Child Poverty

Optimising uptake of money advice and income among families with children 0-5 years

Child poverty has a negative influence on health, education, social and physical development and can seriously harm a child’s future life chances and opportunities. The percentage of children 0-19 years living in poverty within South Lanarkshire is slightly below the Scottish average at 22%. However, some areas i.e. Blantyre is 29%, 6% above the national average. Evidence suggests that a large number of families entitled to benefits do not receive them. The universal health visiting (HV) pathway proposes routine enquiry for money worries as a professional standard at all key child health surveillance (CHS) contacts starting at 0-6 weeks.

**Project aim**

Our theory is that a financial inclusion pathway incorporating routine enquiry for money worries will produce effective referrals between universal health visiting services, parents/carer’s and money advice support services improving access to quality advice and support'.

By December 2017, increase telephone advice line referrals by 5% in the Blantyre HV team, following routine enquiry at 0-6 weeks (baseline Nov 2016 0%)

**Methodology**

- Starting small with one HV team in Blantyre (predominately children in SIMD quintiles 1 and 2) and SLC Money Matters Advice Service (MMAS) to develop and test the change package
- Health visitor champion identified within Blantyre Team
- Process mapping to identify the key process of implementing routine enquiry in practice and referral route to the MMAS visualizing where we wanted to be.
- Locality HV team and managers briefing session on revised SIMD demography and child poverty data
- Utilized the model for improvement and iterative testing with PDSA cycles

**Change package**

- Routine enquiry at universal pathway contacts 0-6 weeks and 27 months.
- Child poverty information ‘prompt’ to facilitate discussion with families around financial wellbeing and income maximisation. (Figure1)
- Financial Inclusion pathway developed and was the standardised process tested
- Financial inclusion ‘learning set’ for staff

**Outcomes and Results**

Within the team we are able to demonstrate a sustained 100% reliability of routine enquiry by 6 weeks.

**Chart 1**

- Chart relates to our aim and the baseline for the team was 0% at 6 weeks. Testing started in November 2016 with 2 HV staff moving to full team implementation in May 2017. We are beginning to see an improvement from May 2017 with a special cause in July – peak holiday time.

**Chart 2**

- Telephone Advice Line received 113 referrals from Blantyre HV team from April 2017 to December 2017. Following the special cause in May when we extended the test to the full team we are seeing an improving trend since July 2017. Of these referrals 63% have engaged with the service.

**Chart 3**

- contains a breakdown of money advice and support provided to families in response to HV referral. The top three are housing benefit, working tax credit and Scottish welfare fund

**Chart 4**

- illustrates the weekly/annual financial gain for a sample of 20 families

**Chart 5**

- illustrates the weekly/annual financial gain for a sample of 20 families

**Key learning**

- Introduction of Routine Enquiry as a service standard proved to be a reliable process in supporting families to access money advice services. This will now be applied at the 13 month and 4 year review
- HV staff identified that the first visit to a new family was not the optimum time to discuss the sensitive issue of money worries and implemented RE in the period 0-6 weeks post delivery
- There was improved recording of future action by staff within the national CHS documentation
- We captured an increased level of selective enquiry as a result of increased awareness and reliable pathway process for referral
- Changes to the money advice telephone service was made to include locality based money advice offices as the service responded to the complexity of referrals by HV staff
- An impact prediction analysis on money advice services will be made as we scale up this work across South Lanarkshire HV Teams

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