

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee BRIEFING NOTE – No. 2/24

Date: **10 December 2024**

Briefing paper to: **Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Purpose: **Overview of Moving Parents and Children Together support for families.**

Background:

Substance Misuse Treatment Services in Medway are commissioned by Public Health and delivered by The Forward Trust (FT). When the service was procured in 2023 Public Health required the provider to deliver a family support programme as part of the core contract. This report outlines the course, the impacts in Medway to date, and future developments for the intervention.

The Moving Parents and Children Together (M-PACT) programme was developed in response to the [2003 Hidden Harm report](#), which called for services working with vulnerable families to be trained in the delivery of evidence-based interventions. The programme was designed to specifically meet the multiple and complex needs of families affected by addiction.

The M-PACT programme is delivered by trained practitioners to bring together up to 8 families, usually including at least one parent (or parenting figure) with a substance use problem and at least one child aged 8-17 years.

Overview of the course

A standard M-PACT programme consists of a family assessment followed by 10 face to face sessions - 8 group sessions (which combine work with all participants, work with adults and children separately, and work with individual family units); a family review, and a reunion.

There are also shorter and longer versions of the programme which can be tailored to the organisation and their participant's needs, as well as an aftercare programme for families who may need ongoing support.

FT accept referrals from any organisation alongside self-referrals for different family members including parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and foster carers. Family members do not need to be in recovery to attend the programme and this is managed through comprehensive risk assessments, management plans and support contracts. The inclusion criteria for those wanting to attend an M-PACT programme is intentionally broad, to allow as many families as possible to access the programme, whilst still enabling FT to manage risks and keep people safe through robust assessment.

Impact

M-PACT is an evidenced based independently evaluated programme. The data gathered over the years has clearly shown the programme generates positive outcomes and measurable opportunities for change, for families living with addiction.

In 2014 an independent economic assessment of M-PACT was carried out by Interface Enterprises, so a robust and defensible estimate of the costs and benefits of the programme could be provided. The methodology chosen to undertake this assessment was an evaluative Social Return on Investment (SROI). From a cost-effectiveness perspective the SROI showed that M-PACT provided substantial and real economic value and in 2014 the programme generated a conservative £2,213 of savings per family, at a cost of £802 per family. This generates an SROI ratio of 2.76 or for every £1 spent on M-PACT, it generates £2.76 in savings.

In 2019 the '12 years of M-PACT report' was published and, showed that participants reported improvements in:

- Global family functioning (including disrupted communication, strengths and adaptability and feelings of being overwhelmed by difficulties)
- How families viewed the severity of the problem
- How families thought they were managing
- Coping efficacy Many of the changes, most notably for family functioning and coping efficacy were statistically significant, meaning that they were unlikely to have occurred by chance and were likely to be directly associated with attendance on the M-PACT programme.

In 2021 the M-PACT programme was also noted as an effective intervention in the Government publication: [Examination of the links between parental conflict and substance misuse and the impacts on children's outcomes](#).

The first Medway M-PACT programme ran between 17th July 2024- 11th September 2024. It Medway originally consisted of 5 Families these were all female carers (Mothers and Grandmothers) and approximately equal numbers of male and female children. No male carers attended in the first cohort.

Feedback from the participants was positive and indicated that they felt their mental wellbeing had improved, they felt more able to parent well, and substance use had decreased. They also reported children were performing better at school, they understood addiction more and relationships had been strengthened. Participants were given tools to continue the progress they made during the course, some of the participants stated they would stay in contact with others as part of their support structure. Families in the cohort made really positives connections.

During the programme other issues were identified which resulted in referrals to Domestic Abuse services, Citizens Advice Bureau, Trauma Counselling, Drug Treatment Services and referrals for future courses. The programme considers all aspects of a person's life.

Next Steps

This initial programme has performed well, numbers of attendees was lower than would have been liked. An action plan is in place to increase the numbers of people being supported. This includes:

- Medway River staff will continue to engage families directly to present and inform them of the MPACT programme.
- Additional programme delivery staff will be trained. A further MPACT Training session for staff will be delivered in January 2025. The training session will be offered to Open Road staff also to encourage referrals from our Young Persons service and the River Recovery service.
- MPACT will be recommended by FT as a suitable intervention during Child Protection review meetings. Social workers may then decide to include MPACT in safety plan.
- Promoting the programme to partner organisations who may may be in a position to make referrals for people not currently in contact with the drug treatment service.
- Increase the number of male carers attending; potential barriers to male carers will be identified and addressed.

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