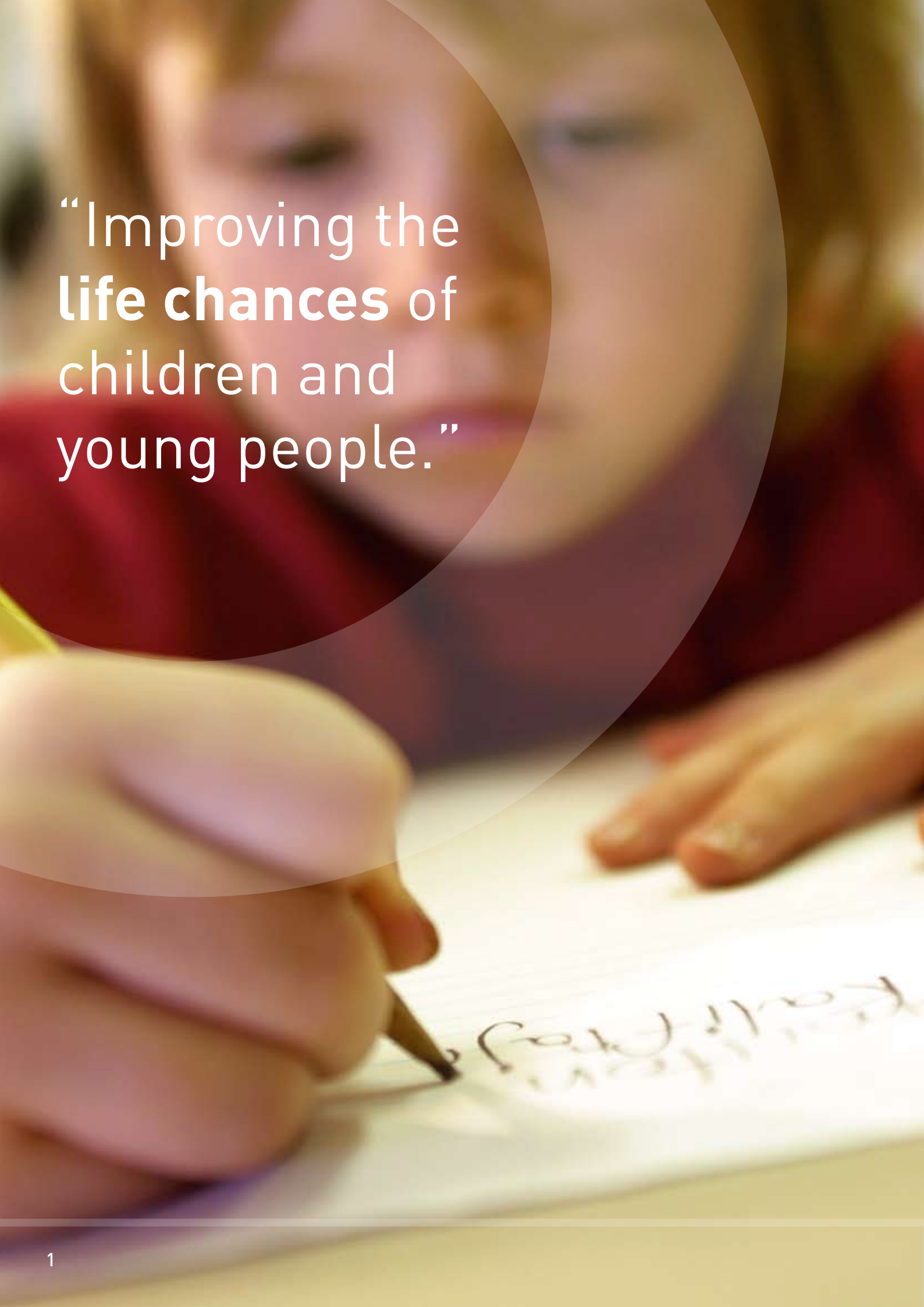




Integrated
Services
for Children and Young People

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First Interim Evaluation



“Improving the
life chances of
children and
young people.”

Health Action Zone

The Health Action Zone (HAZ) was set up in 1999 in recognition of the persistent inequalities in health in North and West Belfast and the difficulties faced by local communities. HAZ works in partnership with the community, voluntary and statutory sector and takes a broad social, economic, physical and cultural view of health and well-being, one which focuses on the determinants of health.

Integrated Services for Children and Young People Programme – First Interim Evaluation

Quaesitum, Independent Evaluation and Research were commissioned in August 2007 by Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) as the Integrated Services HAZ lead partner to carry out an independent evaluation of the Integrated Services for Children and Young People Programme delivered by BELB on behalf of HAZ. Terms of Reference were agreed for the evaluation and this document is the First Interim Evaluation Report reflective of activities up to 30 April 2008.

Context

The Health Action Zone (HAZ) has been striving to improve the life chances of children and young people and to identify the best method of intervention in relation to children and young people in greatest need since its inception in 1999. HAZ identified an opportunity to move forward its work associated with designing integrated services for children and young people through a funding application to the Integrated Development Fund (IDF).

The application for a total of 5 million pounds was submitted in January 2004 and an economic appraisal was conducted in 2005. The application was successful and funding was secured initially for the period April 2007 to March 2010.

In April 2007 the funding was released to the BELB as the accountable HAZ partner for the IDF. It has been agreed that funding can be carried forward each year up to March 2010 and transferred across the four IDF thematic pillars (Early Years, Parent Support, Health & Well-being and Learner Support). A request has been submitted to allow spending to continue beyond 2010.

The Programme sits very well within its policy and research context. It targets the disadvantaged and vulnerable and aims to provide a better quality of life for children and young people through collaborative and joined-up service planning and delivery. It encourages the development of services in the community setting, and strives to eliminate poverty and social exclusion. It builds on the work of the Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships and the Greater Shankill and West Belfast Task Forces.

The work also provides the opportunity to enhance the achievements of the Communities in Schools and One Stop Shop initiatives and to work alongside research based programmes such as Achieving Belfast.

Programme Level

In order to address the aims and objectives set out in the funding application a very complex model of working has, of necessity, been adopted. The lead partners are HAZ, BELB; the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), the Greater Shankill Partnership and the West Belfast Partnership Board. Representatives have given very generously of their time and have demonstrated a commitment to collaborative working. They all attribute much of the success to date to the high quality support they have received from the HAZ team in developing the model and maintaining a focus on the principles under which funding was secured.

Management structures and systems have been put in place to nurture a commitment to successful collaborative service planning and delivery for children and young people. A Project Board has been established to maintain a focus on the long term vision for Integrated Services. Membership comprises key stakeholders across Health and Social Care, Education and local Community and Voluntary organisations. The Project Board meets monthly to collectively address priorities. Written minutes are circulated and points for action agreed.

An In-house Reference Group was established in January 2006 with membership nominated by the Project Board. Members were given a remit to provide 'expert' input into the project planning and implementation process.

This has involved attendance at meetings and the provision of feedback in relation to Expressions of Interest and Proposals. Members have had an important role to play in managing interface issues, avoiding duplication with existing services and ensuring that new methods of service delivery are incorporated into 'core duties'.

Following a long and protracted recruitment process a Programme Leader was appointed in November 2007 and took up position on 1st May 2008. The Programme Leader has focused on familiarising herself with the inputs and processes in place to support project delivery and development.

Local Implementation

In order to ensure a focus at local level, two Local Implementation Action Groups (LIAGs) have been established in Greater Shankill and West Belfast with the lead for each LIAG coming from the respective Partnership Boards. Each LIAG was required to demonstrate that they have engaged with the entire locality and linked with existing relevant developments such as Sure Start and Neighbourhood Renewal. The Greater Shankill LIAG is significantly smaller geographically than the West Belfast LIAG. The structures and systems in place to manage the process are therefore more complex in West Belfast. Each LIAG has a budget of 2 million pounds with 80% set within the IDF components and 20% for new and different services consistent with the underlying principles of the Programme i.e. integration etc. The remaining one million pounds will benefit both LIAG areas.

Evaluation

To take the evaluation forward, an Evaluation Reference Group was established representative of HAZ, BELB, CCMS, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT), Greater Shankill LIAG, West Belfast LIAG, Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), Queen's University and Quaesitum Independent Research and Evaluation (in some organisations the representative has not yet been named). The main purpose of the Reference Group is to guide the evaluation process.

Inputs and Processes

The evaluation has thus far focused on inputs and processes. The next stage will involve providing support to individual projects and programmes in relation to the establishment of appropriate internal monitoring and evaluation systems to support the management and delivery of the work. The Quaesitum Evaluation Team will work very closely with the Programme Leader to ensure accountability to the Application for Funding.

Desk Research

To date, desk research has included reference to relevant policy and research, the Application for Funding, minutes of meetings, Expressions of Interest and Proposals. An open invitation was given to the Quaesitum Evaluation Team to attend Project Board meetings.

Stakeholder views

The views of stakeholders were sought using a variety of data collection methods: ongoing verbal contact with the Programme Leader, face to face semi-structured interviews with the HAZ Team and individual members of the Project Board, schedules by email to the Local Implementation Action Groups (LIAGs) and the In-house Reference Group and a focus group with the West Belfast LIAG. A focus group was arranged with the Greater Shankill LIAG but only two members attended.

The Integrated Services Model

The Integrated Services model embraces communities whilst simultaneously creating a better understanding of statutory services and providing an opportunity for a focus on common outcomes. Local need has been assessed and there is a common focus on areas of greatest need across both LIAGs. Following Needs Assessment, Expressions of Interest were submitted to the Project Board for consideration. These were subsequently converted to Proposals. The refinement of Proposals is an ongoing process under the close guidance and direction of the Project Board and to date, two Draft Proposals have been produced by the Greater Shankill LIAG and one by the West Belfast LIAG. In addition, work is ongoing on two joint proposals in respect of Looked After Children and Alternative Education.

The drafting of these Proposals has been a very labour intensive process and both Groups are to be highly commended for their commitment and dedication. They respectively acknowledge the excellent support they have received from the HAZ Team.

Recognising Success

Stakeholders agree that the signs of success will be a common approach to service provision, evidence of influencing the way services are planned and delivered and a seamless service. Similarly, there is agreement in relation to some of the potential barriers to success: the length of time the work has taken to reach implementation stage, a lack of resources due to the ambitious nature of proposals, the constraints of departmental structures, failure to link sufficiently with existing services, a lack of commitment from statutory services and a concern that some services are not appropriate for Integration.

Communication

Communication has been acknowledged by the Project Board to be crucial to the ongoing success of the work. This is evidenced by the work of the HAZ Communications Manager in drafting a Communications Strategy and identifying an appropriate logo for the promotion of the work. In relation to the promotion of the work, a number of presentations have been given and there is evidence of sharing information and knowledge with other relevant initiatives such as the Full

Service Community Network and the Eastern Area Children and Young Peoples' Committee. There have also been a number of briefings at departmental level.

Conclusions

The findings of this first interim evaluation conclude that the work is informed by strategic direction and by relevant initiatives such as Communities in Schools and the One Stop Shop. Local need has been accurately assessed. The message is clear – there is a need to deliver services to children and young people differently. There is successful engagement at all levels across all sectors and there is a creative talent around the table at different levels. Effective structures are in place to support development. As a result of the space created by the Programme to discuss and develop a corporate sense of local need, services are being planned in a new and innovative way.

The findings suggest that the work embraces the principles of integration, achievability, and sustainability. There is also evidence that it is innovative and preventative. However, whilst the signs of adherence to these principles are undoubtedly present, they will be tested in implementation. Although the message is unambiguously clear that there is a need to deliver services differently the capacity to commit resources, in the longer term, is still to be tested.

Future Consideration

A number of areas have been highlighted for consideration. These include:

- A focus on achieving a common understanding of integrated services, a review of roles and responsibilities and a refocus on membership of the various groups in place to support the management and delivery of the work.
- Work must also continue on developing appropriate communication systems and promotion of the work as it enters the implementation stage.
- Proposals must be directly related to the Application for Funding to ensure accountability to the IDF and this will necessitate a refocus on the goals of the overall initiative.
- Consideration might be given to breaking up aspects of each Proposal into manageable proportions in order to progress to contract and implementation.
- Given the short term nature of funding, recruitment and selection will require dynamic thinking in terms of identifying potential sources of staff.

The next stage will require a very specific focus on developing appropriate internal monitoring and evaluation systems to support Project development.

Further information on the Integrated Services for Children and Young People Programme is available from Brenda Martin, Programme Leader, Belfast Education and Library Board, 40 Academy Street, Belfast BT1 2NQ.

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The Integrated Services for Children and Young People Programme First Interim Evaluation was carried out on behalf of BELB by Quaesitum Independent Research and Evaluation.

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