



PRESS RELEASE

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The once deeply entrenched boundaries that separated the health, social work and education professions are gradually being broken down as a result of efforts to provide children and their families with access to “seamless services”.

Research by Children in Scotland, supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, shows that giving children and families access to a single team of professionals from different disciplines can improve their experience of using support services. The team, who have a range of expertise, provide a ‘one-stop-shop’ for the families.

Many vulnerable families need help from more than one agency and have experienced frustration in having to repeat the same story to different professionals who do not share information.

The research project followed 26 families with children, living in Scotland, over three years. Just over two thirds reported benefits in being able to contact one team member, who would consult the team and respond to their need. The families reported faster access to support, improvements in their children’s behaviour and development, increased confidence in the service and better community relationships. The staff reported reduced levels of stress among the families they were working with.

Problems only occurred where a family needed help that could not be provided from within the team. This tended to occur when families had multiple difficulties, and in particular, difficulties with housing, or when an adult in the family was already accessing a particular service and where their child required service from elsewhere.

All the families involved in the research project had access to a team either through an integrated community school, which are based on the principle that children often need access to a range of different services to succeed in education, or a family centre.

The family centres tended to help families, particularly those with young children and their parents but also older siblings and extended family members. The team at the integrated community schools began when concerns emerged about a child’s behaviour and welfare. The parents then became involved through their children.

Jennifer Turpie, director of policy and research at Children in Scotland, said: “From this research we have learned of some of the benefits of professionals working together for children and families. What is clear, however, is a need for further research into what models will work for families with multiple difficulties and how services can be designed in ways that meet the needs of all children”.

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Notes for editors

- The full report *Seamless services: smoother lives. Assessing the impact of local preventive services on children and their families*, is now available from Children in Scotland (price £10 for Children in Scotland members and £14 for non-members. www.childreninscotland.org.uk)
- Children in Scotland is the national agency for voluntary, statutory and professional organisations and individuals working with children and their families in Scotland. It exists to identify and promote the interests of children and their families and to ensure that relevant policies, services and provisions are of the best possible quality and able to meet the needs of a diverse society.