

On registering participants were asked to highlight the challenges they face around FAMILY
These challenges were then used to form the discussion at the World Cafe.

Challenges - Voice/ Agency

Pre Event

- Lack of advocacy for parents, Parents being undermined

Unrealistic expectations for parents
- Ensuring everyone in the family is truly able to understand and influence decisions about their family

I project manage the Families Learning together project and we are keen for family voice and involvement in each local authority
- Hearing about lived experiences

Event Discussion

- Looking at the context of families as 'experts' of themselves

Capturing the voice of the child

Hearing the wee bits and bobs that make a big difference

We need more safe spaces to hear the voice of families - very little done in Scotland

Paid leave for kinship carers
- Including children- YP voice in decision making

Training parents in PEEP programme - parents as the experts

Impact of developmental language disorder on ability to communicate needs

Ensuring how we involve, work with and engage families is essential. Systems are not set up to ensure best practice in this area.

Relationship based practice. Trust - voice comes easier
- No voice for parents to raise social policy

Its all about building trusting relationships - work with not for attitude

Knowing family situation before crisis

Actively promote the role of dads through staff training

Create spaces to check families understand decision making processes
- Each council to develop formal dad promotion groups

Encouraging young people to talk when they dont trust professionals

Complex language used by professionals not inclusive practice

Network appropriately sharing information

Local research in child and parent participation and engagement reviews
- Hearing views of children and parents

We need to have better knowledge to peoples capacity to participate - neurodiversity - what people understand

Young persons voice being truly listened to and acted upon

Respecting carers and parents knowledge of children within care plans

How do we bring in the voice of birth parents?

Challenges - Lack of Early Support

Pre Event

- The team is set up as a whole family support service to prevent children being received into care. Some Challenges are around increasing complexity of families being referred in and all points where issues are entrenched and/or risks at home are unmanageable. Challenges of multiple factors impacting on families

Young people with significant mental health issues not getting the correct support or early intervention to support them to remain in the care of their parents
- Finding suitable space to thrive

Keeping families together and getting them the right support

Event Discussion

- Responding to crisis. More early planning and engagement is essential

Funding and expansive criteria for services - no wrong door

EEL Funding needs to be prioritised and protected

Funding - Early support is crucial even before baby is born

Funding for early years - invest in futures
- Improved maternity and paternity leave

Increase workforce and funding

Early support is a creative space and can give lots of flexible responses

What difference would it make if early help services were statutory?

What difference would it make if the promise was statutory?
- Put it on the same footing as statutory services in culture and funding/ planning

Support for birth parents - break the cycle

Lack of understanding of the importance of early support/ intervention in Early years

Work more collaboratively with services that support areas throughout the region. Use local resources at the touch points where families need support. It will help have the most impact. The need for early intervention will decrease over time

Legislation making early intervention a duty
- Acknowledging early support and crisis supports are both vital

Threshold changes

Funding prioritising families

Perhaps its about culture too. So need to change from the top

Make it a right/ legal requirement

Challenges - Workforce

Pre Event

- Once children are accommodated the councils just accept that that's the final step. Very rarely have rehab plans in place to go home.

The competing demand on families time.
- for professionals to understand that it's the whole family who need support.

Safe guarding
- Children's Hearing's removing children from their family when this is not Social Work recommendations.

Multi Agency Working
- One of the most pressing challenges families that we support face is the lack of early intervention support for Black families. Too often, Black and ethnically diverse families only receive attention when a crisis has already escalated, rather than being offered the preventative and supportive services that could help maintain family stability. There is a significant gap in culturally competent early intervention services, which means that Black families are not given the same opportunities to access support before child protection measures are considered. This not only leads to unnecessary family separations but also places additional strain on children, parents, and social workers alike.

Another key challenge is the bias in decision-making that disproportionately affects Black families. Social workers, like all professionals, operate within a system that has historically been shaped by racial stereotypes and institutional bias. Studies and our own research indicate that Black parents are more likely to be judged as high risk compared to their white counterparts, even in situations where circumstances are similar. This results in Black families being subjected to harsher scrutiny, higher levels of surveillance, and more intrusive interventions, often leading to child removal rather than efforts to strengthen and support families. The lack of anti-racist training and cultural competence among many professionals means that assumptions, rather than nuanced understanding, drive social work decisions.

Event Discussion

- Recognise the need for highly skilled staff

Power dynamics in social work

Inclusion and access from different backgrounds

Challenges - lack of resources/ funding, waiting lists

When I meet new families I let them know I work with the whole family
- Workforce needs to be skilled and valued

Permanent contracts that allow for retention of knowledge and staff development

Having a wellbeing champion in the workplace that you can access often and easily

Fathers Network Scotland provide workforce training

Quality Training and evidence based reflective supervision needs to be provided
- Creating peer support networks / share skills and provide space for reflective practice

Compassion and empathy for workforce from employers and public perception

Create an open safe, space for people to talk, engage and be listened to

Develop staff knowledge of statutory rights of dads

Anti racism training
- Investment in experienced workers to support newly qualified staff / time

Language barriers. Finding staff and volunteers that are multi lingual

Staff wellbeing

GIRFEC Approach, multi agency child planning process

Confidence and competence, development of the workforce
- Competence in assessing risk in a proportionate way that recognises and builds on strengths can be lacking - excessive risk oversight

Training, networking, learning

regular my plan meeting held

Lack of workforce diversity

Challenges - Engagement

Pre Event

- Working with mums who have severe mental health. Diagnosis and cannot look/ bond to their babies due to their diagnosis

Father- inclusion within statutory services
- Definition of family, engagement of families, workload pressures, impact of DV and substance use on families

Engaging families who are reluctant to accept support
- Engagement as family are suspicious

Event Discussion

- You said, we did

Who Cares? Scotland

Multi agency planning meetings, inclusive

Listen

Families feeling stigmatised is a barrier to engaging in consultations
- Give families the same/ similar training we have as professionals

Openess, honesty, transparency

UNCRC, Voice of the child, include children!

Solution - social media (more informal for families)

Do with, to encourage participation and motivate change
- Empower dads through formal processes

No recourse to public funds/ who will engage with them?

Having key services involved at planning table, wider relevant opportunities to increase engagement

Use third sector as a bridge to engage families

Advocate service available
- Awareness of power - both organisational and personal/ social graces

Role, Power - do families trust the support?

Acceptance, strength based relational practice

Stay curious - go and meet the whole family (professionals tend to know from the reports)

HV service reduced - staff resource issues?

Challenges - Resourcing

Pre Event

- resources for our services that allow for long term planning and staff security so systems can be changed.

Finding suitable space to thrive
- Lack of resources

Trauma informed spaces for work with families.
- The lack of long term funding to allow relationships to develop with families over time

Pressure on kinship carers. When school becomes challenging for the young person e.g reduced time in school, repeated exclusions there in an increased risk of the placement breaking down.
- Offering supports for those families in crisis with no resources

Young people with significant mental health issues not getting the correct support or early intervention to support them to remain in the care of their parents.
- Father-Inclusion within statutory services

The competing demand on families time.
- Funding!!! Most marginalised families will not have access to a service that advocate for the inconsistencies that they experience. Prevention services reduced, whilst highlighting the increased need for this. Baffling!

We are working with Professionals, young people and families on the Positive Justice and Rights collaboration in partnership with East Lothian and Midlothian, gathering the voice of families to create a creating system change we are fortunate in having a group of families we are working with. The real challenge we face is time to work with families due to the short term nature of funding. This is echoed by the families they have highlighted that services come and go and they feel let down.

Event Discussion

- Services withdrawn due to lack of funding - who do the community turn to now?

EEL requires funding in order to get it right

Find/ secure more budget for children are (early years centres/ nurseries etc)

Recognition of good work occurring by Scot Gov

Investment in people and services
- Financial investment for early intervention

Encouraging staff to be creative

Flexibility of budgets, secure funding

Issue of ever changing list of resources - funds - access

opportunities for staff development and secure contracts
- Unrealistic timescales to achieve transformational changes - funding finishes before full impact can be realised

Need more flexibility for budgets to be accessed and quicker

More funding, more advertising for CAB as we can assist with this

Make benefits application forms easier to navigate, more face to face help for people applying, less online - as not as helpful

System not giving informal kinship carers fair access to resources, housing, finance - in comparison to foster care
- Making creative ideas a reality in this crisis driven, short staffed time

Challenges - Other Challenges- what else should we consider?

Pre Event

- Increasingly experiencing issues related to unintended consequences of care - in that the socioeconomic status change for children moving from care settings (foster/ residential) where they experience middle class life style (access to clubs, pocket money and vans go back to their families who are living in poverty are experiencing additional barriers in settling back into family life.

There are many challenges but one less considered is the impact of public debt on families income
- Trauma informed spaces for working with families

Event Discussion

- Relationship Scotland offer a 'Parenting Apart' programme for mums and dads to work out how to best parent together after seperation