

Evaluation of Action for Children Supported Housing, Supported Tenancy and Pre-Tenancy Support services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Supported Housing and Tenancy Support

The Supporting People programme is administered through the Area Based Grant, to bring together a number of housing funding streams. Local councils have full discretion to direct funds to meet local needs. Services are most often delivered by the voluntary sector and housing associations and are directed at people who need help to find somewhere safe and secure to live independently.

Action for Children Services

Action for Children had been commissioned by Supporting People in Rochdale to deliver three key services; Supported Housing, Pre-Tenancy Support and Teenage Pregnancy Floating Support to young women who were pregnant and to young parents who had been referred to the service. Each of the services made a unique offer to those women and men who met the referral criteria with needs that matched the eligible support tasks.

Evaluating the Outcome

The evaluation was undertaken to establish the difference that these services had made to the lives and outcomes for young women & their families, including factors that enabled or hindered effective communication and multi-agency working between Action for Children & other community-based services.

METHOD

Study Aim:

To evaluate the impact of Tenancy Support & Supported Housing Services on outcomes for young women and their families

Objectives

- To establish the degree of achievement of SLA outcomes and outputs.
- To identify key characteristics & needs of the young women who use the services.

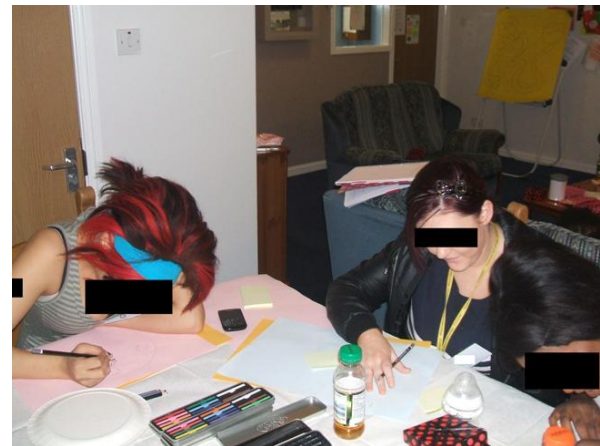
- To assess the relevance, accessibility, responsiveness and outcome impact of the services on young people using them.
- To establish the value for money offered by the service.

Data Collection and Analysis

Service Level Agreement Data

Average start and finish scores in the 10 domains of the Rochdale DIAL instrument were recorded for users of all three services and plotted to show the direction of change on a dependence-independence continuum. Simple descriptive statistics were applied to summated responses to "Snapshot Survey" questionnaires and to evaluation responses relating to the Home Alone course.

Perceptions of impact



An online survey with all Action for Children services staff and telephone interviews with 11 referring practitioners established views on what worked well and what worked less well, focusing on effective communication and multidisciplinary working. Individual and focus group activities with 10 young service users elicited their views of the services.

Framework analysis (Smith & Firth 2011) was applied to this varied qualitative data.



Cost-effectiveness analysis

Two cases were analysed using a model developed by the OPM (2007).

Ethical Issues

The research team followed guidance offered by the British Sociological Association 2002, Royal College of Nursing 2007, & INVOLVE. Formal ethics approval was secured from the University of Salford Research Governance and Ethics Committee.

Overview of Findings

The Young Women

The young women served by the supported housing & supported tenancy services had often endured family breakdown, domestic violence, sexual assault, homelessness, financial difficulties, and physical or mental ill health.

“I was really bad. I was kicked out of school in year 10. I was fighting. I actually used to fight with my mum, I mean she wouldn’t fight back but I would fight with my mum and I was getting kicked out all the time. When I was at my mum’s I would sneak out. As soon as my mum fell asleep I would sneak out the kitchen window, & I’d come home about six o’clock... drinking and parties and stuff like that.”

Services provided by Action for Children were vital to the safety and felt security of young women and their children in circumstances of extreme vulnerability.

Being able to move into supported housing without access to money for a deposit of rent bond was key in helping the young women to escape from situations where they and their children were vulnerable and at risk of harm.

“When I moved into my own place things just went downhill with me and her dad. Arguing and domestic violence. Domestic violence was involved...”

“I was suffering from depression and mental illness and things like that; I was really ill.”

Gabriel Court offered a unique service and safe environment that was not available elsewhere, providing immediate security, safety, time & space to support viable futures.

Young pregnant women often felt stigmatised but for some young women being pregnant presented an opportunity for a fresh start. The services optimised their life chances and helped them towards safer independent lives.

“But I don’t know how they do it, but they make it dead approachable, like you can tell them anything, absolutely anything. I’ve sat there with my old tenancy support worker, and I’ve told her things that I wouldn’t even tell my best mate.”

The unique contribution made by the services raising the dreams and ambitions of the young women while they were coping with the demands of adolescence and motherhood should not be underestimated.

“I changed for the better completely. I just changed overnight. Just the fact I was going to be a mum; just the fact that I was going to have to look after this baby that was reliant on me to look after it... Being pregnant brought out the real me. I just became so much happier. I wasn’t angry and stressed any more. It felt right...”

The young women aspired to having ‘normal’ family lives, being good-enough parents, living in decent houses and being in stable family relationships.

There was strong evidence that increased surveillance afforded by the supported housing services had resulted in timely and early intervention with regard to the safeguarding of children.

When children were accommodated, the services continued to provide sustained support to mothers working towards being reunited with their children.

The young women perceived the services to be both life-changing and life-saving.

Gabriel Court was a safe place: a refuge in which to escape the physical and emotional traumas that negated any thoughts of a positive future. It then provided the life-skills and motivation to be able to function in a tenancy and to care effectively for the baby. Resilience was built & aspirations developed for a better, stable personal and family life with the possibility of further education.

Action for Children Staff

Action for Children staff were universally positive about the outcomes of the services. Their working relationships with referring practitioners & agencies, and effectiveness of communications were highly regarded. They shared common aims with the referring agencies and with other organisations with which they worked in partnership with aim and purpose in alignment. The staff reported that the needs of young people were being met and that they were helped to progress into successful tenancies and family life.

“I am proud to work for the tenancy support service and I consider the work we do as vital to the people we support. I see around me dedication among the people I work with and value the support I receive from management in fulfilling my work load.”

Referring Practitioners

Referring practitioners valued the personal response that they experienced from Action for Children staff: particularly the manager.

The manager enthused them and instilled confidence in the rigour and sensitivity of the services on offer.

The young people who had used a service & returned to the care of the referring agency had experienced positive relationships with staff and had been enabled to make vital changes in their lives.

The alternative to the availability of the Action for Children services was mostly perceived to be dire – in terms of the future of the young people, the outcomes for their children, and the effectiveness of their own services.

“In a nutshell the consequences for young people would be grim. Young people are up against it. Without intervention there would be tenancy failure, debt and misery.”

Overwhelmingly, the services were thought to provide a catalyst for positive life changes.

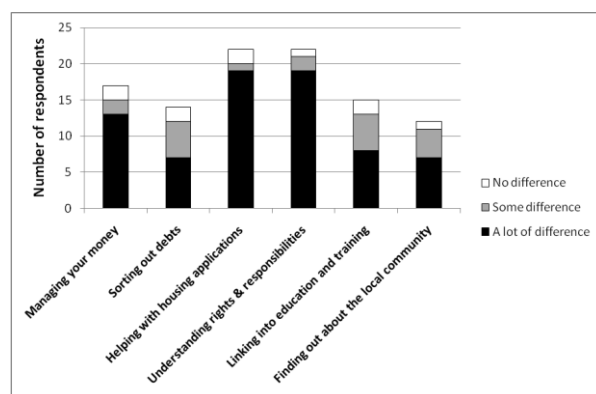
Outcomes Data

The services achieve consistent success in promoting independence in service users with evidence of enhanced capability.

Substance misuse and offending behaviour are uncommon and when present slow the pace of achievement, but they do not prevent success completely.

Snapshot surveys & end of course evaluation indicate the positive regard that service users have for the Action for Children staff.

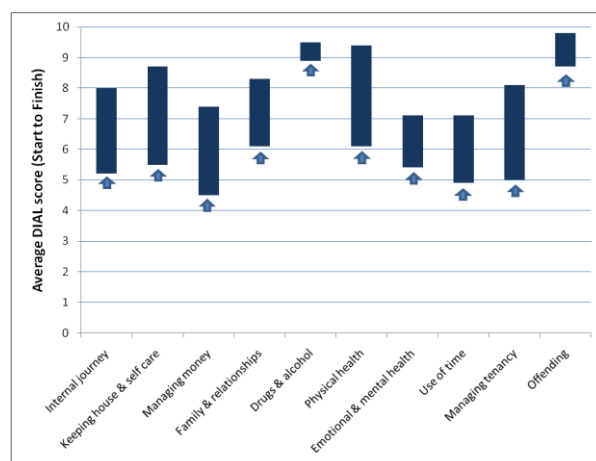
The difference made by the pre-tenancy support service in specific areas



In particular, their efforts and persistence and attitudes are commended. This results in high levels of engagement.

Service users value the skills acquired and feel more confident to take on their own tenancy.

Improvements in average Rochdale DIAL scores for the Floating Support service



Cost effectiveness

The first case related to a young woman who had fled domestic violence, been homeless and rehoused, only to suffer further domestic violence, failing to cope with the tenancy and neglecting her baby. Action for Children intervention was estimated to have cost only 65% of the cost of alternative services.

In the second case, an 18 years old had moved out of the family home when pregnant, completely unaware of how to manage a tenancy, and feeling low in mood and isolated from her friends. Action for Children services were estimated to have cost only 24% of the cost of alternative services (or 18% in another scenario).

Conclusion

The Action for Children services impacted positively and in a lasting manner on the lives of those who accessed any of the services. They were valued by external partners and referring agencies, and they were cost-effective when compared to valid alternative scenarios.

Feelings before the service

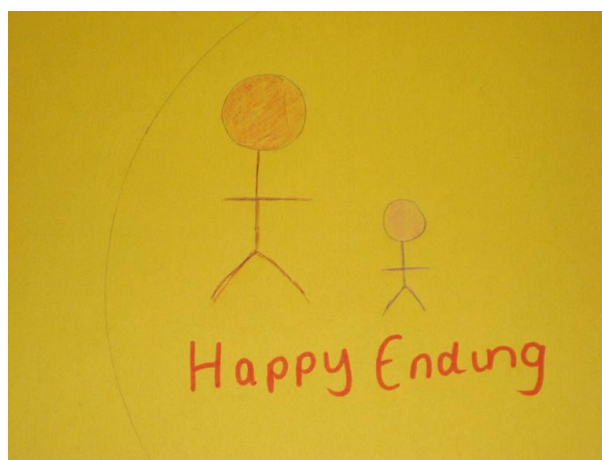


Feelings after the service



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The **CYP@salford** research group includes child health nurses, social workers, midwives, public health nurses & other health and social care professionals whose focus is on children & families.

Livesley J, Long T, Fallon D, Myers S, Murray de Lopez J, Chadwick R, Cappleman J. *Evaluation of Action for Children Supported Housing, Supported Tenancy, and Teenage Pregnancy Floating Support Services*. (2011) University of Salford.

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