

## EAST LOTHIAN PROJECT

### INTRODUCTION

Circle’s East Lothian Project strengthens families by offering practical, emotional, parenting, connecting and advocacy support. We identify families’ rights, abilities, 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, 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 and to work intensively in family homes, within their communities. We have adapted to the pandemic by offering socially distanced walks and doorstep/garden visits, by ensuring families have enough food, fuel and clothing, and by offering wellbeing packs, as well as bespoke ‘padlets’ to access resources.

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
- *Parents Under Pressure* (PuP) Programme in family homes (outreach)
- One-to-one and group work with children to increase resilience
- Championing family rights
- Advocacy and participation
- Improving family life, e.g. communication, relationships, organisational skills, family activities, living environment

### BENEFICIARIES

The children and families who are supported by this project are often dealing with a variety of challenging circumstances such as poverty, poor mental health, substance use, health inequalities and social isolation. In 2020/21 the project aimed to support 30 families in the Children Affected by Parental Substance Use (CAPSU) service and 12 families in the Pregnancy service.

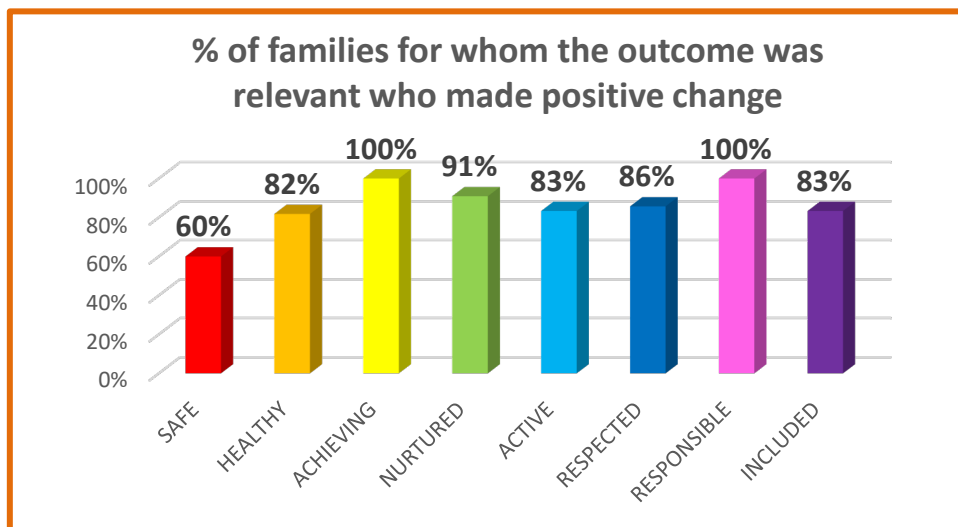
In 2020/21 we worked with a total of 42 families, made up of 132 family members as follows:

<b>Families</b>	<b>42</b>
Parents	<b>62</b>
Kinship carers	<b>6</b>
Children and young people	<b>64</b>
<b>TOTAL no. of family members</b>	<b>132</b>

## OUTCOMES

Circle works alongside family members to identify their specific support needs and concerns, enabling them to work towards improving their family life, health, wellbeing and resilience. We use the *Getting it right for every child* (GIRFEC) framework 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 17 families for whom service ended in the year, of which 11 had outcomes recorded. This is further detailed below:



*"It would be extremely difficult, hard and stressful without the support of the Circle worker. Circle made a huge difference providing all the equipment we need for our new-born baby, plus a lot of helpful information. My Circle worker motivated me to use less drugs and to stop using as soon as possible."*

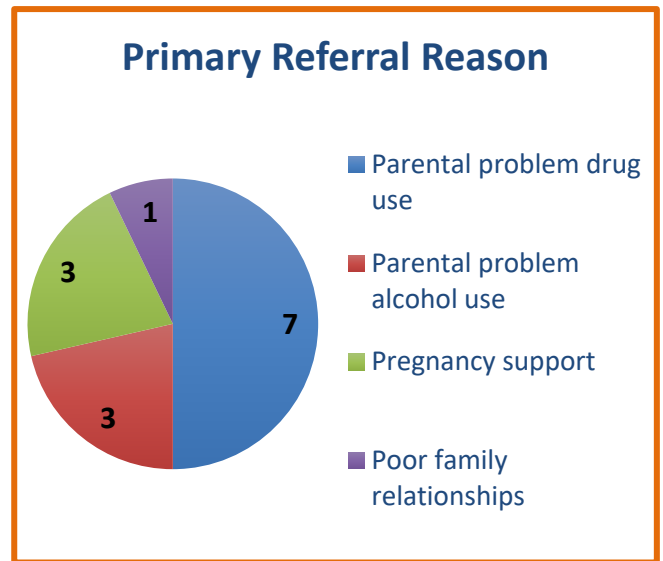
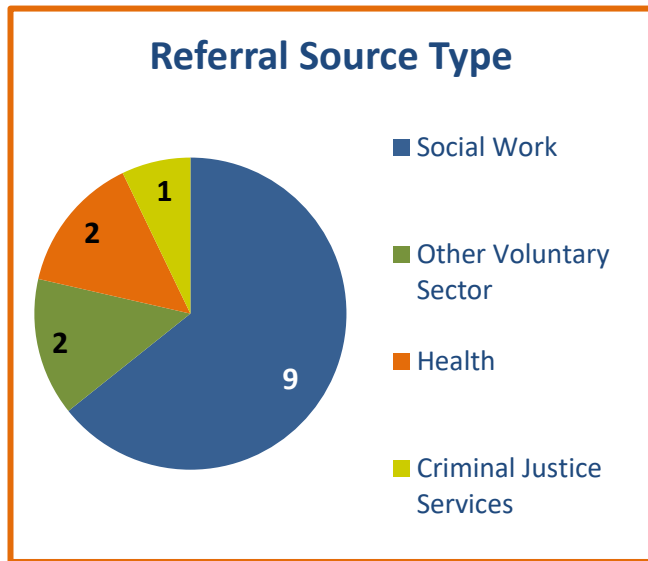
[Mother]

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

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

## REFERRAL TYPE AND REFERRAL REASON

Families were referred to Circle’s East Lothian Project in 2020/21 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 (65%), with the remaining referrals made up from a variety of services including other voluntary sector organisations (14%), Health (14%) and Criminal Justice Services (7%).

Half (50%) of the 14 families were referred for parental drug use, with 21% referred for parental problem alcohol use and 21% for pregnancy support, with the remainder (8%) being referred because of poor family relationships.

Of the 17 families for whom service ended in the year, the average length of involvement was 58 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 wide range of third sector partners.

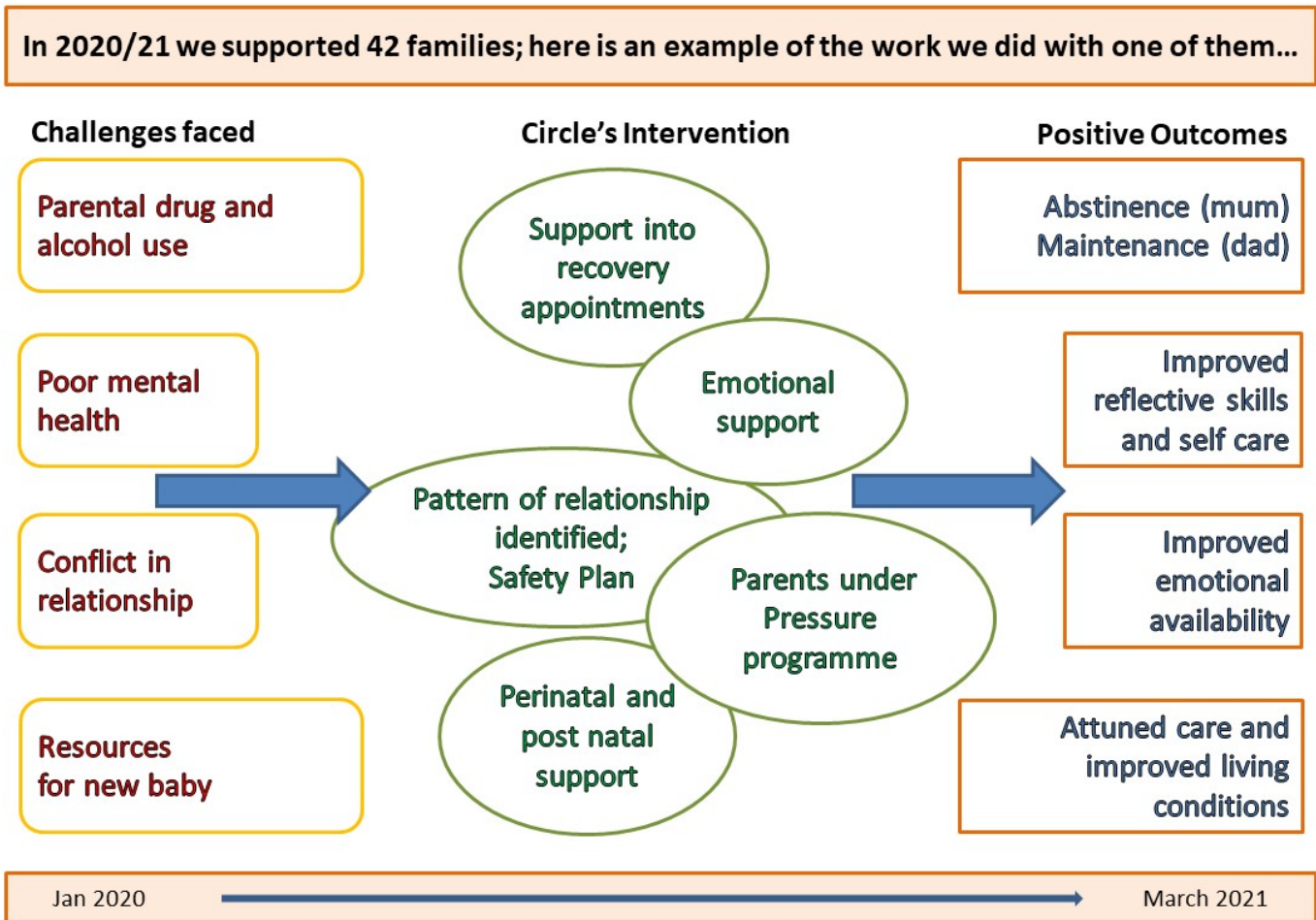
Furthermore, Circle and MELD (Mid and East Lothian Drugs) have facilitated a ‘test of change’ to learn more about family rights and family inclusive practice by holding ‘conversations for change’. The summary and full report for this can be found on our website: <https://circle.scot/families/family-rights-and-inclusion/>

## FUNDING

In 2020/21 the project received funding from The National Lottery Community Fund, Corra Foundation, the Cattanach Trust, 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), all supported by a half-time Project Manager. We have also recently recruited to a half-time Children’s Resilience Worker funded by East Lothian Council to develop one-to-one, group and peer support for children and young people affected by parental substance use.

## CASE STUDY



## PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR YEAR AHEAD

While 2021/21 has been an incredibly challenging year for families, the team have prioritised relationship-based practice and helped by meeting the fundamental needs of families. We have also gained a lot more knowledge of how family members view our service through our independent evaluation: [https://circle.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/210326-EastLothian\\_Evaluation\\_FINAL.pdf](https://circle.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/210326-EastLothian_Evaluation_FINAL.pdf).

In the year ahead we plan to develop the Children’s Resilience work by offering safe space for children to explore their strengths, skills and feelings, and identify their hopes for the future, as well as meet other children and young people. We also plan to develop Parents Under Pressure alongside our colleagues in the NHS Substance Use Service. Finally, we have contributed to the national ‘whole families and family inclusive practice’ framework and look forward to contributing to this locally. In the forthcoming year we will continue with our main aim to strengthen families and identify resources to sustain the project. We are grateful to our current funders, MELDAP and East Lothian Council, for the opportunity to continue to support East Lothian families.

*“Without Circle my mental health would be a lot worse than it is and I would be smoking more cannabis and drinking more. I would be more stressed out and less focussed on my own self care. My Family Outreach Worker listened to me, made me feel important too, helped things move forward with my children and to have more contact with them. I am also thinking more about my future.”*

[Mother]



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