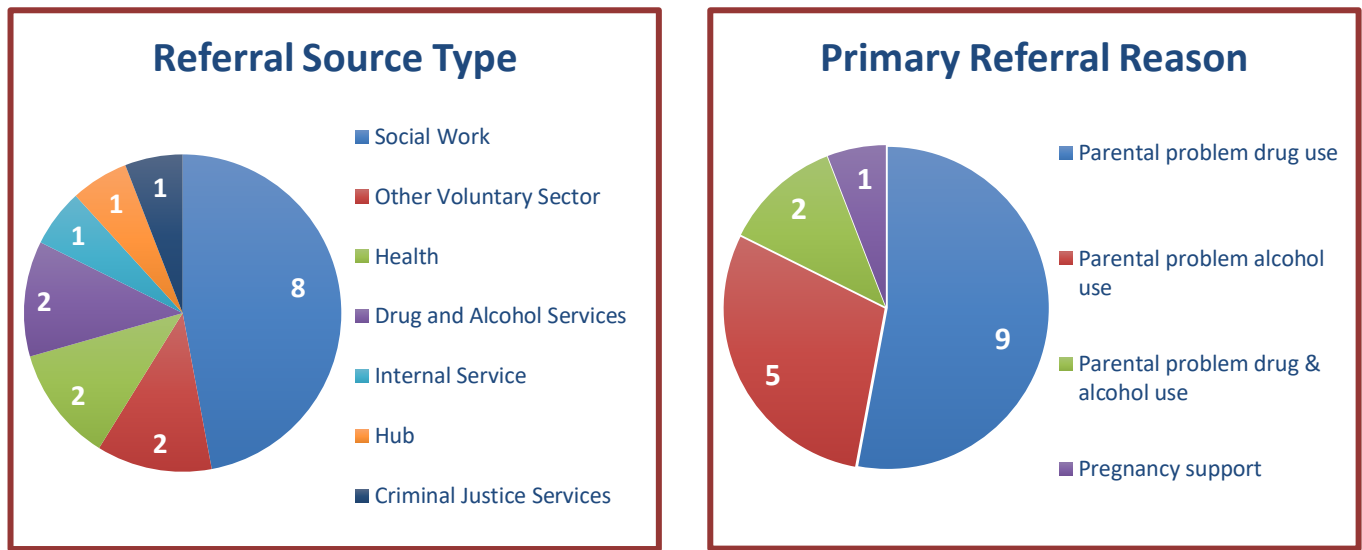
[Mother]

The positive outcomes experienced by families supported by this project include:

- Trusting and healthy relationships developed
- Increased engagement in community resources
- Reduced impact of parental addictions
- Improved coping strategies and resilience
- Children’s boundaries and routines improved
- Improved living conditions

REFERRAL TYPE AND REFERRAL REASON

Families were referred to Circle’s East Lothian Project in 2019/20 from a variety of sources and for a number of different reasons as outlined in the charts below:



The majority of referrals came from our colleagues in Children and Families Social Work (47%), with the remaining referrals made up from a variety of services including Drug and Alcohol (12%), Health (12%) and other voluntary sector organisations (12%).

The majority of reasons for referral of the 17 families were for parental drug use, followed closely by parental alcohol use.

Of the 15 families who were closed this year, the length of involvement ranged from 16 weeks to 155 weeks. The average length of involvement was 44 weeks.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



Circle’s work is rarely done in isolation. The children and families we work with often experience a wide variety of challenges that require a number of organisations and individuals to work together to help them find their own specific solutions. Circle’s East Lothian Project has in the last year worked with our colleagues in Children and Families Social Work, with NHS Substance Use Service and Mid & East Lothian Drugs (MELD), as well as a range of third sector partners.

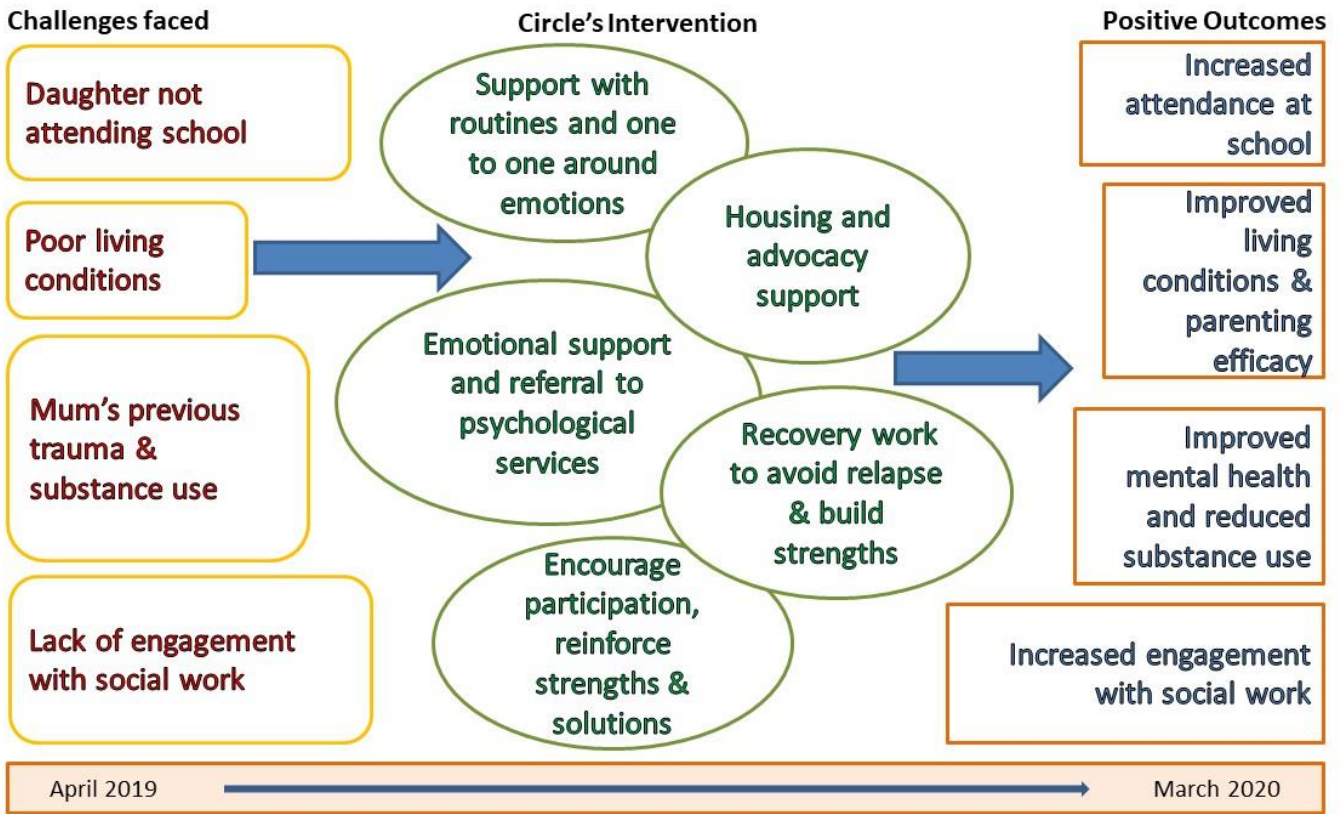
Furthermore, Circle and MELD have facilitated a ‘test of change’ to learn more about family rights and family inclusive practice by holding ‘conversations for change’. This partnership project supported by the Challenge Fund, is currently being undertaken with our partners (above) and with Mid and East Lothian Drug and Alcohol Partnership (MELDAP). To date we have found social isolation, loneliness, discrimination, stigma and inequalities to be primary challenges faced by family members. Solutions include understanding the individual’s definition of ‘family’, challenging discrimination and inequalities, realising rights, as well as improving connections within families and communities.

FUNDING

In 2019/20 the project received funding from The National Lottery Community Fund, Corra Foundation, the Cattanach Trust, Volant, East Lothian Council and private donors. These funders have contributed to three Family Outreach Workers, a Family Inclusion Coordinator and a Peer Support Worker (in partnership with MELD) post. All supported by a half-time Project Manager.

CASE STUDY

In 2019/20 we supported 37 families; here is an example of the work we did with one of them...



PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR YEAR AHEAD

Building on our co-location with children's services in Macmerry and recovery services in Musselburgh's Recovery Hub, we will continue to work collaboratively with a range of partners to ensure families receive a holistic, whole family response. We will also develop a training and participation pack to enhance family rights and family inclusive practice across the sectors. We look forward to reporting on findings of our test of change and our external service evaluation, to learn from living, lived and learned experience.

"Family Outreach Worker is strengths-based and focussed on what the family can do and empowers them to sustain changes."
(Social Worker)



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