

Identifying and supporting vulnerable children and young people

Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership

An example of how Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership responded to the needs of potentially vulnerable young people.

"These were the children and young people I was most concerned about - their mental health, safety and family wellbeing. I wanted to ensure we responded across sectors to protect families."

Graeme Simpson, Chief Social Work Officer,
Aberdeen City Community Planning Partnership



Challenge

Support within communities were closed during the COVID-19 lockdown. Due to the speed of decision-making, this happened with an abruptness that left many families, children and young people vulnerable.

Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) had a specific concern that due to school closures, children, young people and families that may have challenges or needs that required support, would be left invisible and not supported during lockdown.

The families deemed particularly at risk were those who were not already supported by social services or with statutory sector input. These were families with children or young people who were seen in an educational setting or by the community as having increased vulnerabilities or needs, but who did not fulfil referral criteria for social work input.



What was done differently?

Aberdeen City HSCP invited the ihub's strategic planning team to support thinking, design and delivery of support as well as identification of the vulnerable children, young people and families.

Aberdeen City HSCP developed work across sectors, addressing barriers, and used existing local developments to deliver support within their local system.

Key to this work was building on trust-based relationships across sectors to drive change in the provision of support and build networks at a local level. This meant a more joined up and collaborative offer of support to reduce the vulnerability of children and families.

Social workers closely aligned with education and life long learning colleagues to identify families who had increased vulnerability. Life long learning team members were then able to develop relationships with these families, and offer remote support on a regular basis.

Third sector colleagues were involved in managing a self-help telephone line which allowed vulnerable families, young people and individuals to seek support during lockdown.

An example of how Health and Social Care Partnerships are responding to planning and commissioning challenges in the context of COVID-19



Key insights:

Graeme Simpson, Chief Social Work Officer,
Aberdeen City Community Planning Partnership

“It was clear that the experience of lockdown was not going to be felt equally across families or within communities. We had some excellent pillars in place that allowed us to mobilise across sectors and to focus on vulnerable children, young people and families.

The child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) led resilience hubs across Aberdeen City and NHS Grampian, and the use of Google Classrooms provided teachers with sight of as well as daily contact with children and young people, enabled our focus to be on those families where additional support at this time of crisis would be helpful.

Being able to gather people across agencies, to discuss the how to approach, and to have support from the ihub meant things could move faster.”

Good Practice Framework for Strategic Planning

The strategic planning support team in the ihub have developed a [Good Practice Framework for Strategic Planning](#) to enable practical and constructive local conversations on strategic planning.



This insight demonstrates the following good practice by:

- maintaining a clear focus on prevention
- displays collaborative leadership and respectful engagement
- identifying the impacts of potential change on service volumes, physical and human resources, and
- creating platforms for a new type of engagement and co-production with people who use services.

Experience of change from Aberdeen HSCP

“By being involved in the existing Children and Young People Improvement Collaborative meant that many of the key stakeholders and those that could commit resource to supporting vulnerable children and young people, and their families, were already identified. This enabled existing relationships to be used.

There was speed, efficiency and openness about the changes brought into Aberdeen City. This helped all participants feel they had equal input and things to offer.”

Reflections

- Leadership across sectors is key, and ensuring that there is a shared focus is vital.
- Although this example is about a specific COVID-19 response during lockdown, the key building block of using trusting relationships to break down barriers and support vulnerable families is relevant anytime.
- Trusting relationships across sectors is necessary to drive change.

If you are interested in exploring something similar in your area or to find out more, please get in touch.

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