

**The First Regional Hidden Cost On Offender Families Conference
Barnardo's Essex CAPI Service working in partnership with the
Essex Fire Service and the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Essex**

Tuesday 26th September 2017.
Essex Fire Headquarters, Kelvedon Park, London Road, Rivenhall, Witham CM8 3HB

Conference Aims & Objectives

Barnardo's Essex CAPI service understands the unique vulnerabilities and challenges faced by children and their families affected by parental imprisonment and provide specialist support and services across Essex. Over **216 children, young people and their families** were referred to the service and offered support last year.

The aim of the Barnardo's Essex CAPI conference was to raise professionals understanding and awareness of this vulnerable group and provide an opportunity for professionals to hear directly from parents and children about their situation and how support has helped them overcome challenges to improve their outcomes. This conference also gave the opportunity to showcase successful multi-agency and collaborative working that has been established across Essex which ultimately is improving the lives of children, young people and their families.

Successful multi-agency and collaborative working was evident from the outset as the Barnardo's Essex CAPI Service would not have been able to hold such a conference alone without the valuable support and assistance of the Essex Fire Service, the Police Crime Commissioning Team and the Essex CAPI Steering Group Members over many months.

Conference Opening

A full agenda was set for the day with Chief Fire Officer Adam Eckley kindly opening the conference who put the modern fire service into context for attendees with key focus on what, why and where are the risks in our community and what is the Essex Fire Service going to do about. He also outlined the key elements which are responding to emergency situations, protection and prevention with the key message of what are we going to do about it? The conference chair, Jonathan Whalley, Barnardo's Director Of Children's Services is very proud of the work Barnardo's is doing to highlight the hidden issue of the effects of parental imprisonment which should be a visible issue and reiterated Adam Eckley's comment of the importance of everyone at the conference learning something and to do something about it. Jonathan suggested that we cannot stand alone to tackle these issues we must work together.

Adult Service Users

Real life accounts highlighted the importance of the work that The Barnardo's Essex CAPI Service provide within their family support work and the team were proud of all those who found the strength and courage to speak to the audience about the challenges and hurdles they have had to overcome and are still facing.

Nicola

For a mum of four losing their family home following the imprisonment of her ex-husband was a real challenge and being placed in temporary accommodation was a real shock for all the family. Nicola spoke about the effects losing their home has had on the family following four moves in year, with no money for storage, furniture was stacked in rooms, they lived out of boxes and was placed some distance from the children's schools which is having the biggest impact on the children's wellbeing. Being in local authority housing has also meant that the very much loved family pet dog cannot live with them either and Nicola feels not enough has been done, you can never do too much where children are concerned.

"When their father went to prison the effects were not ripples, they were huge tidal waves."

Elizabeth

Mum to two boys Elizabeth spoke emotionally about the shock of coming home to find the police on her driveway and having arrested her husband for theft. With a likely prison sentence he would have food and roof over his head which was something that Elizabeth and her boys might not have as a family on the outside also 'doing time'. She spoke of the heartache of telling her boys what had happened but how the CAPI Service had supported her and the boys every step of the way from understanding why dad had to go away to making memory boxes and family scrap books.

"No little boy should have to go through this because of a bad choice his dad made..."

Philippa

When her husband went to court, Philippa found herself in a situation she never thought she would be in. She had so many questions with no answers and in her words did what no parent should do and googled it and found the many effects on children as a result of parental imprisonment which worried her enormously. She too spoke emotionally about how the CAPI Service helped her and her two young boys deal with the situation they found themselves in. For Philippa, resettlement has been a difficult time and a hard one for the two boys to adjust to.

"once he was released I thought, great it's over, but I was wrong...."

Child's Voice

The child's voice is at the heart of the work Essex CAPI do as well as Barnardo's as a whole and many of the articles within the United Nations Convention On The Rights Of The Child (UNCRC) are relevant to their work with particular reference to Article 12—the right to be heard. Essex CAPI continually work to ensure the rights of children are promoted, upheld and obstacles challenged.

7 year old Liam's dad was sent to prison after accidentally knocking down a cyclist whilst driving his truck and Liam spoke with his support worker Sarah about how it feels for a child to have a dad in prison and gave an honest account of how it felt when his mum told him dad was going to prison as well as his worries about getting to the prison to visit dad. Liam told the attendees the way CAPI have helped him to remember his dad with a memory box and a calendar to count down the months until dad is released.

"I'm worried about getting to the prison as mum's car might conk out, as the garage said it only has a few more miles left in it"

There was also a powerful video clip shown to attendees about 10 year old Robert and his struggles with family life since his dad was sent to prison for hurting his sister. Robert was unable to attend the conference, but was happy to record his story to be shared at the conference.

Guest Speakers

Roger Hirst Police & Crime Commissioner for Essex endorsed the work of the Barnardo's Essex CAPI Service as making a real difference by early intervention working with children, young people and their families. The population of Essex is 1.7 million as of those 7.5 thousand people are involved in criminal behaviour, if we are to thrive as a county we need to have safe and secure communities and work with young people is vital for this to happen. Roger Hirst made reference to the recently published Lord Farmer Review which highlights the importance of strengthening prisoners family ties to prevent reoffending and generational crime. Key elements for this is; somewhere to live, a job and the golden thread being a stable family life.

Reoffending rates are 40% lower if the offender returns to a stable family home.

Donna Finch MBE Essex Fire Service Community Development & Safeguarding Manager gave a speech which also tied into the impact of a stable family background and importance of early intervention and also questioned are we as professionals intervening early enough, should it be more a case of early identification? Donna illustrated the framework required to secure a stable base on which families can thrive with the analogy of nurturing the roots, trust, love, respect, communication etc. She then outlined the Essex Fire Service's FIREBREAK programme, Fire FIT, Fire INSPIRE, Fire RESPECT and Fire EMPOWER along with the impact this programme has on young people. Following the conference there have been several requests for information on this course and Barnardo's Essex CAPI have been pleased to send on this information.

Rachel Conlon (York St John University Prison Partnership Project) & Anna Herrman (Clean Break) Barnardo's- Askham Grange Estate Project

Barnardo's Essex CAPI Service were very fortunate that Rachel and Anna were able to travel to attend the conference to share their powerful film "Keeping Mum" which is about mothers serving sentences at an open prison, HMP Askham Grange and shows the affects of parental imprisonment on children. Rachel gave background information on the formation of the prison partnership which brings together education, the arts and the prison service. Anna described how the Clean Break Theatre Company uses theatre and the arts as a transformative tool for women in prison. We have provided the link to the clip below as there were many references to this clip in the evaluations.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNjRmTEkIT0&feature=youtu.be>

Workshops

The well attended afternoon workshops provided attendees the opportunity to go through the various stages of the offender journey and the Essex CAPI Service thank all those who took the time to plan and facilitate the workshops which are noted below.

- Arrest & Court provided by Barnardo's Isle of Wight team and the EPUT Liaison & Diversion team
- Prison & Community Support provided by The Essex CAPI Service and HMP Chelmsford
- Release & Resettlement provided by the CRC and Ormiston Families.

Market Stall Holders

To further collaborative working there were a number of market stall holders in addition to The Barnardo's Essex CAPI Service including; Ormiston, Essex Fire Service, The Change Project, Family Lives, Barnardo's CSE, Barnardo's Essex Advocacy Services, Essex County Council Early Years & Childcare, Castlepoint Association of Voluntary Services, EPUT Safeguarding, Barnardo's Child & Family Wellbeing Service and The Children's Society. Feedback from the evaluations were that these organisations provided a wealth of information on the day but general feeling was more time for networking would have been welcomed. Information on all the market stall holders was available in the packs on the day, but will also be distributed again to all attendees.

Evaluation

"Keeping Mum" was a very powerful clip would like to share this with my team...

"a very warm welcome at a lovely venue"

"very well run and organised conference"

"there needs to be an event like this on a regular basis"

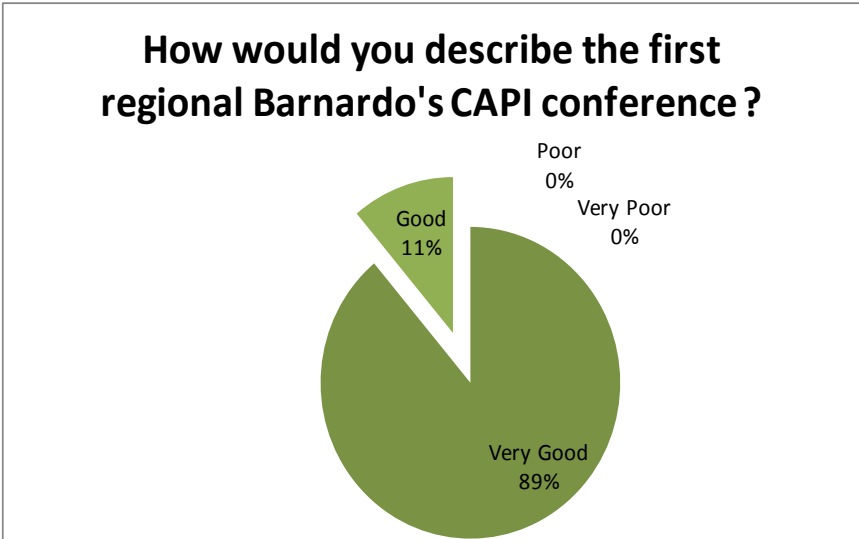
To ensure the views of the attendees at the conference were captured there were a few ways to give feedback and these included the evaluation form (comments below) as well as a graffiti wall for attendees to write on the wall anything that surprised, shocked or interested them. There was also a bag of worries which is a tool used by the Essex CAPI team when working with children for them to write down their 'worries' and attendees were also encouraged to do so during the course of the day.

"issues around housing and schooling are something I had never considered - thought provoking"

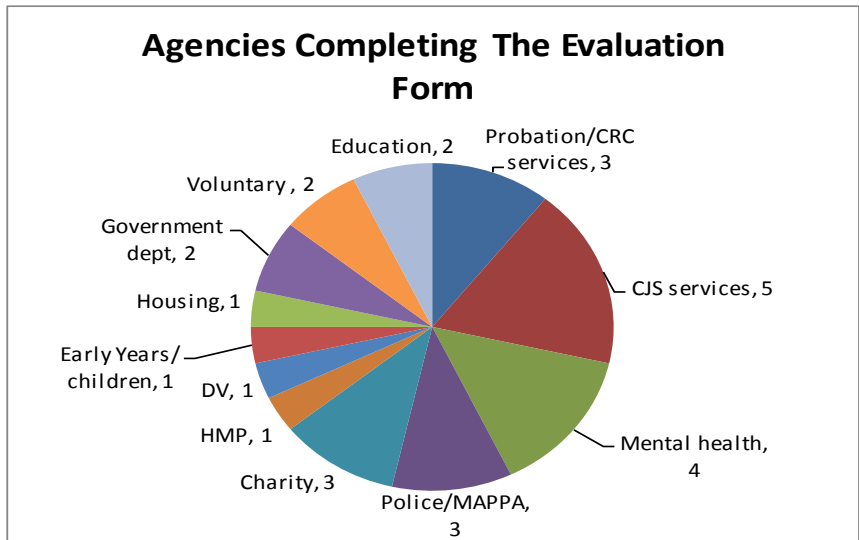
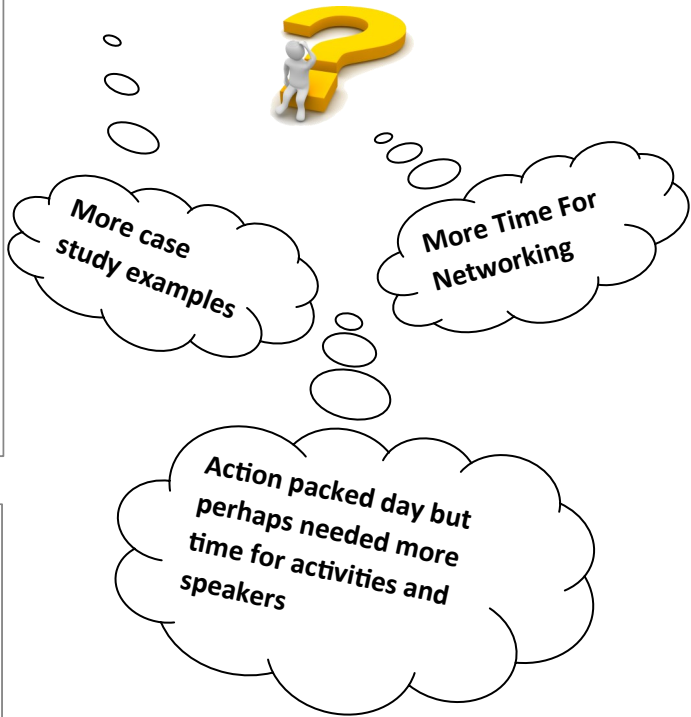
"the real life accounts were extremely inspiring"


"listening to first hand family experiences demonstrated the impact very well"


"thoroughly enjoyed this whole event - extremely interesting"




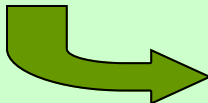
What Could Have Been Changed?



If you were to share one piece of learning from today what would it be? 	Issues faced by families
	Better/greater understanding
	How a family situation can change
	How to better support families and children
	Issues with housing/benefits
	Lack of understanding by professionals
	Where to find local support
	Impact on children

What was the most thought provoking or shocking thing you found out today? 	Stigma and isolation faced
	How offender families serve a hidden sentence
	Data and stats
	Lack of empathy amongst professionals
	Listening to the powerful service user stories
	Negative Impact on families
	Lack of help
	Situation experienced by children at time of arrest

How can your organisation respond to the needs faced by the family? 	SPOC- have a lead person in every service
	Share with colleagues
	Look at gaps and where we can meet them with a multi agency response
	Establishment of support groups
	Consider funding and sharing of resources
	Training to professionals
	Make this a priority group
	Joint working

How Will The Information Change Your Thinking? 	Consider families needs
	Better/increased understanding
	Value the work with families
	Be more open to the challenges the families face

From the evaluation comments and initial findings following the conference, the following outcomes have already been seen:-

- The need for Essex CAPI to continually promote their service as it is clear that still some sectors and areas within Essex are not aware of the service despite a comprehensive approach to promoting the service.
- The adult service users felt so empowered by speaking at the conference that they have asked to become volunteers and have suggested starting their own peer support forum which the Barnardo's Essex CAPI Service will support moving forwards.
- Also highlighted was a missing link between the probation service and families and this is something that will be discussed within the Essex Steering Group meetings.



Referring to the Essex CAPI Service couldn't be easier!



Click [here](#) for the link to the form and email it to essex.capi@barnardos.org.uk

Once received we will call you to discuss it further or call 01268 558448 / 07947 219802 for more information!