

A person is seen from the back, wearing a black t-shirt with a white graphic of a hand with fingers spread. The background is a textured wall with a staircase railing in the foreground. The entire image has a red color cast.

sage Foundation

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Evaluation: 2018 – 2019

DEMONSTRATING PREVENTION IS AFFORDABLE AND EFFECTIVE

Corporate philanthropy keeping young people off the streets

**Report by
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#placetocallhome

Introduction

By Debbie Wall, VP Sage Foundation

Youth homelessness is unacceptable. The physical harm, the terror and the destruction of lifelong potential should not be inflicted on any child. And yet, as a society we continue to fail to protect young people from this.

We prove in this report that young people can be protected from homelessness, and that prevention is not just affordable – it costs a fraction of the alternative.

- All 11 young people involved in our Newcastle pilot were supported into a safe situation. Seven are in their family home and four are in secure independent accommodation.
- If those 11 young people had become homeless, the cost to the state would have been around £110,000 per year.

We also prove that business has a role in keeping young people off the streets. By spending our own corporate funds, we can be nimble, we can apply our efficiency and speed to market processes; find the gaps in a system and create change.

We took a professional approach to the structure of this pilot, as we would with any Sage tech innovation. Sage recognises that

youth homelessness is a complex issue and like any business challenge we have taken the time to learn where our support was needed the most.

We developed this pilot, *A Place to Call Home*, because we could manage it independently, with a resolute focus on showing that funding prevention works.

Already this is having the right effect and Newcastle City Council is considering match funding our work.

Working with the education and youth 'think and action-tank' LKMco, we began by conducting research into the causes of homelessness to help us pinpoint how we could make a difference. We recognised that there was great work already taking place but why were young people still ending up on the streets?

We listened, we learned and quickly came to understand that prevention work does not happen early enough. We also learnt that charities and providers within the homeless sector could not always offer prevention work as funding is linked to outcomes and it is difficult to evidence that preventative interventions have worked.

So we decided to get the evidence. We commissioned an independent monitoring and evaluation report to prove that early intervention can prevent homelessness.

A great deal of research led us to the Barefoot Professional model delivered by Family Gateway. This model works because it employs and trains local parents who have experienced the same or similar issues – giving them the unique ability to earn a family's trust and respect, help a family identify their underlying issues, and then address them.

We funded Family Gateway's Barefoot Professionals who successfully intervened in the family life of 11 young people at risk of homelessness. We have extended the programme to help a further 13 families.

So, what next? There's plenty to do. A staggering number of young people comprise the hidden homeless in the UK: 255,000 with no guarantee about where they will sleep each night. This is in addition to 30,000 turned away by local authorities when they seek support, and the comparatively tiny number, 16,000, 16-to-24-year olds deemed statutorily homeless and given support – many of whom will be supported

temporarily and may find themselves back on the street. How many of these young people could have avoided this situation if help had been available earlier?

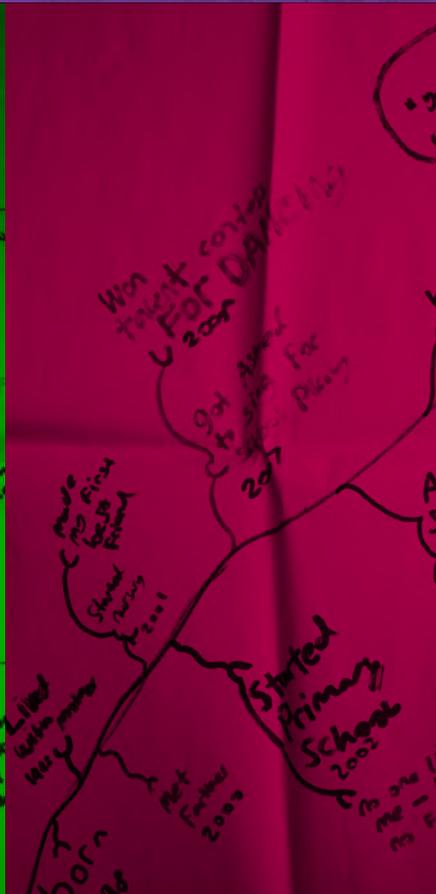
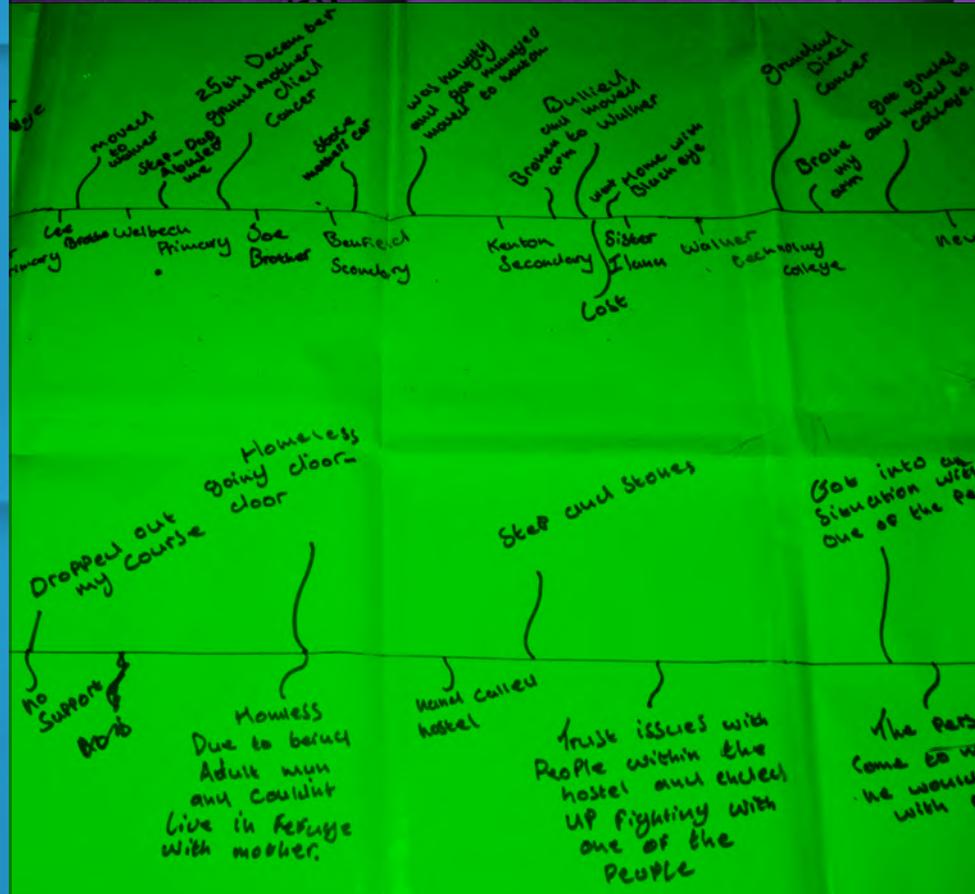
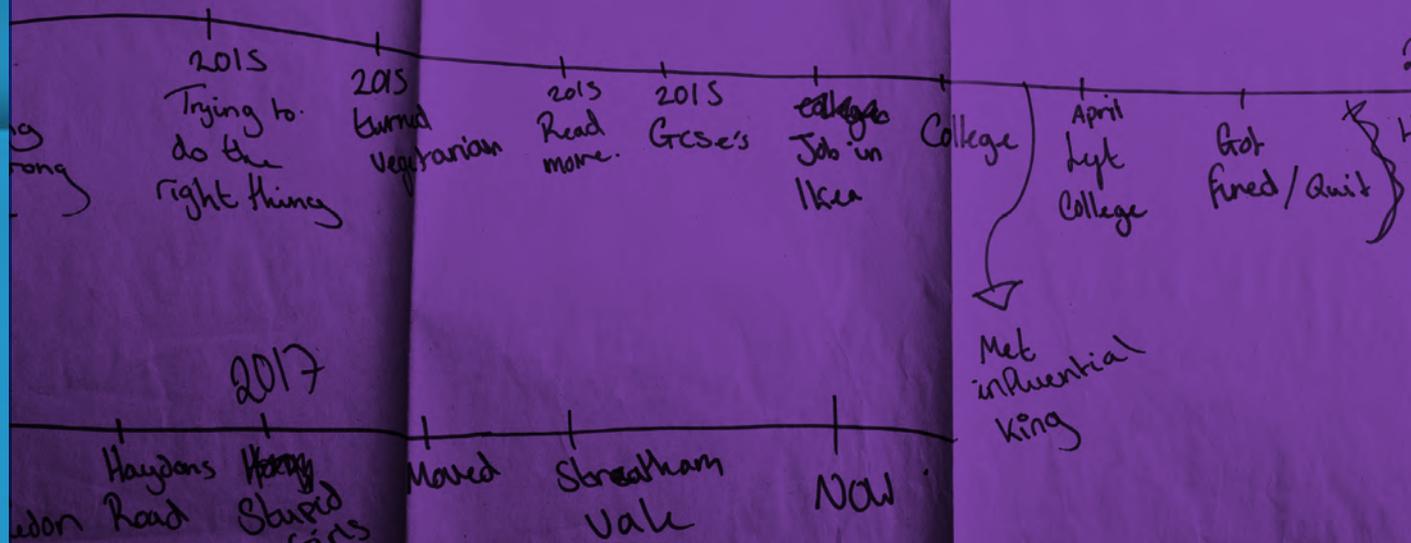
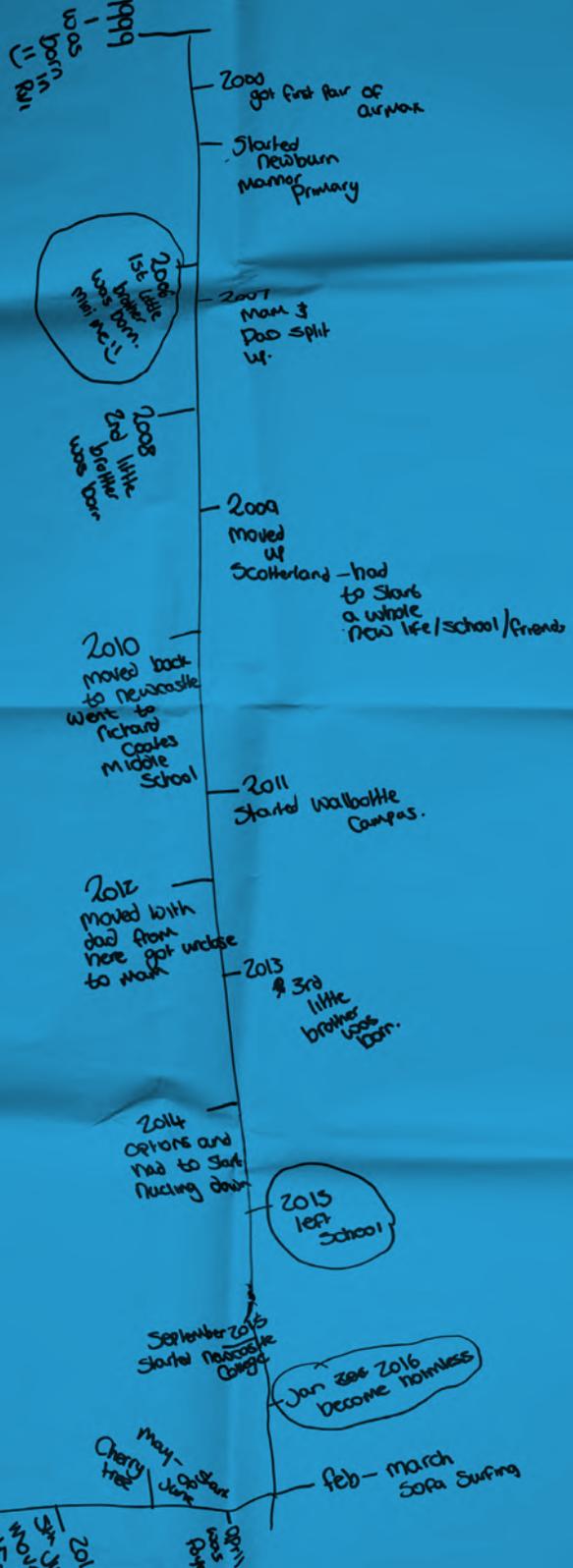
We want to share our learning with the business community in Newcastle, with the laser focus of expanding the role that Sage and our corporate partners can play in funding prevention work. We believe that communicating our commissioning model with Newcastle City Council as a local authority gives us the insight into what is truly needed to end youth homelessness and would ask you to join us in this action.

There is scope to joint fund further projects to continue to test the theory and provide further evidence that working this way makes a real change. We welcome any conversations about this.

We will continue our work. For us the ideal trajectory for the young people we are supporting is one of continued education, possibly an apprenticeship or higher education, and delivery into secure, rewarding work, with us or another responsible and supportive employer.

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As well as the number of young people who did not change their score as they gave positive responses initially (shown in grey).

For some outcomes, such as Warmth, most young people gave positive responses initially so there was less change in their scores after working with Family Gateway. However, against other outcomes, such as emotional expressiveness, parental encouragement and observing rules and boundaries most young people identified issues in these areas at the start of the intervention but improved their scores after working with Family Gateway. As one young person explained, working with Family Gateway had helped them express their emotions which had a positive impact on their relationships:

“It’s easier to talk to people about things than just bottle everything up...it makes you feel a lot better... [my Family Entrepreneur] took us out and we spoke about things. And everything we spoke about just like got everything sorted ...I sat down and talked about it with my mam ...we’ve just become like stronger since we started with gateway.”

Additionally, over half of young people also felt that family cohesion, their ability to deal with conflict and the extent to which they had their own space, improved during their time working with Family Gateway.

FIGURE 1

Young people’s (n=11) score change during their time working with Family Gateway.



-  Young people increased their score on the strongly disagree to strongly agree scale between baseline and endpoint.
-  Young people did not change their score but had a positive score (strongly agree or agree) at baseline.

FIGURE 2

Parents' score change during their time working with Family Gateway.



Figure 2 represents parents' score change in the same way: blue icons illustrate the number of parents who improved their score on each dimension whilst grey icons show the number who did not change their score due to feeling positive about that aspect of the relationship at the start of the intervention.

Parents were more likely than young people to give a positive score on relationship measures at the start of their time working with Family Gateway. We discuss that this may be due to some measures asking about parents' behaviour making it less likely that parents will be critical, and due to adults feeling more social pressure to 'pretend everything is okay'.

Parents were most likely to feel that there were improvements in their family's ability to deal with conflict and in familial warmth and affection. When parents discussed a reduction in conflict with their child, they often referenced communication strategies they had developed while working with their Family Entrepreneur.

"They've made us feel like to be more calm instead of like reacting quite quick and arguing with [my son] ...now I always listen to what they said and see if that works... I'll let him have his say...so we get on better."

For other outcomes, such as cohesion, involvement and whether the young person had their own space in the family home, some parents improved their scores while others gave positive scores at baseline and a

few decreasing their scores, most often from 'strongly agree' to 'agree'. On the listening outcome, most parents felt positively about this at baseline and did not improve their scores, this is in contrast to the high number of young people who felt their parents were listening to them more by the end of the intervention (see figure 1).

The programme's long-term goal is to prevent homelessness, ideally by keeping the young person in the family home. However, in some cases, the family home is neither the ideal nor a safe option for a young person. In these cases, preventing homelessness by arranging alternative accommodation for a young person to transition to is the 'best' option. Where young people do experience homelessness, Family Gateway aims to provide crisis support, support to the family to ensure the young person returns home if this is safe and possible, and seeks to prevent homelessness reoccurring. Family Gateway worked with ten families but with eleven young people as there were twins in one family.

Homelessness was prevented in seven of the ten families (for eight young people):

- Homelessness was prevented for five young people by keeping the young person in the family home and the young person's risk of homelessness is now considered to be much reduced.
- Three young people (one from the same family as another young person who did not become homeless) were prevented from becoming homeless as they were supported by Family Gateway to transition into independent accommodation as the family home was not considered to be the best or safest place for them.

In the three other families, young people became technically homeless but were supported by Family Gateway to access safe accommodation and in some cases return to the family home:

- In one case, the young person moved in with their boyfriend, whilst in the other two cases Family Gateway arranged temporary accommodation for the young person.
- In two of these three cases, Family Gateway continued to provide support and mediation to the family and the young person returned to the family home.
- In the one case where the young person has not returned to the family home, Family Gateway continued to support them to arrange permanent independent accommodation, which, it could be argued, is a positive option for this young person given their highly complex home environment and the ongoing challenges their parent faces.

Young people and parents highlighted six key features of Family Gateway's practice which they felt was beneficial:

1. A clear distinction between Family Gateway and other official support services, in particular Social Services
2. The 'Barefoot Professional' model
3. Mediation
4. Acting as a hub linking families to other services
5. Early intervention
6. One to one support: 'A listening ear'

Working with 'Barefoot Professionals' rather than other official services was seen as particularly positive, as one parent explained:

"Because you can relate, you know they understand and they relate to you, you know what I mean? It makes a bit more comfortable to talk about because you know what they've gone through and where they are now, and it kind of motivates you to want to be where they are."

Young people valued mediation in particular. In some cases in which a young person had left the family home, mediation helped them to repair relationships and return home.

"I didn't speak to me mam for a long time and then we just like sort of sat down Family Gateway helped like, set up a big like... meeting where we could all just talk to each other and that... It just helped got problems across and sorted."

Parents emphasised the value of early intervention by highlighting that working with Family Gateway had helped to avoid the situation worsening.

"If Family gateway weren't there, I dread to think where we'd be. She could be in foster care, I could be fighting to get her back. But it didn't have to go that far. That's the thing with Family Gateway, it never has to go that far."



Summary of impact against outcomes

Cohesion: For some young people, working with Family Gateway appeared to increase the extent to which they felt they spent enjoyable time with their family. Their parents tended to agree at endpoint. However, some young people and parents still did not feel that this was the case after having worked with Family Gateway.

Discussions during focus groups and interviews showed that parents and young people felt that how families spend time together is an important factor in healthy family relationships. Some families felt that they did spend time together, and this helped repair relationships in difficult times. However, others did not. This appears to corroborate our survey findings. For one family, Family Gateway's support to help the young person move out of the family home allowed the family to become more cohesive and maintain beneficial, enjoyable relationships.

Expressiveness: At the start of their time working with Family Gateway, few young people felt that their families were emotionally expressive, though parents were more likely to think so than young people. For nine young people and six parents, working with Family Gateway increased the extent to which they felt their family was emotionally expressive. However, just under half of young people and parents still felt unsure (answering 'neither agree nor disagree') about whether the family was emotionally expressive at endpoint. This also came through in interviews with young people. Some highlighted that working with Family Gateway had allowed them to open up and begin to express their emotions – firstly with their Family Entrepreneur, and then with their parent – whilst other young people were still struggling with doing so.

Dealing with conflict: Working with Family Gateway appeared to increase the extent to which parents and young people felt able to deal with conflict. Before the Family Gateway intervention, most parents and young people felt that they were not able to disagree without arguing. After working with Family Gateway, over half of young people and nearly all parents felt their family was better at avoiding conflict. Parents highlighted that the strategies Family Gateway had supported them to develop were effective in avoiding conflict with their child. Young people felt that family mediation had supported them to reduce conflict with their parent, though some needed continued support in this area.

Communication (listening): For some young people, working with Family Gateway appeared to have a positive impact on the extent to which they felt their parents listened to them. Before working with Family Gateway, parents often did not recognise the problem their children identified with their communication and listening. After the intervention, however, parents' judgments of whether they listened to their children were more in line with their children's judgments, although some young people still felt that they were not listened to at the end of the project. Some parents and young people suggested that working with Family Gateway had given them strategies to improve their communication. In one case, this had allowed a young person to return to the family home after being homeless for a month.

Involvement and encouragement: After receiving support from Family Gateway, young people felt more encouraged, and parents' assessments of how encouragingly they behaved seemed more

in line with their children's perceptions. A parent involved in the focus group recognised that being more encouraging towards their children had improved their relationships.

Warmth: Most, but not all, parents and young people felt that they expressed affection to each other before working with Family Gateway. However, there was some disagreement within families between parents and their children about whether this was the case. At the end of their work with Family Gateway, more young people and parents felt they showed warmth and affection in their families. For the few that did not, both children and parents in that family recognised the issue. Young people valued warmth and affection in their family highly, and some felt that working with Family Gateway had helped to repair relationships and increase this warmth.

Rules, boundaries and behaviour with friends: Not following rules in the family seemed to be an issue for most families before they started working with Family Gateway. After their time working with a Family Entrepreneur, more young people and parents felt that they followed rules in their family. Where some still did not feel this was the case, there tended to be more consensus within the family that this was an issue. Some parents felt that working with Family Gateway had helped them to lay down rules and boundaries more firmly in their households, which, in some cases, had a positive effect on young people's behaviour and family relationships in the longer term.

Young people's behaviour with their friends sometimes involved breaking rules, and this was identified as a source of conflict between parents and children.

Parents were more likely than young people at the beginning of the project to feel that their children were susceptible to peer pressure. However, after working with Family Gateway, parents were less likely to think this was a severe issue, and some young people reported finding it easier to resist peer pressure. After working with Family Gateway, parents and young people were both less likely to report that a young person's behaviour with their friends was a source of tension and conflict.

Space: Overall, working with Family Gateway increased the likelihood that a young person would feel that they had their own respected space in the home, as well as the likelihood that their parents would agree. For those young people who, at the end of their time working with Family Gateway, still did not agree that they had a space in the home, the parent acknowledged that this was the case.

Knowledge of and access to support services: Working with Family Gateway increased the likelihood that young people and parents would know where to access support when things went wrong in their family relationships. Participants were also more likely to feel comfortable to do so. Before working with Family Gateway, most young people and parents said they did not know where to seek support and did not feel comfortable to do so. After the intervention, all parents and over two thirds of young people knew where to get help, and felt able to ask for support. Two young people still felt unsure, and one young person said that they did not know where to access support. This suggests that some young people may benefit from continued work with Family Gateway, focussing on highlighting support services that they can work with.

1.

An introduction to *A Place to Call Home*

In 2017, LKMco and Sage Foundation conducted participatory research examining the educational experiences of young homeless people. Ten young people who had experienced homelessness took part in the research and shared their experiences of homelessness and education leading to the publication of *A Place to Call Home*.

A Place to Call Home revealed that breakdowns in family relationships are a key cause of homelessness. Even when this was not the primary cause, it was always a contributing factor. In line with existing literature on youth homelessness, we found that factors behind relationship breakdown included:

- abuse in the home;
- a young person's poor behaviour;
- the breakdown of support networks due to bereavement;
- substance-abuse issues;
- mental health issues, and,
- familial rejection of LGBT young people^x.

Homeless Link's 2018 annual report found that relationship breakdown continues to be a key cause of homelessness and is the primary cause in half of youth homelessness cases in England. The report explains that this has led to increased homelessness:

'Relationship breakdown was also cited as key factor in the increase of young people sleeping rough, with homelessness providers highlighting a lack of prevention and early intervention initiatives.'

(p.14, Homeless Link, 2018)

Similarly, the stories that young people shared in *A Place to Call Home* exemplified that in most cases, it was not until 'crisis point', often when the young person left the family home and became homeless (whether sleeping on the streets or sofa surfing), that

they received support or intervention. This is despite the fact that many of these young people had been at risk of homelessness for years due to wide range of risk factors such as spending time in care; suffering from mental health issues; experiencing early bereavement; financial issues and familial relationship breakdown. In other cases, young people came from less complex backgrounds but became homeless after a long deterioration in their familial relationship, but similarly had received inadequate support at an early stage.

Prevention: the need and the challenge

Each year, 150,000 young people ask for help from their Local Authority because they are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Just over half, 83,000, receive support. As Centrepoint highlights, by the time a young person approaches their local authority, they have often reached crisis point, and yet, not all receive support. Thus, a focus on prevention is needed, and, is justified, since preventing homelessness not only reduces

harm to the young person and their family, but also carries a lower cost to the public purse.

Centrepoint's 2017 researchⁱⁱ finds that the average cost to the state of a homeless young person is £8,900 per year for 16-17 year olds and £12,200 per year for 18-24 year olds. Thus, effective preventative programmes costing up to £8,000 per year per young person, would constitute a saving.

However, defining prevention and measuring its effectiveness presents a challenge. Establishing a causal connection between an intervention and the avoidance of a defined outcome, in this case 'homelessness', is difficult and sometimes impossibleⁱⁱⁱ. It is especially challenging in the context of a complex societal issue with multiple, interlinking causes and risk factors.

Nonetheless, recent policy changes have recognised the importance of prevention as a means of tackling homelessness. In 2016, £20 million was allocated to 'prevention trailblazers' including Newcastle City Council, working to develop new approaches to early intervention to prevent homelessness. On the other hand, this fund is not specific to youth homelessness. Subsequently, in 2018, The Homelessness Reduction Act placed a duty on all local authorities to help prevent homelessness. Homeless Linkⁱⁱⁱ highlights *'The Act signals a significant shift from previous legislation in that it puts renewed focus and responsibility on preventing homelessness earlier on.'* Unfortunately, this legislation tends to focus on addressing housing insecurity: where an individual is at risk of losing their home, in order to reduce homelessness. Similarly, 'prevention trailblazers' may focus on financial issues, crisis point support and

the reduction of repeat homelessness rather than homelessness in the first instance or indeed youth homelessness specifically.

This housing insecurity and financial focus does not reflect the typical situation faced by young people who are at risk and in need of preventative intervention. A young person's physical housing (often a family home) may be financially secure but their familial relationships may be nearing crisis point – it is this that could result in them leaving the home.

Best practice in prevention

Researchⁱⁱ on best practice for youth homelessness prevention highlights the importance of:

- **Multi-agency working** which ensures that families and young people have access to the range of services they need to address complex needs, as well as reducing duplication of services. Good communication across services also enhances the effectiveness of the interventions.
- **Having a 'single front door'** or hub approach to allow young people to access the range of services through one point of contact or physical 'hub'. Centrepoint highlights that this approach is particularly important *'given the chaotic nature within which this group engage with services'*.
- **A whole-family approach** is crucial given that relationship breakdown is a key cause of youth homelessness and issues that parents face are likely to have a considerable impact on young people.
- **Positive professional relationships** are a fundamental element of good practice as

families and young people are unlikely to engage with someone who they have not built a good relationship and foundation of trust with.

The same researchⁱⁱ also emphasises the need to further investigate promising practice such as mediation, particularly early mediation, combined with access to other support.

Phase two of *A Place to Call Home*: funding prevention with Family Gateway

The research for Phase 1 of *A Place to Call Home* highlighted the need for prevention services, in particular services preventing the breakdown of relationships which could otherwise result in homelessness. Sage Foundation sought to fund a pilot project with an organisation working to prevent youth homelessness. Thus, a review was conducted of available provision and organisations in Newcastle which were potentially well placed to deliver an intervention focused on addressing relationship breakdown in order to prevent youth homelessness.

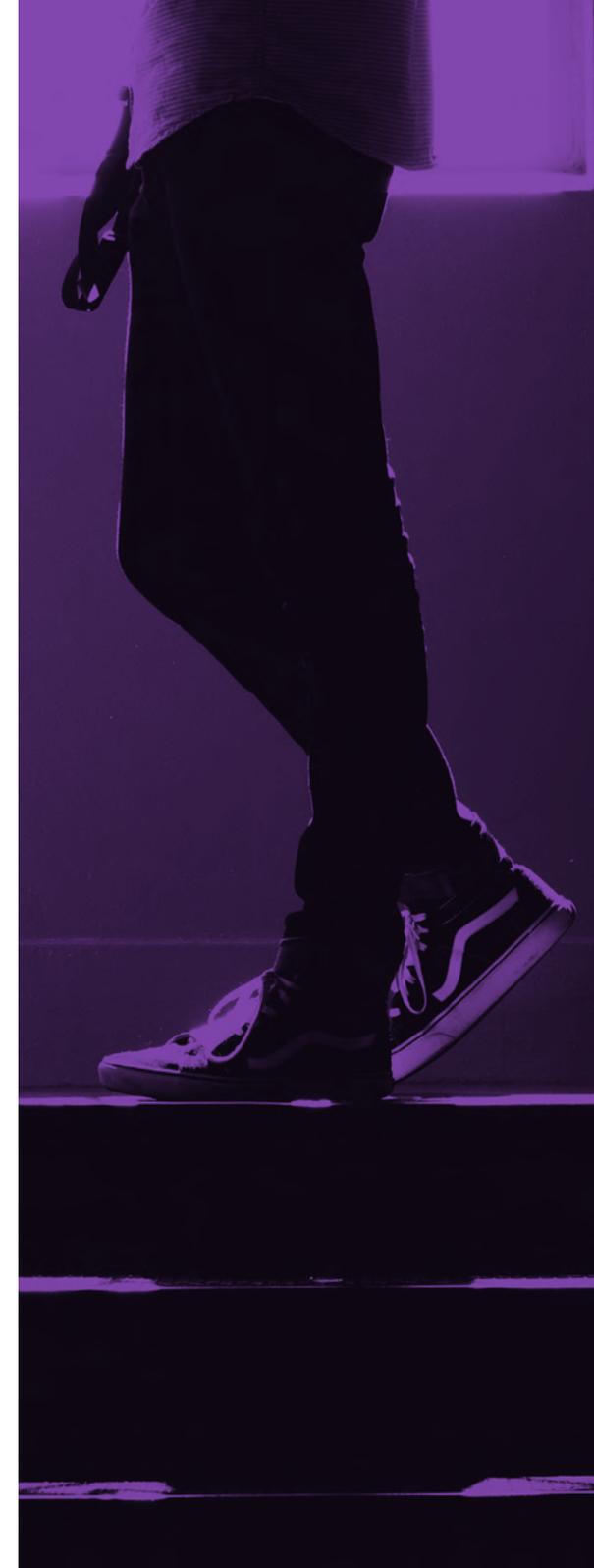
Family Gateway was selected due to the planned intervention embodying all elements of good practice. Family Gateway uses a 'Barefoot Professional Model' whereby local parents who have experienced and overcome similar issues to those faced by families in need of support are trained to become 'Family Entrepreneurs'. Family Entrepreneurs work with families in their own communities and offer a bespoke package of support to the whole family including family mediation. When families are referred, initially, Family Entrepreneurs focus on building relationships with young people and their family and

working to understand the complex set of issues facing the family. They then bring in a range of supportive services and act as a bridge between the support services and the family, who are often mistrustful of official services. Family Gateway runs a range of projects using this approach to address issues in the local community from addiction to unemployment.

For this project as Family Gateway targeted families in which a young person was at risk of homelessness, often due to relationship breakdown and therefore a building pressure for them to leave the family home. Families were referred through schools, social services, other community services and by Family Entrepreneurs who have an in-depth knowledge of the challenges families in their community are facing. Once a family was engaged with Family Gateway, the Family Entrepreneurs linked them with necessary services and supported their engagement with those services as well as providing family mediation and a trusted point of contact in crisis situations.

Crucially, the planned pilot programme exemplified evidenced best practice by providing a single hub and point of access to multiple services, building positive relationships with families and taking a whole family approach including early family mediation.

Family Gateway set out to work with ten families in which a young person was at risk of homelessness. This report outlines the findings of the monitoring and evaluation of this pilot programme and details the stories of each family in order to illustrate the range of support they provided and the outcomes within each complex family situation.



2. Methodology

2.1 Aims

Family Gateway provided support that aimed to keep a young person in the family home if it was safe for them to be there. If it was not safe for the young person to remain at home, Family Gateway aimed to help the young person to find alternative accommodation and support them to maintain healthy relationships with their family and wider networks.

Outcomes

Short term and intermediary outcomes which contribute towards the long-term outcome of preventing homelessness were established at the start of the programme (see Figure 4).

Short term outcomes

The measurement of young people and families' knowledge of healthy relationships and skills to manage relationships was based around key elements of healthy relationships gathered from validated scales measuring family relationships, as well as factors which Family Gateway identified as important in the families they work with. These key elements are outlined in Table 1, alongside the survey statements used on the evaluation tools to elicit families' thoughts on each factor.

Improvement in these relationship outcomes should mean that:

- Young people and parents have improved skill in managing relationships with their families.

- Young people and families feel positive about their relationships with each other.

Intermediary outcomes

As a result:

- Young people and families have fewer incidents of conflict and are better able to deal with conflict.
- Young people and families have positive relationships and consequently, stable and secure family environments.

Long term outcomes

- Decreased likelihood of young people becoming homeless (as a result of relationship breakdown).
- Improved-whole life chances for young people.

FIGURE 3



TABLE 1

Family relationship factors	Related short-term outcome	Outcome web and survey question statements
Cohesion: the extent to which a family is emotionally close and the members of the family have a feeling of togetherness.	Young people and family members feel that the family spends time together and finds this positive and enjoyable.	'In my family, we do enjoyable things together.'
Expressiveness: experiencing and expressing a range of emotions to one another.	Young people and families express their feelings and respect each other's feelings.	'In my family, we tell each other honestly how we feel.'
Conflict: the presence and frequency of stressful interactions and the family's strategies for dealing with them.	Young people and families feel able to deal with disagreements and conflicts when they arise.	Young person: 'When I disagree with my parent/carer, we talk it through without having an argument.' Parent: 'When I disagree with my child, we talk it through without having an argument.'
Communication: listening and speaking skills referring to the openness of communication and the extent to which family members pay attention to messages communicated.	Young people and families listen to each other and communicate effectively.	Young person: 'My parent/carer listens to my views, ideas and worries.' Parent: 'I listen to my child's views, ideas and worries.'
Involvement encouragement: the extent to which family members are interested and concerned with] one another.	Young people feel that their parents/carers support and encourage them.	Young person: 'My parents/carers encourage me to reach my goals.' Parents: 'I encourage my child to reach their goals'
Warmth: the expression of affection and nurture.	Young people and their family members feel that they express affection for one another.	Young person: 'My parent/carer and I express love and affection for each other.' Parent: 'My child and I express love and affection for each other.'
Space: whether a young person has their own space in the home and whether they feel this space is respected.	Young people feel they have their own space in the family home and that this is respected.	Young person: 'I have my own space in my home which my family respect.' Parent: 'I make sure my children have their own space in our home.'
Rules and boundaries: the extent to which family members have set boundaries and respect them.	Young people and their family members feel that there are rules and boundaries in place and that generally these are followed.	'In my family, we follow a clear set of rules.'

2.2 Tools

A combination of different tools were used to examine both the impact and the mechanism behind the impact.

Quantitative Tools: outcome webs and surveys

'Outcome webs' and survey questions were completed by young people and parents with the Family Entrepreneurs at three time points: baseline, midpoint and endpoint, to establish what, if any, impact working with Family Gateway has on the short-term outcomes.

- Outcome webs** focused on family relationship. Each 'spoke' represented a specific element of the relationship, outlined in Figure 2.
- Additional survey questions** were completed with the outcome webs and included questions to cover:

- The extent to which a young person's relationships outside the home have a negative influence on their family dynamics (e.g. the extent to which they act due to peer pressure from their friends).
- Whether young people and families know what services are available to support them and that they feel comfortable to access these services.

Qualitative Tools: interviews and focus groups

In order to gain further insights and establish how Family Gateway impacted on young people and families, interviews and focus groups were conducted with a subsample of parents and young people. The sample was opportunistic as parents and young people were invited and those that turned up were interviewed. Interviews with three young people were conducted at the end

of the project and a focus group with three parents, two of whom were the parents of the interviewed young people, was also conducted at the end of the project. The interviews and focus groups were broadly the same in order to maximise opportunity for triangulation between the findings from the interviews and the parent focus groups.

Three activities were designed to elicit views on their family relationships:

- 'What does family mean to you':** this activity was conducted with the young people only. Young people were given two minutes to write a few sentences about what family meant to them.
- Picture activity:** a series of pictures were presented and participants were asked to choose pictures which were most similar or least similar to their own family and explain why. Due to logistical constraints, only one of the three young people was able to complete this activity.

- Describing your family:** participants were asked to think back to the beginning of the project and to think of three words to describe their family, they were then asked to repeat the exercise thinking about their family now. A range of prompt words were provided but young people could also think of their own words.

Young people and parents were also asked about:

- Communication in their family
- Conflict and dealing with conflict in their family
- Expressing feelings in their family
- Whether their family spent time together
- The young person's relationships with their friends and their susceptibility to peer pressure
- Working with Family Gateway including: the support they had received, whether this had changed their behaviour in any way, the benefits of working with family gateway and anything they would improve about the experience.

FIGURE 4 – young person outcome web

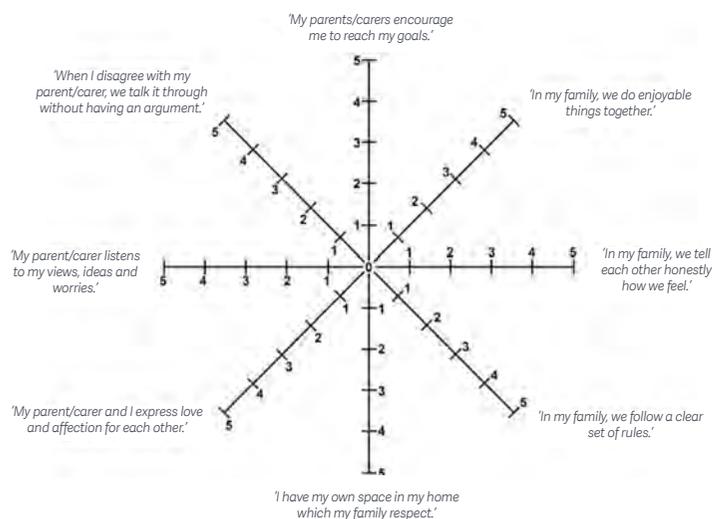
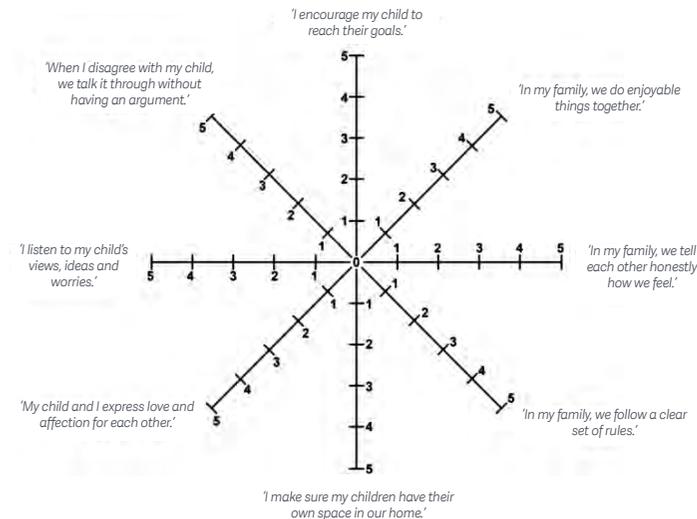


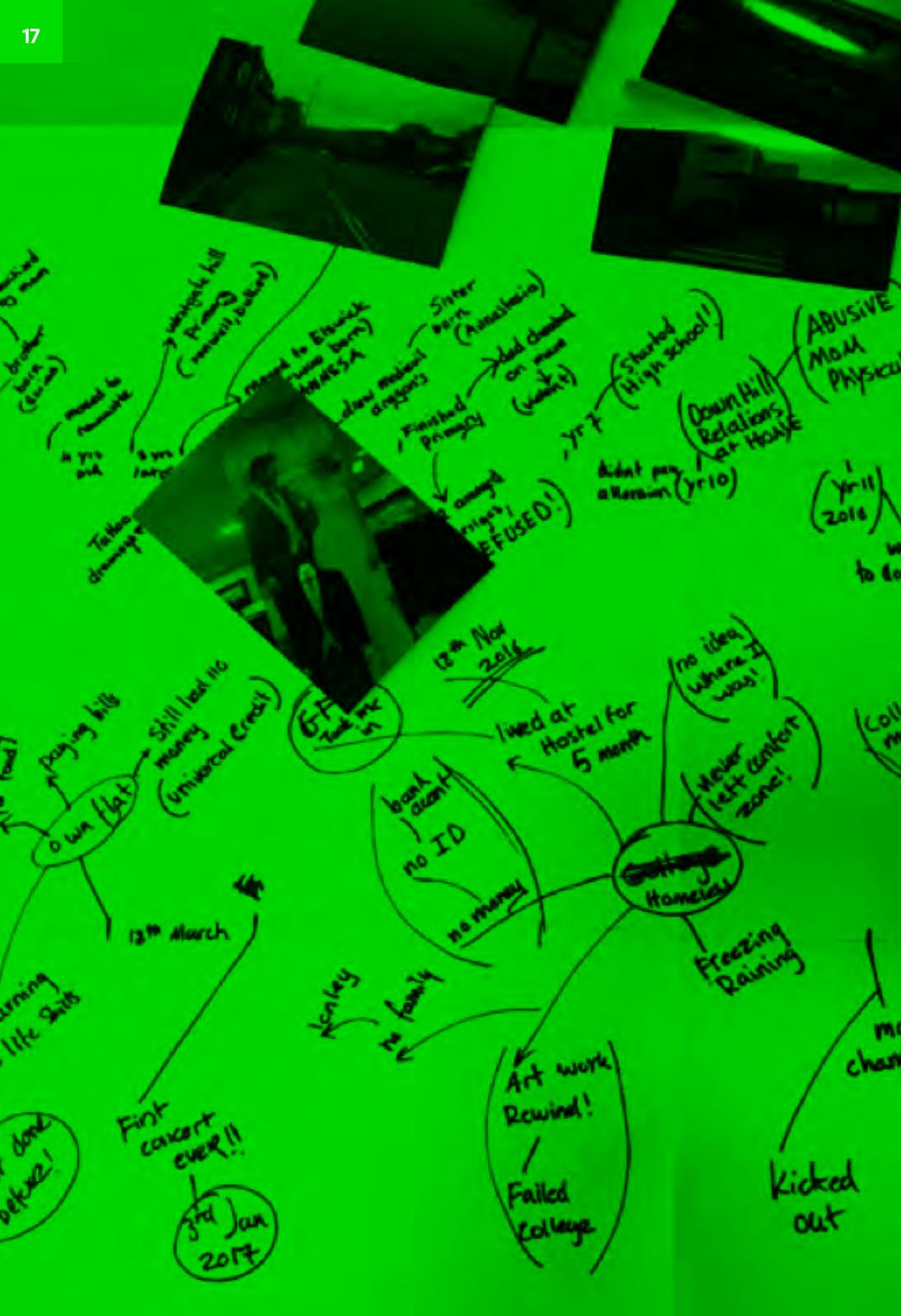
FIGURE 5 – parent/carer outcome web



Finally, three Family Entrepreneurs were also interviewed as a group and asked to reflect on the project including:

- Key successes and the ways of working which contributed to these successes
- Key challenges
- What they would change about the project or the way they work

All interviews and focus groups were transcribed and thematically analysed. Common trends were identified but due to the small sample size and the range of situations and challenges faced by the families, most responses are detailed primarily in the story of that specific family.



3. The families and the support provided by Family Gateway

The following section describes each of the ten families that Family Gateway supported as part of this project. It details the main issues they faced which led to their referral to Family Gateway, the support Family Gateway provided and the family's circumstances at the end of the project. In doing so it highlights the extent to which the young person was at risk of homelessness and whether the work with Family Gateway prevented this or supported the young person if they did become homeless.

It is important to note that while the main aim of the project was to prevent homelessness and this often means keeping the young person in the family home, the family home is not always the best or the safest place for a young person and therefore, in some circumstances the young person leaving the family home with the support of Family Gateway can be considered a positive outcome- especially where it allows a young person to maintain positive relationships with their family and therefore continued access to a support network.

Note: all names are pseudonyms

Daniel and his mother

Daniel's family had recently immigrated to England from another country. Daniel was 13 years old and lived with his mother and step-father in temporary accommodation. He did not have his own room.

At the beginning of the project the family's English was very limited and due to this language barrier Daniel felt isolated from his peers in school. These issues were causing tension between him and his mother. Daniel was displaying intense anger and blamed his mother for removing him from his home country and his friends and peers there.

The local authority referred the family to Family Gateway who considered Daniel to be at an early stage of being at risk of homelessness due to relationship tensions, poverty, and unsuitable, overcrowded accommodation.

Family Gateway liaised with the local authority, local colleges and Daniel's school to provide support with housing as well as with Daniel's schooling. Family Gateway supported Daniel's family to apply to the Local Authority to access more suitable accommodation. Initially the family was moved into more suitable temporary accommodation and eventually

a permanent home where Daniel has his own space. Family Gateway also provided furniture and support to set up the family's new home.

Both Daniel and his mother were enrolled onto ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) courses and Family Gateway arranged opportunities for Daniel to spend time doing activities with young people his age. As a result, Daniel's English is much improved and he has made friends at school, is attending regularly and making good progress. His mother's English has also improved, however language remains a barrier to family mediation.

Not being able to mediate between Daniel and his mother when issues do arise has been a continued challenge. Nevertheless, Daniel's relationship with his mother has improved as a result of living in a more suitable home and being happier in school and Family Gateway now considers that his risk of homelessness is very minimal.

Kayden and his mother

Kayden was raised by his grandfather as his mother was not able to look after him when he was a child. At 16 years old, his behaviour deteriorated and his grandfather felt he was no longer able to house him. Therefore, Kayden moved in with his mother and two younger brothers, both of whom have special education needs. However, Kayden's mother found his behaviour difficult to deal with and struggled to lay down rules and boundaries due to feeling 'more like a sister' than a mother to Kayden. The family was referred to the Family Entrepreneurs through another project in the community, Kayden was thought to be at high risk of becoming homeless due to escalating tensions in his family relationships and his mother's reluctance to have him stay in her home as she felt he was disrupting the routines for her younger sons.

Kayden was reluctant to engage with the project and was initially very reserved during interventions and mediation. His Family Entrepreneur focused on building a relationship with him to allow him to trust and engage. Kayden's mother struggled to show affection for Kayden and while this contributed to Kayden acting out, it also made him reluctant to raise issues with his mother about how he felt, leading instead to more poor behaviour. Kayden's mother continued to struggle with having him in

her home and supporting him financially. As Kayden was 17 and Family Gateway recognised that if he became homeless at age 18 he would struggle to get support, they made arrangements for Kayden to move into supported living in order to ensure this was a controlled and supportive move rather than a chaotic transition into homelessness.

As Kayden began to build trust with Family Gateway he started to engage in family mediation. Through this mediation between Kayden and his mother, their problems around expressing affection, boundaries and communication were addressed. His mother was also given support to develop communication strategies and ways of avoiding conflict.

Living independently has been a positive move for Kayden and this distance has drastically improved his relationship with his mother: they now speak every day, are 'much closer' and see each other regularly. Kayden's mother feels she has more strategies to avoid conflict as she listens to Kayden, encourages him more, and feels she can set boundaries in her home now that he has his own space. Kayden is now planning to start a motor mechanics course and then an apprenticeship. Despite not staying in the family home, Kayden was prevented from becoming homeless and now has a positive and supportive relationship with his family.

Kaylee and her mother

Kaylee's family was referred to Family Gateway due to high levels of conflict between Kaylee and her mother which put her at risk of homelessness. Kaylee's older brother had previously been homeless due to substance abuse issues and was given a restraining order following extreme instances of violence towards Kaylee and her mother. Kaylee's mother also struggles with alcohol addiction and had lost her job due to mental health issues. This had led to debt issues and the threat of eviction - circumstances which placed considerable strain on the family and on Kaylee who is 17.

Kaylee's behaviour often caused conflict, as did her mother's issues with alcohol. Communication between Kaylee and her mother had completely broken down.

Family Gateway provided support for both mother and daughter. Kaylee's mother was put on an Alcoholics Anonymous programme and a programme of debt repayment support. Kaylee was given support with her anger and often spoke to her Family Entrepreneur when she needed support during conflict or when she was feeling angry. Family mediation initially helped repair the relationship in the family and reduced conflict.

However, Kaylee left the family home following an argument about money and refused to return home. At this point Kaylee was technically homeless and did not know where she would spend the night. Family Gateway worked to find temporary accommodation for Kaylee, that night, ensuring that she would not have to sleep on the streets or 'sofa surf'. Kaylee did not want to return home and felt she would do better living independently. Thus, Family Gateway arranged accommodation for her.

Kaylee is doing a hairdressing apprenticeship through a college, which she 'loves doing'. She is speaking to her mother only sporadically but says she is 'still willing to try' to improve their relationship.

Jenna & her grandmother

Jenna has lived with her grandmother since she was four years old as her mother was unable to take care of her due to her mother's mental health issues. She was referred to Family Gateway through social services because of her low school attendance and risk-taking behaviour. Jenna was at risk of homelessness due to the escalating tension in her relationship with her grandmother and a concern that due to this conflict and her behaviour her Gran may feel she is no longer able to house her.

Jenna was engaging in high risk behaviour and frequently arguing with and being physically violent towards her grandmother. She was not attending school regularly. Both Jenna and her Gran were initially reluctant to engage with the Family Entrepreneurs.

After building trust, Family Gateway provided intensive one to one support for Jenna in order to build her self-esteem and attempt to find the root of her anger and reluctance to attend school. They also worked with Jenna to highlight the potentially dangerous consequences of her risk-taking behaviour.

Jenna and her Gran are now communicating more effectively, however conflict is still frequent. Jenna is more aware of the risks of her behaviour and is therefore in a better position to protect herself. However, her school attendance remains an ongoing issue. Overall, her risk of homelessness is considered to be reduced as she is less likely to engage in risky behaviour and has a better relationship with her grandmother despite continued conflicts.

Twins Amelia and Ben and their mother

Amelia and Ben are 17 year old twins and have three younger siblings. The family was referred to Family Gateway due to family tensions and issues with poverty and overcrowding.

Amelia was at high risk of homelessness and by some definitions could be considered to have been homeless when Family Gateway started the intervention. Amelia has a two-year-old child of her own and was living in a mother and baby unit before Family Gateway started working with the family. She found living in the mother and baby unit extremely difficult and distressing. She suffered with post-partum depression and her mental health was worsened by her experience of the mother and baby unit. Therefore, Amelia had left the unit and was living partially at her mother's home but often sofa surfing at friends' houses as overcrowding in the family home made it difficult for her to stay there full time. Her relationship with her mother was difficult placing her at increased risk of having to leave the family home altogether.

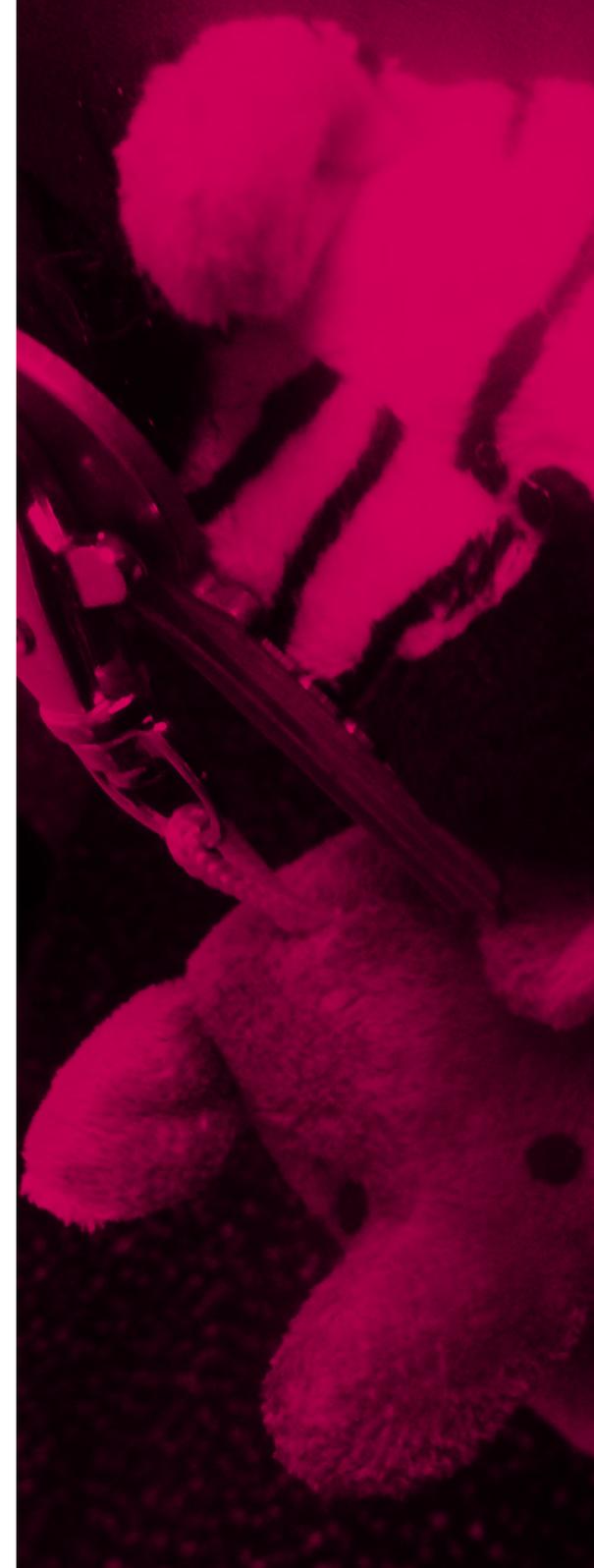
Ben was also living at home with his mother and younger siblings but was using drugs and had previously been involved with the police. As a result of these issues and the

stress that poverty had placed on the family, Ben's relationship with their mother had broken down and therefore, he was at risk of becoming homeless.

Family Gateway provided Amelia with intensive support with her mental health and housing. Her Family Entrepreneur accompanied her to a doctor to get medication and counselling to treat her depression. Family Gateway also supported Amelia to get her own tenancy in a stable and safe home for her and her child, and provided continued support to help her with living independently.

Ben was also supported through one-to-one support with a Family Entrepreneur. He built a trusting relationship with a male Family Entrepreneur as he found it easier to discuss his issues with him. As there are overcrowding issues in the family home and as Ben is 17, it was decided that he would also need to move to independent accommodation, Family Gateway arranged for him to be placed on a housing waiting list. His Family Entrepreneur also provided him with support to prepare him for independent living such as budgeting skills, cooking and other life skills.

Family Gateway also arranged mediation between Amelia, Ben and their mother to address a range of issues in their relationship and help to improve their communication and begin to repair their relationships. Due to this mediation and improvements in the family relationship Ben was able to stay in his mother's home while he waited for independent housing thus avoiding him becoming homeless whilst on the waitlist. The improved relationships also mean that Amelia was able to maintain her family support network whilst living independently.



Charli and her mother

Charli is 16 years old and she and her mother were referred to Family Gateway because of conflict and tension in their relationship and Charli's tendency to abscond from home. Charli does not have a relationship with her father and finds this difficult, she often blames her mother and this causes conflict. Charli's mother felt isolated in dealing with the relationship issues they were facing as she does not have support from her wider family. She was keen to involve Charli's father more closely in parenting but he does not tend to engage.

Charli and her mother were keen to engage with Family Gateway as they both found the escalating tension in their home difficult to deal with. However, despite making initial good steps to improving communication, during the time they were working with Family Gateway, Charli left home after an argument and moved in with her boyfriend. Through mediation Family Gateway was able to support Charli and her mother to repair their relationship so that Charli could return home.

Family Gateway provided Charli's mother with support around positive parenting and establishing rules and boundaries. Charli's mother explained that working with Family Gateway allowed them to 'build up bridges that had broken down' and move on from their 'communication breakdown'.

Family Gateway also provided one-to-one support for Charli to help her deal with the anger she felt and to find ways of expressing this. Charli had previously been expelled from mainstream school and had problems with her behaviour and attendance. She is now attending her alternative provision placement and focusing on passing GCSE exams.

Morgan and her mother

Morgan is 17 years old and was living with her mother and younger sister. Their family was referred to Family Gateway by Social Services as Morgan had accused her mother's boyfriend of assault. Morgan's mother did not believe her allegation and the situation was causing intense conflict in the family home and a breakdown in relationships putting Morgan at risk of homelessness.

Family Gateway put in place one-to-one support with Morgan to help her express her feelings of anger. After building trust with her Family Entrepreneur she admitted that her allegation was false and began to express her intense feelings of jealousy and abandonment relating to her mother's new relationship. She also felt jealous of her younger sister, who had less conflict with her mother, and was suffering with low self-esteem.

Due to the continued tension in Morgan's relationship with her mother and her mother's boyfriend, it was decided that it was not in Morgan's best interests to remain at home. Family Gateway liaised with Local Authority to support Morgan to move into independent accommodation and reduce the risk of her becoming homeless due to conflict with her mother.

Morgan was given support with 'life skills' such as budgeting and cooking to support her to live independently. They also continued family mediation with Morgan and her mother and with the space of living separately they were able to begin communicating more effectively and repairing their relationship. Morgan sees her mother each week and her mother supports her living independently.

Connor and his parents

Connor was 17 years old when his mother self-referred to Family Gateway due to his challenging behaviour. Connor lives with both his parents and two of his younger siblings. Connor's older sister had previously been homeless. The family had been struggling with money since Connor's mum had to reduce her working hours due to her health, the family had been relying on food banks.

Connor's behaviour deteriorated over a period of months where he stopped attending college, started taking drugs and became involved in crime including violent crime, resulting in the police becoming involved. Communication in the family had broken down and Connor initially refused to engage with Family Gateway who provided support for his mother and other siblings. Following a serious argument, Connor's mother asked him to leave the family home. Family Gateway acted as a link to a social worker and housing services in the council to support Connor while he was homeless. However, initially Connor would not engage with these services and spent time on the streets and sofa surfing. Family Gateway eventually succeeded in securing hostel accommodation for Connor where he lived for a month while beginning to engage with the Family Entrepreneurs.

Family Gateway continued to work with Connor and his family during the time he was homeless and not speaking with his parents. The Family Entrepreneur was able to facilitate family mediation between Connor and his mother in which they addressed an early trauma which Connor had suffered outside the family home. Connor's mother also felt supported to put in place more rules and discipline for Connor, and as a result of this and the mediation Connor's behaviour improved and he returned to the family home. Connor was also able to engage with a Family Entrepreneur and access some counselling. Connor is now enjoying taking part in The Prince's Trust programme and plans to get a job once it is finished. Connor explains:

"It's helped my mam because it's taught her how to deal with things and that... it's just really helped her understand why things happen. Aye, it's made us happier. Aye, I think it's been positive and it's helped me to stay positive and that, just knowing that there's someone to listen and that. There's always advice if you're stuck and making a choice."

Jaxon & his grandmother

Jaxon is 13 years old and since he was a child has lived with his grandmother and younger brother. Jaxon's school referred his family to Family Gateway due to his escalating poor behaviour and an incident where he was given a police caution for carrying a weapon.

Family Gateway began working with Jaxon as his behaviour was also poor at home and his gran found this difficult to deal with, putting him at risk of homelessness. Jaxon was regularly absconding from home. Family Gateway provided support on a one-to-one basis and through mediation with his Gran. Jaxon began to express his feelings of anger around his parents 'abandoning' him and feeling let down by his father who often missed or cancelled contact with him. He was unable to regulate his emotions and this anger was often directed towards his Gran who he 'blamed' for separating him from

his parents by being willing to take him in. Mediation enabled him and his Gran to talk through these issues and improve their communication. Mediation also helped Jaxon express his feelings of abandonment to his Gran and therefore feel that his feelings were validated.

Jaxon's Gran continued to struggle to put in place rules and boundaries so Family Gateway worked with her on this and arranged a place on a parenting course to support her. Jaxon's behaviour at school was also worsening so Family Gateway and the school arranged for him to work with the youth offending team, following his police caution. Jaxon responded well to this and has not been in trouble with the police since. Jaxon's behaviour at home is slowly improving but can still be difficult. His grandmother also feels more able to deal with his challenging behaviour.

Abby and her parents

Abby is 14 years old and lives with her mother, father and younger sister. Her family were referred to Family Gateway by Abby's school because Abby was frequently truanting and absconding from home. When Family Gateway approached the family, Abby's mother was initially very resistant to engaging with support. Later Abby's mother revealed her reluctance to engage was due to a deep fear of official services and a concern that she would be 'judged' as a parent. Therefore, the focus of Family Gateway's work initially was building a relationship with all family members to allow them to engage and work through their fear of seeking support. Their family entrepreneur explains:

"Both parents were initially very aggressive and reluctant to engage. Their family had had bad experiences with services in the past and this fear showed as aggression. There was a lot of trust building to do and it was important to follow through with actions to build that trust."

There was frequent conflict between Abby and her parents sometimes resulting in Abby absconding from home and engaging in risky behaviours. As Family Gateway built trust with the family they acted as a neutral point of contact during conflicts or crisis.

Through one-to-one conversations with Abby it became clear that issues such as the parents frequently comparing Abby to her younger sister negatively were impacting on her self-esteem and causing her to act out. Family Gateway used family mediation to address and work through these issues with Abby and her parents.

Family Gateway also provided Abby with a wide range of support such as getting contraception as she was sexually active, and ensuring that she began to attend school regularly. Simultaneously, the Family Entrepreneur supported Abby's parents to develop strategies to address conflict and Abby's behaviour.

As a result of mediation and support Abby's relationship with her parents and her younger sister has improved, she has stopped absconding from home, her behaviour and communication with her parents has improved and Abby did not become homeless. Her mother suggests they 'don't know where they would be' if not for Family Gateway's support.



4.

Impact on outcomes

4.1 Impact on short-term relationship outcomes

Young people and parents' views in the following eight areas were measured at three different points.

- 1. Cohesion:** whether the family spent enjoyable time together
- 2. Expressiveness:** whether the parent and child expressed their emotions to each other
- 3. Dealing with conflict:** whether the parent and child were able to deal with disagreements without arguing
- 4. Communication- listening:** whether the parent listened to the views and opinions of the child
- 5. Encouragement:** whether the parent encouraged their child to achieve their goals
- 6. Warmth:** whether the parent and child expressed affection for each other
- 7. Rules and boundaries:** whether the parent and child felt that there were clear rules that are followed in the home
- 8. Space:** whether the young person had their own space in the family home

Some of these factors were also discussed in the focus groups and interviews with parents and young people at the end of their time working with Family Gateway.

The 'baseline' measure was taken when families started working with Family Gateway, the 'midpoint' measurement was taken approximately half way through the family's time working with Family Gateway, usually between three and five months after the 'baseline'. The 'endpoint' measurement was completed once the family had finished their involvement with Family Gateway usually between five and seven months after the baseline.

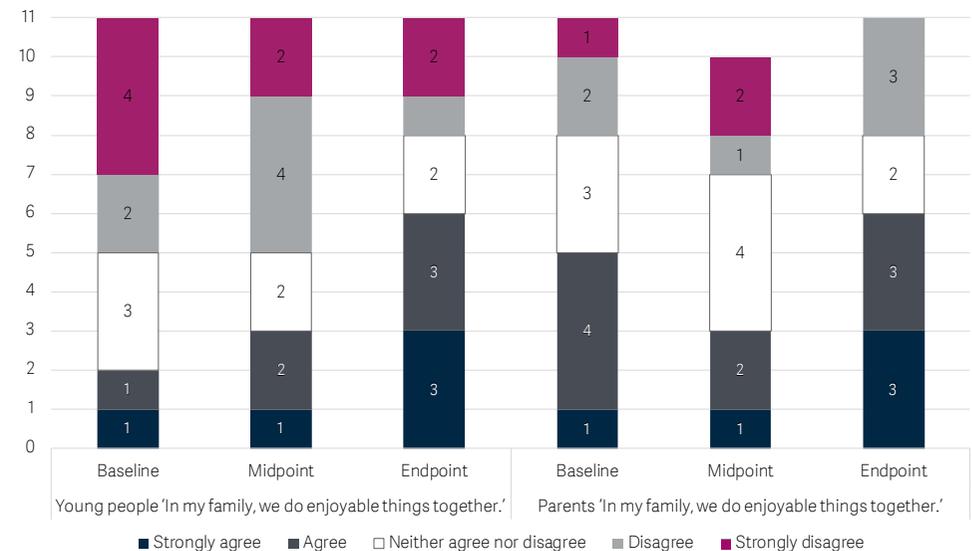
4.1.1. Cohesion: the extent to which a family is emotionally close, a feeling of togetherness

Family cohesion is the extent to which a family is emotionally close to one another and this closeness can be a 'protective factor' to external stressful events. Research measures family cohesiveness by looking at three factors: the extent to which families feel 'togetherness', spend time together and are emotionally close. This 'emotional closeness' is covered in the outcomes expressiveness and warmth (see sections 4.1.2 and 4.1.6).

Young people and parents were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt that their family 'do enjoyable things together' in order to establish the extent to which they felt a sense of family cohesion and enjoyed spending quality time together. Quality time together can be considered both an indicator of healthy relationships and a method of fostering good relationships.

FIGURE 6

Parents' and young people's scores on cohesion axis of outcome web (young people n=11, parent n=11)



Note: where some bars n=10, an axis of the outcome web was mistakenly incomplete

How to interpret the graphs

Each graph shows the young people's (left three bars) and the parents' (right three bars) scores on a particular outcome web axis. The exact statements are detailed under the bars. The three bars on each side represent the three time points of measurement.

The bottom two sections of the bars represent the number of young people or parents that 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the statements, as the statements were positive an increase in the size of the these sections of the bar indicates a positive impact.

**6 young people
and 5 parents** said their
family was spending
**more enjoyable
time together**

At the beginning of their time working with Family Gateway, most young people did not feel that they spent enjoyable time with their family and only two young people said they did. In contrast, just under half of parents said they spent enjoyable time together as a family (see Figure 6).

For young people, the likelihood that they felt they spent enjoyable time together increased during the time spent working the Family Gateway, most of this increase took place between the middle of the intervention and the end, perhaps indicating that other issues needed to be addressed initially before more families spent enjoyable time together. However, three young people still felt they did not spend enjoyably time as a family after having worked with Family Gateway.

Parents' sense of whether they spent enjoyable time together or not was similar to the young people's after working with Family Gateway with half agreeing that they did. When parents and children were matched within families it was apparent that their sense of whether they spent time together as a family was broadly aligned, especially after working with Family Gateway (see Figure 6).

Six young people and five parents increased the extent to which they felt they spent enjoyable time together (indicated on the 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' scale) after working with Family Gateway. However, around half of the families still did not feel they spent enjoyable

time together after having worked with Family Gateway, perhaps suggesting that they had not worked out other issues in their relationships.

Young people highlighted the importance of time spent together as a family and acknowledged that doing so could help repair or reinforce family bonds following conflict or stressful events. The brother of one of the at-risk young people explained:

"Probably the most that's helped us get on is whenever it's a birthday like cos we go out and have a meal and just stop arguing because it's a celebration. We just stop and think well, I may hate him sometimes but no matter what happens I'll always be able to rely on him... he'll always love me and... no matter what happens we're just family."

Some parents also acknowledged the importance of this time together but felt a lack of opportunities to spend time together may have exacerbated stress in the family leading to the difficulties which led to Family Gateway becoming involved. In reference to a stimulus photo discussed in the focus group a mother responded:

"I think this is how it is very occasionally but now I'd like it to be all the time, but obviously with my husband working away we don't spend a lot of family time together and I sometimes think if we had maybe we wouldn't be in the mess we are now."

These responses support the view that cohesion and specifically time spent together

is an important outcome when considering the impact of Family Gateway's work on family relationships.

However, other young people indicated that they did not spend time together with their families and in these cases the family relationships were often still fraught.

"Not really, because I work weekends and my mam does nights so when I get in from work, I just go straight to bed, so we don't really see each other."

For one family, living apart allowed them to better enjoy time spent together as the parent and young person were able to get on better. Family Gateway had supported the family to allow the young person to move out and live independently when the family relationship was breaking down, in this case, a 'managed move' with the support of Family Gateway had preserved the relationship between the parent and the young person which appeared to be highly beneficial.

"He doesn't live with us anymore and we get on better, so when he comes to sleep one odd night, he respects us because it's not his home anymore...He goes to the shop for us and stuff all the time, he helps us with his little brothers. We've just come back from a holiday to Spain and I was expecting it to be awful for that week thinking, "Oh God, he's going to be horrible, he's going to be how he was previously"; but he was absolutely brilliant."

FIGURE 7

Stimulus photo used in focus groups



Summary

- For some young people, working with Family Gateway appeared to increase the extent to which they felt they spent enjoyable time with their family and their parents tended to agree at endpoint. However, some young people and parents still did not feel this was the case.
- Young people's and parents' responses in the focus groups and interviews highlighted how time spent together was an important factor in healthy family relationships.
- Some families we interviewed felt that they did spend time together and this helped repair relationships in difficult times, however, others did not, reflecting the survey findings.
- For one family, Family Gateway's support to help the young person move out of the family home allowed the family to become more cohesive and maintain beneficial, enjoyable relationships.

4.1.2 Expressiveness: experiencing and expressing emotions to family members

Expressiveness is a key factor examined on many validated measures of family relationships. Emotional expressiveness is also an element of cohesion (see section 4.1.1. above) and of open and healthy communication (see also section 4.1.4).

Young people and their parents were asked whether they felt that in their family “we tell each other honestly how we feel” in order to establish the extent to which families were emotionally expressive.

Few young people felt they or their families were emotionally expressive when they started working with Family Gateway. However, some parents said their families did tell each other honestly how they felt, despite their children saying otherwise, perhaps indicating either that the young people were not actually honestly expressing their emotions or that young people felt their parents were not.

Working with Family Gateway appeared to increase the likelihood of young people feeling their families were emotionally expressive: after the intervention, only one disagreed this was the case, although four remained unsure answering ‘neither agree

9 young people and 6 parents said their family was more **emotionally expressive**

nor disagree’. Similarly, after working with Family Gateway, parents were less likely to disagree that their families were emotional expressive, though some were still unsure (see Figure 8).

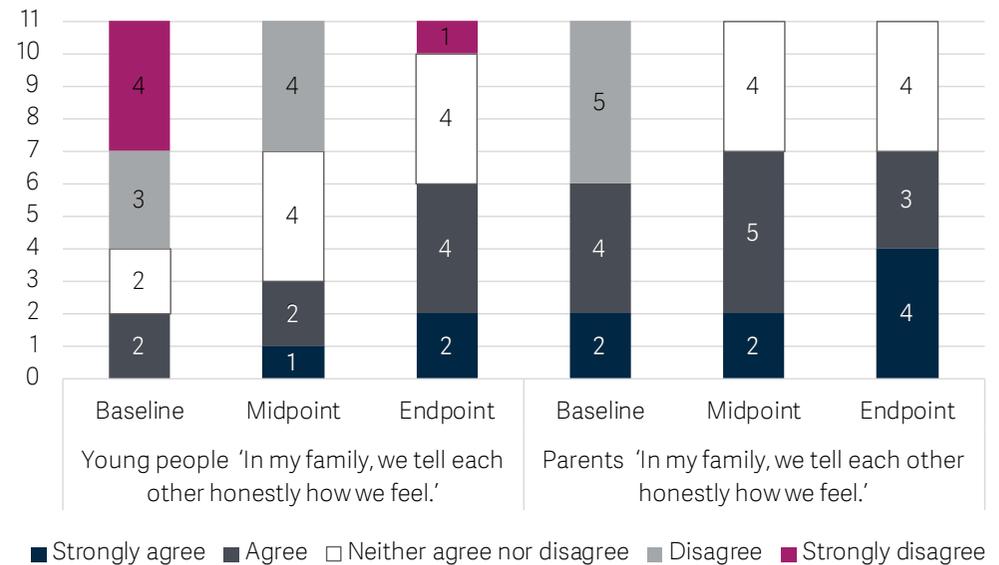
Within families, most young people and their parents gave similar responses after working with Family Gateway suggesting greater awareness of the fact that feelings were not expressed, even if they were not yet able to be more emotionally expressive.

During interviews, young people suggested that working with Family Gateway had supported them to talk about their emotions. In some cases, young people first opened up to their Family Entrepreneur and were then able to talk to their parent with the Family Entrepreneur’s support.

“It’s easier to talk to people about things than just bottle everything up...it makes you feel a lot better because you’ve got all of the stress load off your chest... she [the family entrepreneur] took us out and we spoke about things. And everything we spoke about just like got everything sorted and [then I] sat down and talked about it with my mam and then like we’ve just become like stronger than what we were since we started with gateway.”

FIGURE 8

Parents’ and young people’s scores on expressiveness axis of outcome web (young people n=11, parent n=11)



However, reflecting the survey findings, other young people still struggled to express their feelings to their parent or family members resulting in issues building up and causing conflict.

“I tend to just keep my mouth shut, which then builds up over time and then that ends up causing an argument because I just lose it after a while of building it all up, because I struggle to sit down and talk about my feelings sometimes.”

This quote suggests that some young people still needed support to express their feelings to their parents. For this young person, towards the end of the project family mediation had supported this process but Family Entrepreneurs highlighted that often longer-term support is needed to ensure young people and parents can express their feelings consistently in a healthy way following years of dysfunctional communication. However, this same young person (as quoted above) did indicate that Family Gateway had had a positive impact on their emotions, despite not being able to be emotionally expressive to her family.

“Yes, they’ve calmed my anger down, I’m not angry anymore, like I used to be a really angry person like all the time over everything and anything, whereas now I’m a bit more calm and laid-back and they’ve just helped us see things a bit more positively instead of looking so negatively at everything.”

Summary

- Overall, at the start of their time working with Family Gateway, only a few young people felt that their families were emotionally expressive, though parents were more likely to think so.
- Nine young people and six parents working increased the extent to which they felt their family was emotionally expressive during the time they worked with Family Gateway.
- On the other hand, some young people and parents still felt unsure about whether the family was emotionally expressive. This was reflected in the interviews with young people.
- During interviews, some young people highlighted that working with Family Gateway had allowed them to open up, start expressing their emotions firstly with their Family Entrepreneur and then with their parent, whilst other young people were still struggling with doing so.

4.1.3 Conflict and dealing with conflict

Conflict in the family home is a key cause and a key symptom of relationship breakdown and in some cases an escalating conflict can result in a young person leaving the family home suddenly with nowhere to go, leading them into a particularly vulnerable type of homelessness such as sleeping on the streets.

The level of conflict in a family home and individuals’ ability to deal with disagreements and conflict are often used as key measures of family relationship health. Disagreements and some conflict within the families Family Gateway works with is to be expected due to external stressors such as poverty and already fractured relationships. Thus, in this area we focus on families’ ability to deal with conflict rather than completely avoid it. Young people and parents indicated the extent to which they felt they could have a disagreement with one another that would not escalate into an argument.

At the start of their time working with Family Gateway both young people and parents were unlikely to say they could deal with disagreements without it becoming a conflict (see Figure 9). This outcome had the most negative scores at baseline compared to the other seven relationship factors, suggesting that conflict was a particular problem for most families, perhaps because it is a symptom of other issues such as a lack of emotional expressiveness, something that was highlighted by one young person in previous section.

The number of young people and parents that felt they could deal with disagreements increased during the time families were working with Family Gateway and after completing the intervention, more young people and parents, seven young people

7 young people and 9 parents said their family was better at **dealing with conflict**

and nine parents felt their family was better at dealing with conflict. At the end of the programme, only two young people and two parents, did not feel they could avoid arguments and conflict (see Figure 9). In one case the parent and child were from the same family and in the other they were from different families.

Most young people and parents who took part in focus groups and interviews felt that Family Gateway had supported them to deal with conflict more effectively or to avoid escalating disagreements into conflicts. Two parents explained that they had got better at listening to their teenage children and that they approached conversations about rules or a young person’s behaviour in a less confrontational way.

“They’ve made us feel like to be more calm instead of like reacting quite quick and arguing with [my son]...Like [my family entrepreneur] was like ‘Well I know what you’re doing wrong, you’re not letting him speak and you’re shouting over him, so give him a chance to speak,’ so now I always have that in my head now where I’ll just listen to what they said and see if that works... I’ll let him have his say.”

“Now I kind of try to pick my moments more, so when the earphones aren't in so I'm not screaming at her, and I'll just say, 'Look, I need five minutes, I need to sit down with you,' and 'What you did the other day, your behaviour, it really upset us. I was disappointed,' and we will sit and have a frank discussion.”

Young people tended to highlight mediation as a key factor in supporting them to discuss issues without creating an argument.

“[When Family Gateway] like mediates it helps me and my mum get on. You know it's like when someone's like sitting watching you when you work... because sometimes me and my mam struggle to get our words

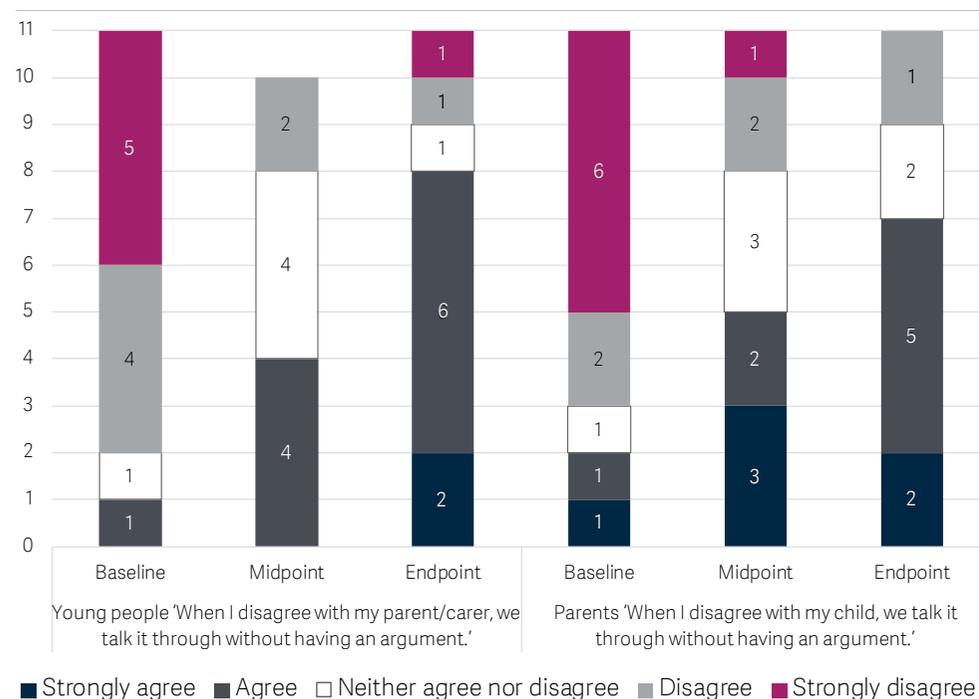
out to each other and we end up arguing but then Jill's helped me really.”

However, some young people did not yet feel like they could do this without Family Gateway's support, again indicating the need for a more prolonged intervention.

“Yes [mediation helped], because we couldn't kick off or lose our tempers, we had to stay calm. Yes, it did, actually, the first few weeks afterwards, we stuck to it and stayed calm but then it just slowly got less and less communication and more shouting. ...I'm still willing to try it, yes, but it's got to work both ways.”

FIGURE 9

Parents' and young people's scores on dealing with conflict axis of outcome web (young people n=11, parent n=11)



Summary

- Working with Family Gateway appeared to increase the extent to which parents and young people felt able to deal with conflict.
- Before the Family Gateway intervention most parents and young people felt that they were not able to disagree without arguing. After working with Family Gateway over half of young people and nearly all parents felt their family was better at avoiding conflict.
- Parents highlighted that the strategies Family Gateway had supported them to develop were effective in avoiding conflict with their child.
- Young people felt that family mediation had supported them to reduce conflict with their parent though some needed continued support in that area.

4.1.4 Communication: the extent to which families communicate openly and honestly and listen to one another

Effective communication is an important element of healthy family relationships^{vi}. Poor communication can lead to conflict or a breakdown in relationships.

This outcome focuses on the listening element of communication, specifically the extent to which the parent listens to the young person. To an extent, the expressive

side of communication is covered in the emotional expressiveness outcome (see section 4.1.2) Young people responded to the statement 'My parent listens to my views, ideas and worries' while parents' statement responded to: 'I listen to my child's views, ideas and worries'.

Before starting to work with Family Gateway most young people did not feel that their parents listened to them. In contrast, parents indicated that they did listen to their children (see Figure 10). This suggests not only that children felt unhappy with the communication between them and their parents but that parents did not agree with

their children's perceptions of this issue. The fact that young people did not feel listened to may have contributed to the difficulties in dealing with conflict that were highlighted in the previous section.

Once families had been working with Family Gateway for around three months, more young people felt their parents listened to them. At the end of the intervention only one young person disagreed that they were listened to and their parent also recognised issues they had previously not recognised.

In the interviews, after having worked with Family Gateway, one young person still felt they were not listened to and this was a source of conflict. They also seemed to find it difficult to communicate.

"I just feel like I don't get listened to, or... sometimes people take it the wrong way and not the way that I mean it, because the way I've explained it probably hasn't been the best way, and I just stay quiet to save any arguments...my mam, like when she started doing the AA meetings, I tried to tell her that I was proud of her doing them, but it came out more of a pity party, like a bit sarcastic, but it wasn't meant to seem sarcastic... so my mam took offence...I was just trying to say I was proud of her taking the first step to getting better."

7 young people said their parents were listening to them more

FIGURE 10

Parents' and young people's scores on communication (listening) axis of outcome web (young people n=11, parent n=11)

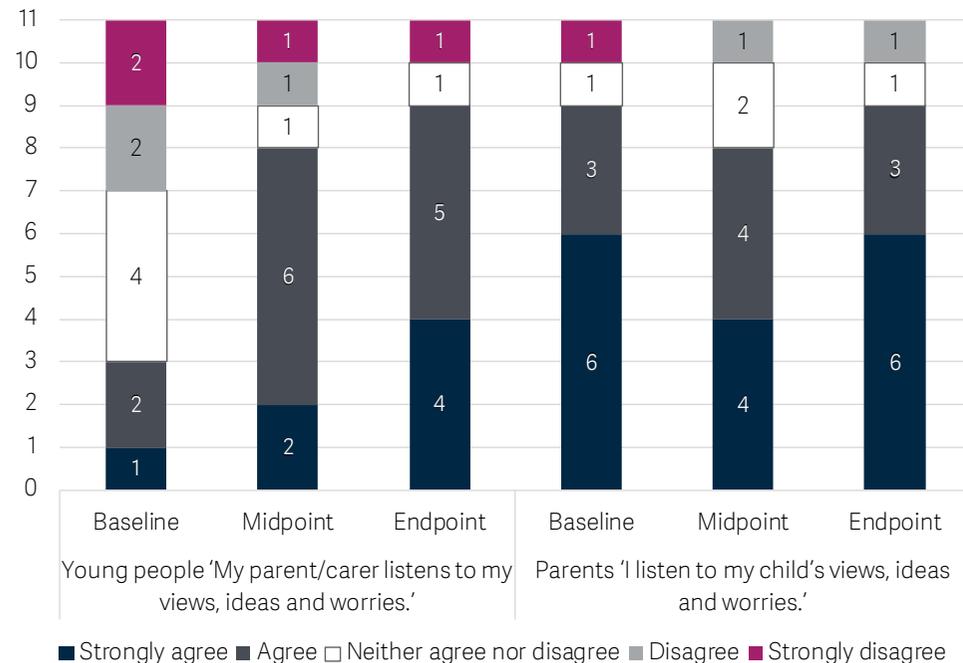


FIGURE 11

Stimulus photos used in the focus groups





Often, parents raised technology as an issue, saying it could hamper communication and therefore cause conflict:

“I think it’s like in [those photos] (see figure 11) ...Me and my daughter constantly in that position, and when we’re not doing that, she’s on the phone. We’ve got so many issues with her behaviour, straightway the phone comes out, headphones go in, she can’t hear you, it’s like you don’t exist... she just walks away... she just separates herself from everybody.”

Parents also suggested that phones and technology sometimes limited their own communication with their children.

“I’m always on my phone but like my two youngest, they like the little tablets, and they come home after a weekend at their nana’s, they don’t come in and say hello to me, they’re kind of like going upstairs straight for the little tablets and... And then I’ll complain but...they’ll go, ‘But you’re always on your phone’ and I think, ‘Oh maybe I am you know?’”

Nevertheless, working with Family Gateway meant that parents listened more to young people and young people found it easier to talk to their parents.

“I listen to him more. Instead of shouting...So I feel like I don’t nag at him as much. I understand him a little bit...I can relate to him a bit better...like, ‘Ah well I was like that at that age and I should give him a chance and that.’ So, we get on a hell of a lot better. We’ll have a laugh together as well.”

“Yeah things have gotten more easier to like talk to my mam about things.”

Family Gateway also appeared to have acted as a bridge for families where communication had completely broken down. One young person explained that when he became homeless, he stopped talking to his family and only through the mediation arranged by Family Gateway was he able to repair those relationships and return home.

“I didn’t speak to me mam for a long time and then we’d just like sort of sat down Family Gateway helped like, set up a big like... meeting where we could all just talk to each other and that... It just helped got problems across and sorted.”

Summary

- Working with Family Gateway appeared to have a positive impact on the extent to which some young people felt their parents listened to them.
- However, some young people still felt they were not listened to at the end of the project.
- Before working with Family Gateway, parents often did not recognise the problem their children identified with their communication but after the intervention parents’ judgments of whether they listened to their children were more in line with their children’s judgments.
- Some parents and young people suggested that working with Family Gateway had given them strategies to improve their communication, in one case, this had allowed a young person to return to the family home after being homeless for a month.

4.1.5 Involvement and Encouragement: the extent to which family members are interested in and support one another

'Affective involvement' is a common factor on family relationship scales and refers to the extent to which family members are perceived to be interested, concerned with one another, and to value each other.^{vii} However, Family Gateway identified encouragement, as part of this involvement and concern for each other, as particularly important. Therefore, to measure this 'involvement and

encouragement' at the three time points, young people indicated the extent to which they felt their parents encouraged them to reach their goals on the outcome web. Similarly, parents indicated whether they felt they encouraged their child.

When they began their involvement with Family Gateway the extent to which young people felt encouraged by their parents varied, with some feeling encouraged and some feeling ambivalent or not encouraged. In contrast, at the start of the intervention parents were more likely to agree that they encouraged their child than the young people were to agree they were encouraged (see Figure 12).

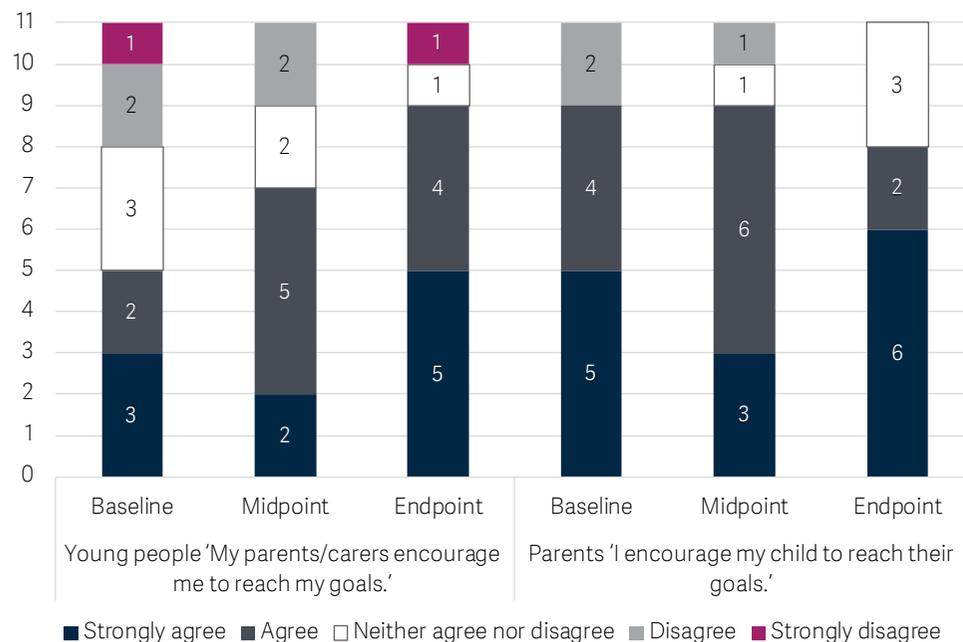
This apparent difference between parents' and young peoples' perception of encouragement could be due to some parents feeling they were more encouraging than they were, or due to some young people not acknowledging encouragement that was given, or alternatively that some parents did not feel able to admit that they did not encourage their child. Regardless, Family Gateway aimed to work with each family to increase positive relationships and communication in order ensure parents did encourage their children and that children felt able to receive this encouragement.

This support with communication and positive relationships appears to have been successful to an extent as after working with family gateway young people and parents' perceptions were more aligned (see Figure 12). During the intervention and once Family Gateway had finished working with the family, young people were more likely to perceive that their parents were encouraging them, though a few still did not feel this. Parents' responses mirrored this as most felt they encouraged their child after working with Family Gateway. In the focus group, one parent explained that her Family Gateway worker had helped her realise that she needed to listen to and support her son more.

"Well I show him that I care more; I didn't back then; I was quite blunt towards him. And I encourage him and stuff like that."

FIGURE 12

Parents' and young people's scores on encouragement axis of outcome web (young people n=11, parent n=11)



Summary

- After receiving support from family gateway young people felt more encouraged and parents' assessments of how encouraging they were seemed more in line with their children's perception of their involvement and encouragement.
- Young people were more likely to feel their parents encouraged them after the family had worked with Family Gateway.
- A parent involved in the focus group recognised that being more encouraging towards their children had improved their relationships.

4.1.6 Warmth: the extent to which families express affection

The extent that family members express affection towards each other is known as 'familial warmth' and is a common factor on measures of family relationships^{vii}. Where families do not show warmth and affection to one another this could be symptomatic of high levels of conflict and relationship breakdown. A lack of warmth could also be the cause of a young person's poor behaviour. Low parental warmth increases the likelihood of the young person engaging in risky behaviour^{viii} while high parental warmth makes young people more likely to be open with their parents about their behaviour and less likely to take risks^{ix}.

Therefore, parents and young people were asked to rate the extent to which they 'express love and affection for one another'.

Before starting to work with Family Gateway, despite some issues identified against other outcomes such as dealing with conflict and communication, over half of young people and parents felt that they expressed affection for one another, though a few did not (Figure 13).

However, in some families, young people's and parents' scores did not align at the beginning of the programme, with parents rating warmth and affection more highly than their child in two families and the young people rating affection more highly in another two families. This disagreement between parents and their children was

largely reconciled after working with Family Gateway. Although not all scores became positive, where warmth was rated poorly, this was consistent within the family indicating that the problem was mutually recognised.

Overall, the number of young people and parents saying that their families show affection for each other rose at the end of the work with Family Gateway (see Figure 13). However, amongst both parents and young people the likelihood that they felt the family was warm and affectionate dipped between baseline and midpoint before rising at the end of the intervention. This pattern of 'dip and rise' is seen in other outcomes including parents' assessment of family cohesion (see previous section), young people's assessment of their susceptibility to peer pressure and parents' assessment of whether young people had their own space (see later sections). It suggests that in some cases parents or young people went through a process of acknowledging a problem through working with Family Gateway before being able to address the issue and improve the situation.

Young people highlighted the importance of affection and warmth in the family unit as a key component of 'what family means' and felt that they would not be able to get this 'love and support' elsewhere, again highlighting the importance of warmth in family relationships.

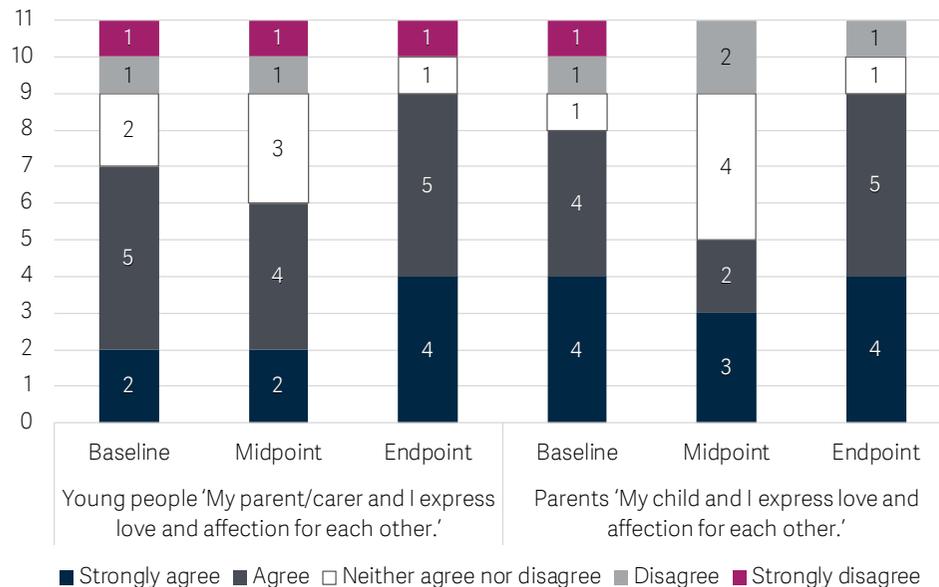
"[Family means] just love and like affection really cause it's like... you've known them your whole life... it's all people that you've got and they stick by you through everything in your whole life [they'll] stick by you."

Some young people highlighted that working with Family Gateway had helped repair their family relationships and they were grateful for this because they valued the support from their family highly.

"Because you never get the love and support that you do from your family. You might get some from your friends, you might get it from other people but deep down it's your family... they'll love you support you no matter what you've done."

FIGURE 13

Parent and young people's scores on warmth axis of outcome web (young people n=11, parent n=11)



Summary

- Most, but not all, parents and young people felt that they expressed affection to each other before working with Family Gateway. However, within families there was some disagreement between parents and their children about whether this was the case.
- At the end of their work with Family Gateway more young people and parents felt they showed warmth and affection in their families and for the few that did not, both children and parents in that family recognised the issue.
- Young people that were interviewed valued warmth and affection in their family highly and some felt that working with Family Gateway had helped repair relationships and increase this warmth.





4.1.7 Rules: the extent to which families feel there are clear rules which are followed

Validated scales of family relationships often include 'behaviour control' as an important factor, this refers to the extent to which the family members feel there are agreed rules which guide their behaviour^{vii}. Given that adolescents' behaviour is often a cause of family relationship breakdown and therefore homelessness and that young people are likely to react to stressful situations by acting out this is a particularly important outcome.

Young people and parents were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt their family members 'follow a clear set of rules.'

At the start of their time working with Family Gateway, most young people felt that this was not the case. Similarly, most parents did not feel that the family followed a clear set of rules (see Figure 14). Parents also emphasised that young people not following rules or the routines of the household was a source of difficulty and conflict.

"I felt like I was buying him to behave and he never did... it was always arguments from the minute we woke up... I found like he caused a lot of problems in my little family routine."

Before working with Family Gateway, there was a lack of agreement between young people's and parents' assessment of whether the family members followed rules: some parents and some young people said the family did follow rules but the young person or parent in their family did not think so. This

indicates that even for those that answered positively before working with Family Gateway there were still issues regarding whether or not rules were consistently followed.

During their time working with Family Gateway, almost all young people, and most parents, increased the extent to which they felt there were clear rules in the family (see Figure 14). After working with Family Gateway, more young people and parents said their family followed a clear set of rules though just under half still did not think so. However, as in other areas, there was more consensus within families: where young people said they followed rules, their parents said the same and where they did not think so, their parents also identified that this was an issue.

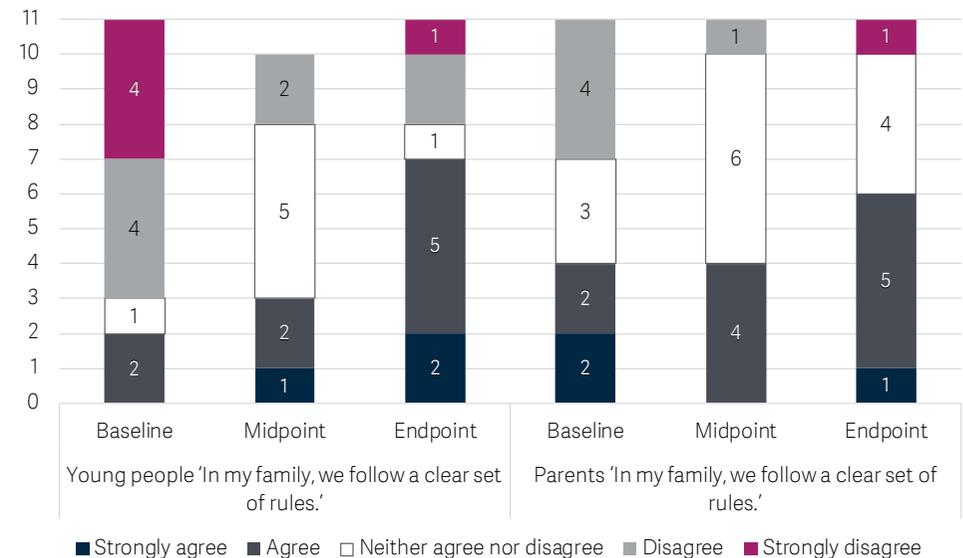
Some parents suggested that working with Family Gateway had allowed them to start

setting clearer rules in the home and to insist that their children followed them. In one case, this led to a parent asking the child to leave the family home until they followed the rules, and in the long term resulted in the young person returning and subsequently improving their behaviour.

"I think they've given me the courage to say to my son, 'No, you're not coming in this house. No, I will not put up with your behaviour.' I think it is because I've had the backing of Family Gateway I can say, 'No, I'm going to stand strong.'"

FIGURE 14

Parents' and young people's scores on rules and boundaries axis of outcome web (young people n=11, parent n=11)



Peer pressure and young people's behaviour with friends

Young people's susceptibility to peer pressure can influence the extent to which they follow rules and boundaries set out by their parents and their behaviour with their friends can be a cause of conflict or concern to their families. Family Gateway identified this as an important factor affecting family relationships and at the beginning of the project planned to work with young people to support them to see where they were engaging in risky behaviour due to peer pressure and how to resist this.

Thus, young people and parents were also asked to complete two survey questions on the extent to which young people's behaviour was affected by peer pressure and on whether this caused conflict with parents.

Young people's behaviour with their friends was often an important source of tension.

“My family think some of my friends are okay and some of them are a bit mad. They think some of them are bad influences and some of them are good ones.”

“I did have a best friend which my mam didn't like, and she banned her from the house because everyone thought we were bad influences on each other because we used to get in trouble at school.”

Before working with Family Gateway almost all parents thought their child had difficulty saying 'no' when their friends told them to do something they did not want to do (see Figure 15). In contrast, around half of young people thought they could easily say no. After working with Family Gateway, parents became less likely to feel this was a severe issue, as they were less likely to 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree', though many remained ambivalent. A few young people also indicated that they were now more likely to be able to say "no" to their friends.

Therefore, working with Family Gateway also reduced the extent to which parents and young people felt that the young person misbehaving with friends was a source of conflict in the family. At the start of their time working with Family Gateway, around half of parents and young people said that the young person got 'in trouble with [their] parents because they do things [their] friends tell them to do' (see Figure 16). At endpoint, only a few young people and no parents said this was the case, suggesting that it was no longer a source of conflict in most families.

One young person acknowledged that doing things because his friends told him had negatively affected his behaviour.

“It's like I've got ADHD so if someone suggests doing something stupid, I'll probably do it... Like going into abandoned buildings and that, things you shouldn't really do, you can get in trouble for it, but it's a fun thing to do... and then some of the times it's bad. Some

of the stuff they say we should do has worse consequences.”

Since working with Family Gateway and returning to the family home, the young person felt they had stopped spending time with those people they felt were 'a bad influence'.

“When I left my home, I was taking drugs and that, so I've stopped taking them now. I've calmed down, I don't hang around with the people I used to hang around with getting us in trouble.”

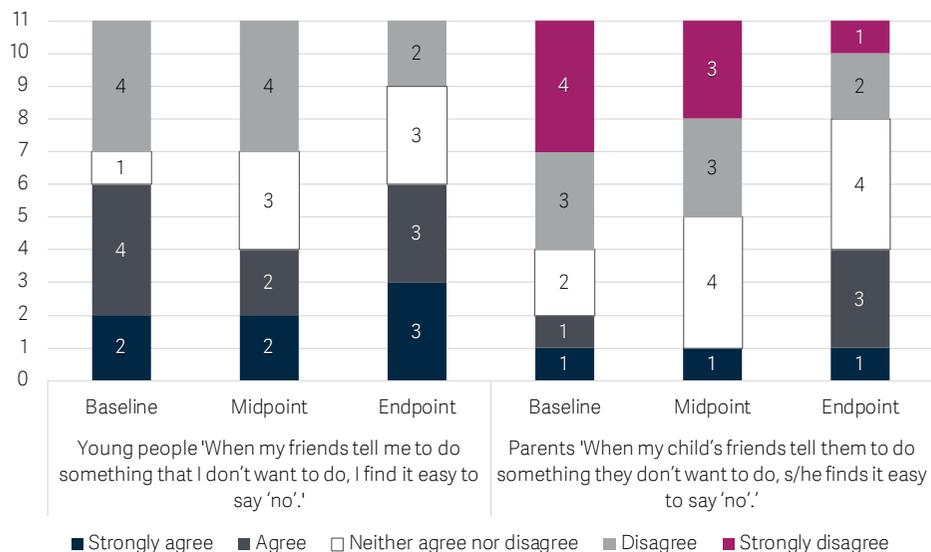
Other young people felt they were unlikely to bow to peer pressure but could nonetheless get themselves into trouble by acting impulsively. However, one explained that talking to their Family Entrepreneur helped calm them down and avoid impulsive actions.

“Not really. I've never been one that follows the crowd, if you know what I mean, I've always just done my own thing. Half the time it's not the right thing to do but I'll just do it anyway. I'm very impulsive... I'll do things in the moment, and then think about it afterwards.”

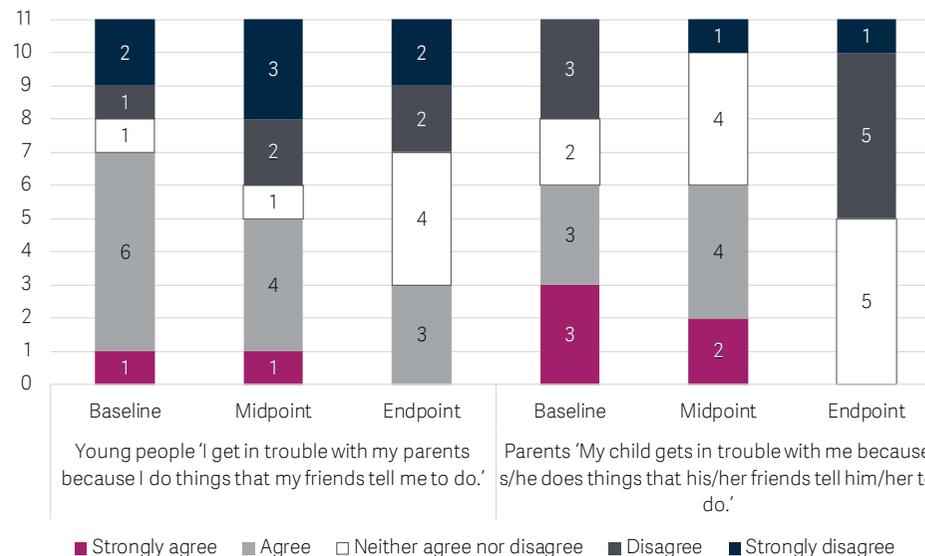
8 young people and 6 parents said that their family were better at **following a clear set of rules**

FIGURE 15

Parents' and young people's responses to peer pressure survey question (young people n=11, parent n=11)

**FIGURE 16**

Parents' and young people's responses to peer pressure survey question (young people n=11, parent n=11)



Note: in contrast with other outcomes and charts, on figure 16 '(strongly) disagree' indicates a positive response and is therefore in blue

Summary

- Not following rules in the family seemed to be an issue for most families before they started working with Family Gateway.
- After their time working with the Family Entrepreneur, more young people and parents felt that they followed rules in their family
- Some parents and young people did not feel this was the case after working with Family Gateway, but in these cases there tended to be more consensus within the family that this was an issue.
- Some parents felt that working with Family Gateway had helped them lay down rules and boundaries more firmly in their households which in some cases had, in the long term, a positive effect on young people's behaviour and family relationships.
- Young people's behaviour with their friends sometimes involved breaking rules and boundaries and was identified as a source of conflict between parents and children.
- Parents were more likely than young people at the beginning of the project to feel that their children were susceptible to peer pressure.
- After working with Family Gateway parents were less likely to think there was severe issue and some young people reported finding it easier to avoid peer pressure.
- Parents and young people were both less likely to report that a young person's behaviour with their friends was a source of tension and conflict after working with Family Gateway.

4.1.8 Space: the extent to which a young person has their own space in the family home

If young people do not have their own space in the family home this can become a source of tension leading to strain on family relationships and a risk that young people feel pushed out of the home. Overcrowding, exacerbated by poverty, can then lead young people to leave the family home and become homeless.

Before starting their work with Family Gateway, most young people did not feel they had their own space that was respected by their family (see Figure 17). Parents were slightly more likely to say

that their children did have their own space but just over half acknowledged that their children did not. There was some disagreement on this within families: in two families the parent 'strongly agreed' that that their children had their own space while their children disagreed that they did.

After the first few months of working with Family Gateway, at midpoint, more young people and parents felt they had their own space in the home, but half did not and some disagreement within families remained.

After the work with Family Gateway was completed, most young people felt they had their own space in the family home and their parents' responses were

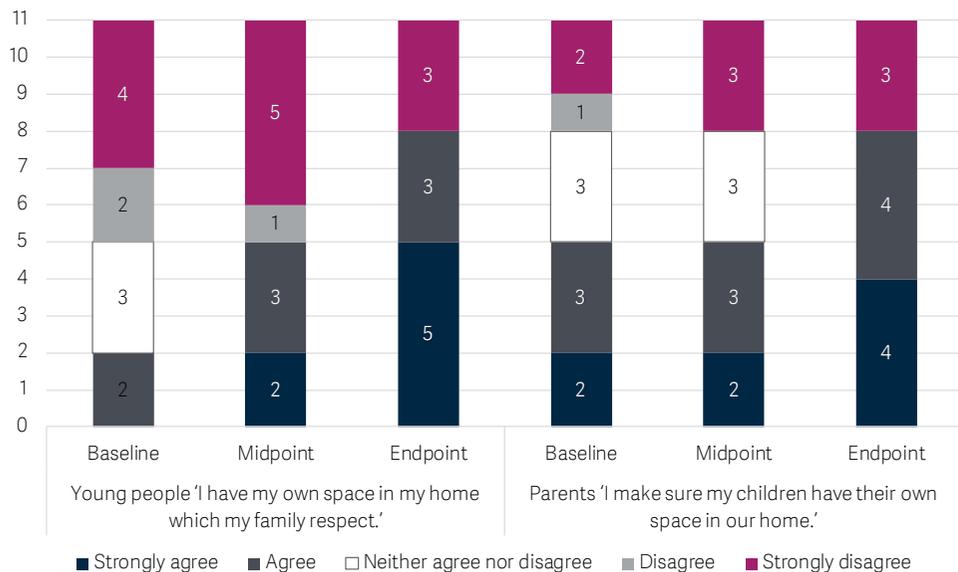
almost exactly the same, indicating more consensus on what constitutes a young person having their own respected space.

This suggests that working with Family Gateway may help families to ensure that a young person has their own space and help young people and parents to establish what a 'respected' space entails.

In some cases, this was likely a result of Family Gateway supporting a family to find appropriate accommodation, such as in Family One (see section 3), in others the Family Entrepreneur helped the parent and child agree how a young person's space could be respected.

FIGURE 17

Parent and young people's scores on space axis of outcome web (young people n=11, parent n=11)



Summary

- Working with Family Gateway increased the likelihood that a young person would feel they had their own respected space in the home and the likelihood that their parents would agree.
- For those young people who, at the end of their time working with Family Gateway, still did not agree they had a space in the home their parent acknowledged that this was the case.



4.1.9 Knowledge of support services and ability to seek support

Many of the families which Family Gateway work with are unlikely to approach support services themselves. Family Gateway's referral and engagement model means their first contact with a family involves going to a family's home to introduce themselves and offer support. In some cases, families react negatively to this and are initially distrustful. Family Gateway works to build up trust and then acts as a hub to other support services. Family Gateway identified families' knowledge of and trust of support services, and their sense that they 'know where to go' for support, as an important outcome for this project.

There can be stigma around seeking support, with some parents concerned that they will be blamed, seen as a 'bad parent' or even have their children taken away from them. This often results in the family reaching crisis point before receiving support, therefore, knowing where to seek support is crucially important if effective prevention is to work.

Parents and young people were asked the extent to which they agreed with the statements 'I know where to get help when things are going wrong at home.' and 'If we are not getting on as a family, I feel comfortable asking for help and support from support services.'

After working with Family Gateway, young people and parents were more likely to say they knew where to get support. Before the intervention, most said they did not know where to seek help and support, while at the end, all parents and almost all young people felt that they did (see Figure 18). However, one young person said they did not know where to seek support whilst a further two were unsure suggesting that more work was needed to build trust between Family Gateway and these

young people and to build young people's awareness of other services available.

Similarly, before working with Family Gateway most parents and young people indicated that they did not feel comfortable seeking support, though a few did (see Figure 19). Working with Family Gateway appeared to make both young people and parents feel more comfortable about seeking support. At endpoint, all parents felt comfortable seeking support while almost all young people did. Again, a few young people did not agree, suggesting more work was needed to help these young people engage with and trust services.

Summary

- Working with Family Gateway increased the likelihood that young people and parents would know how to access support and would feel able to do so.
- Before working with Family Gateway, most young people and parents said they did not know where to seek support and did not feel comfortable doing so.
- After the intervention, all parents and over two thirds of young people knew where to get help and felt comfortable asking for support.
- Two young people still felt unsure and one young person said they did not know where to access support, suggesting that some young people needed continued support.

FIGURE 18

Young people and parents responses to survey question on knowledge of available support (young people n=11, parent n=11)

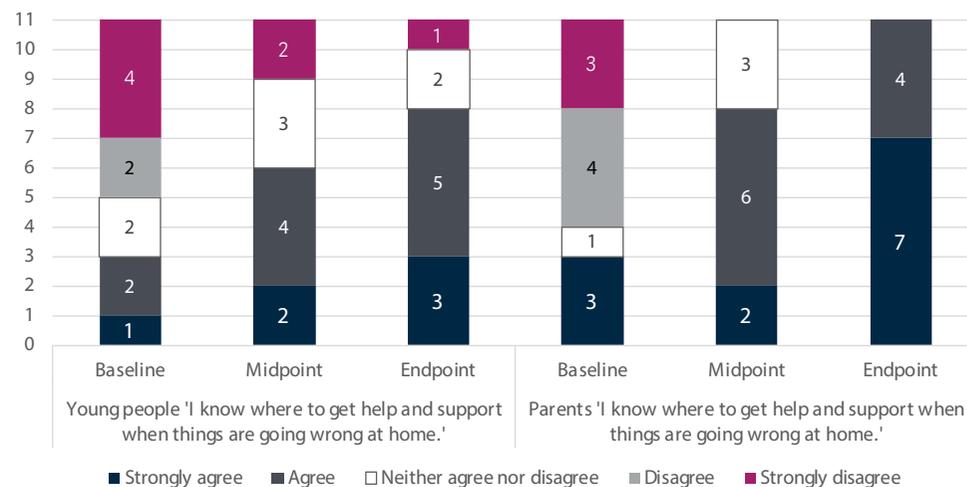
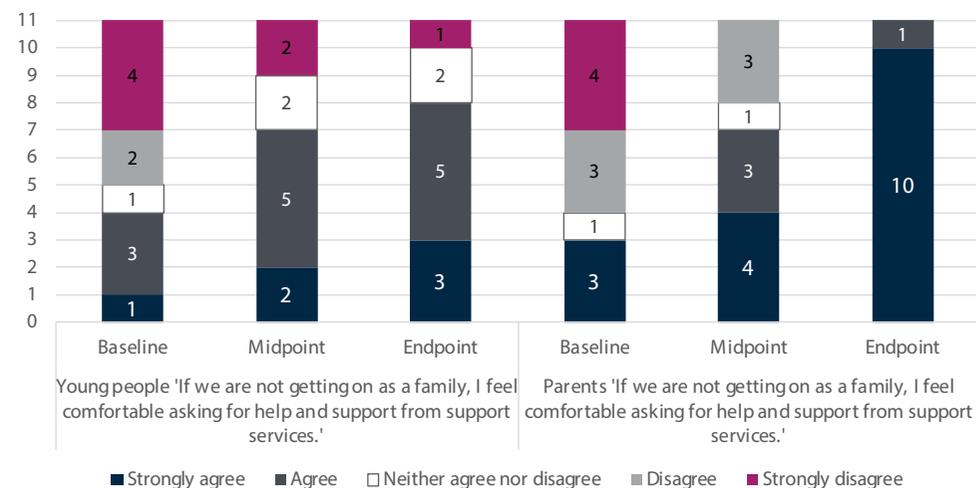


FIGURE 19

Young people and parents responses to survey question on feeling comfortable asking for support for support services (young people n=11, parent n=11)



4.2 Impact on long-term goal to prevent homelessness

The long term goal of Family Gateway's intervention is to prevent homelessness, ideally by keeping the young person in the family home. However, in some cases, the family home is not the ideal or a safe option for a young person and thus preventing homelessness by arranging alternative accommodation for a young person to transition to is the 'best' option. Where young people do experience homelessness, Family Gateway aims to provide crisis support, support the family to ensure the young person returns home, if this is safe and possible, and seeks to prevent homelessness reoccurring. Family Gateway worked with ten families but with eleven young people as there were twins in one family.

Homelessness was prevented in seven of the ten families (for eight young people):

- Homelessness was prevented for five young people by keeping the young person in the family home and the young person's risk of homelessness is now considered to be much reduced.
- Three young people (one from the same family as another young person who did not become homeless) were prevented from becoming homeless as they were supported by Family Gateway to transition into independent accommodation as the family home was not considered to be the best or safest place for them.

In the three other families, young people became technically homeless but were supported by Family Gateway to access safe accommodation and in some cases return to the family home:

- In one case, the young person moved in with their boyfriend, whilst in the other two cases Family Gateway arranged temporary accommodation for the young person.
- In two of these three cases, Family Gateway continued to provide support and mediation to the family and the young person and the young person returned to the family home.
- In the one case where the young person has not returned to the family home, Family Gateway continued to support the young person to arrange permanent independent accommodation, which, it could be argued, is a positive option for this young person given their highly complex home environment and the ongoing challenges their parent faces.



5.

Process evaluation

5.1 Key elements of Family Gateway's approach

In the focus groups and interviews parents and young people were asked: whether Family Gateway helped them, what was useful about working with Family Gateway, and, whether there was anything about Family Gateway's work that needed to be improved. Family entrepreneurs were also interviewed and asked to identify key elements of the approach that they found be successful.

No parents or young people identified anything that needed to change or be improved about Family Gateway's service, other than to say that more Family Entrepreneurs were needed so that the support could be more widely available.

Therefore, responses about how Family Gateway worked and the key elements of what made their approach successful were analysed and the following themes were identified:

1. A clear distinction between Family Gateway and other official support services, in particular Social Services
2. The 'Barefoot Professional' model
3. Mediation

4. Acting as a hub linking families to other services
5. Early intervention
6. One-to-one support: 'A listening ear'

5.1.1. Distinction between Family Gateway and Social Services: 'they're different to Social Services'

All three parents included in the focus group had previously had negative experiences with official support services, most often Social Services, and in one case, with another unspecified family support organisation. These negative experiences had occurred even when parents sought support themselves rather than being officially referred:

"I phoned Children's Services and they put me in touch with... it wasn't Family Gateway, it was a similar sort of organisation. But they came in and they basically told us I was a useless mother and I should be doing this,

I should be doing that, and I had five children at home and the house was a mess and all of this and... you know...that didn't help."

Parents felt that their experience of working with Family Gateway was more positive and specifically 'less judgemental'.

"They're different to Social Services... Social Services come in and judge you straightaway but then they're more like... I feel like they've experienced what we have and they're on our side kind of thing."

"It's just like a big family there and you feel welcome, they don't make you feel like... like with social services sometimes you feel that you're getting looked down on or you're just an issue whereas with them, they make you feel like you're part of them."

The Family Entrepreneurs highlighted that distinguishing themselves from Social Services was an important first step when engaging with families due to families' previous negative experiences, the social stigma of being involved with Social Services and parents' fear of having their children taken into care.

5.1.2. The 'Barefoot Professional' model: "they can empathise with what you're talking about"

Closely related to the importance of separating themselves from social services was the success of the 'Barefoot Professional' model: employing local members of the community who have experience similar difficulties to those they support and training them as mediators and to support families with a range of issues. Whereas Social Workers were seen as not understanding, being judgemental and hiding the process of support from parents, Family Entrepreneurs were seen as empathetic, open and honest.

Parents' frequently highlighted the fact that Family Entrepreneurs had experienced similar issues in their own lives as a key factor in why they felt they could open up to them. In contrast, they often criticised Social Workers as not understanding their issues as they had not experienced similar problems or circumstances, as one parent explained:

"Half of them [social workers], they've got no kids. they try to give you advice on how to bring your kids up. But you just read that the books or why am I going to listen to you and these people have actual kids, families. Their kids have done the same as what mine has."

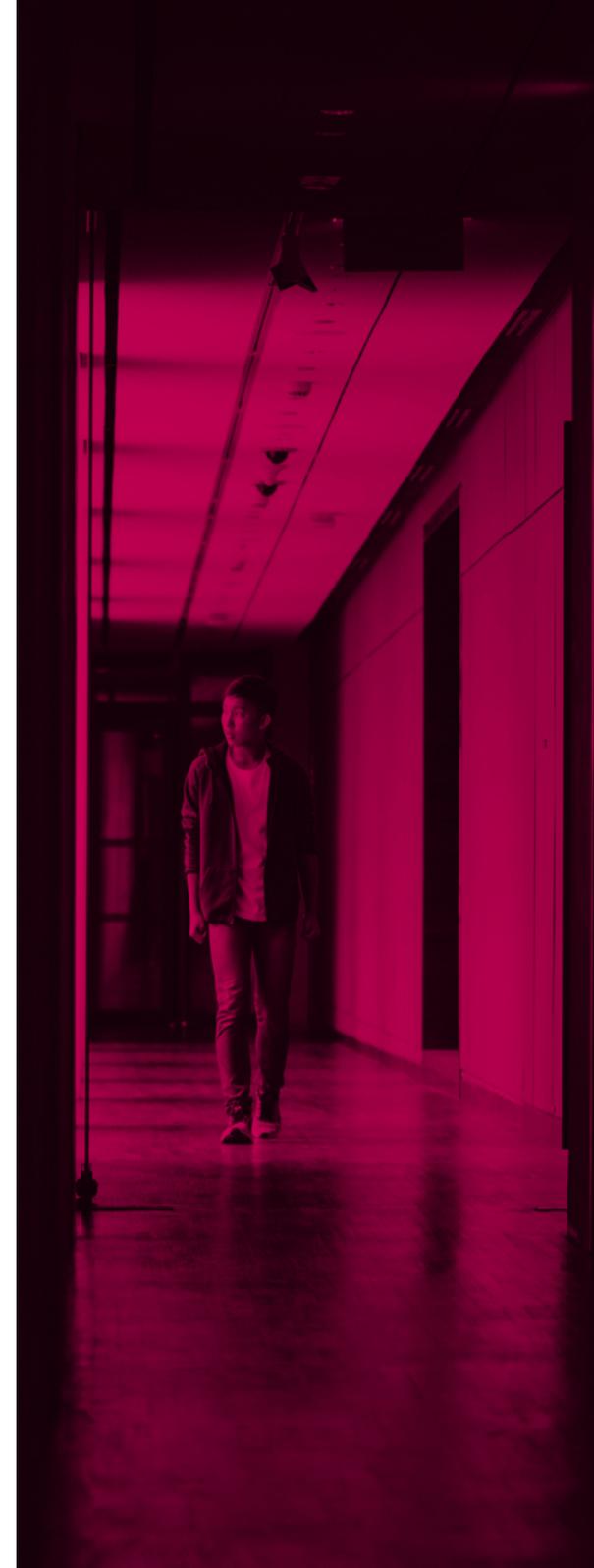
Parents felt that Family Gateway workers understood their issues and could empathise, which helped with building a relationship.

"I think it's just been like the pure understanding with them... the experience of obviously being through this themselves so that gives you a level of understanding so when they talk to you, they can empathise about what you're talking about and what the saying because they've been through it themselves."

"Because you can relate, you know they understand and they relate to you, you know what I mean? It makes a bit more comfortable to talk about because you know what they've gone through and where they are now, and it kind of motivates you to want to be where they are."

This shared experience also meant that parents were less likely to feel 'judged,' which was one fear which stopped them seeking support.

"She kinds of told us it had happened to her. Her daughter went on exactly the same. This had happened, this had happened. I kind of felt... I was more bothered I was going to





get judged as a parent. like a crap parent... And she wasn't like that, total opposite. She lived on my estate and she follow through with the things she said she was going to do which doesn't happen very often."

Family Entrepreneurs also felt that sharing their experiences helped them build relationships and rapport with young people:

"The first thing I would say to a teenager is, 'Listen, I was exactly where you are because I left home when I was fifteen, this is what I done, this is the kind of things that I got up to', and they kind of look at me and [gasps], 'No! Did you?'...then you start building things up so then they sort of think well actually, she is just a normal person. Obviously, I tell them I've got three children now and I'm, you know, I've done better in my life."

The 'Barefoot Professional' model not only allows Family Entrepreneurs to build trust and relationships with families and understand their issues, they are also able to identify and refer families as they are working and living within the same communities as the families in need of support.

5.1.3. Mediation: "I felt like I could just talk"

Family Gateway provided mediation to eight of the ten families as a technique to talk out and work through issues that frequently caused arguments and as a method of equipping families with communication strategies.

Family Entrepreneurs identified it as a key tool for addressing relationship breakdown, which was the primary problem in all ten families. Young people in particular identified mediation as a useful part of the support they received from Family Gateway. In some families, mediation had led to continued improvements in their relationship with their parents.

"When someone likes sits and like mediates it helps me and my mum get on... because sometimes me and my mam struggle till I get our words out to each other and we end up arguing but then Jill's helped me really."

"[She] used to sit down with us, and she would be like the middle person, like a calm person and she would let us take it in turns talking and she would listen to the two of us, and she would help us. At first, it was a bit awkward because it was like when somebody else knows all

the business but then after a couple of times it was a lot easier. I felt like I could just talk."

5.1.4. Linking families to other support services

A key part of ensuring that families receive all the support they need is for them to be linked to a range of services to address their - often complex, needs. As outlined above, the 'Barefoot Professional' model allowed Family Entrepreneurs to engage families that may otherwise be reluctant to work with other support services. Then, Family Gateway acted as a broker between families and other support services and institutions such as schools.

Some families needed support from a range of services as a complex set of problems was placing strain on family relationships, one parent explained some of the support they had accessed through working with their Family Entrepreneur:

"She's been there for me because I was getting to the point where I wasn't copying anymore, was on anti-depressants, and, I'll be totally honest, I was drinking more than I should have been. She got us help with that, with AA, she got me referrals, so that's all under control. She's helped me with the food bank. She's come to Citizens Advice with us to get advice over my housing situation and she's sorted out my

debts which started occurring when I was off due to bad health... and she's always there on the end of the phone."

5.1.5. Early intervention: "I dread to think where we'd be without it"

This pilot project was designed as an early intervention to support families before they reached crisis point. Some parents identified this as a key strength of the support they had received. A sense that Family Gateway had supported them 'early' or even when 'things were getting too bad' relating to a sense that they were approaching, but still prior to, a crisis point.

"If Family Gateway weren't there, I dread to think where we'd be. She could be in foster care, I could be fighting to get her back. But it didn't have to go that far. That's the thing with Family Gateway, it never has to go that far."

Some parents suggested that this sort of early support was not available from official statutory services such as Social Services and that the situation, and the young person's behaviour, would have to become more serious to access support.

"If they're not there then what people like us going to do? Who are we going to rely on? Because it's all good and well ask

a social worker for help but they cannot help you unless you're on an order. I have asked them for help before and because I'm not on a child protection order or the police haven't been calling your house or anything like that, they don't want to know. And if people like Family Gateway aren't there then what am I supposed to do? Let her go off the rails? because that's what would happen."

5.1.6. A listening ear: "Just like someone to talk things through with"

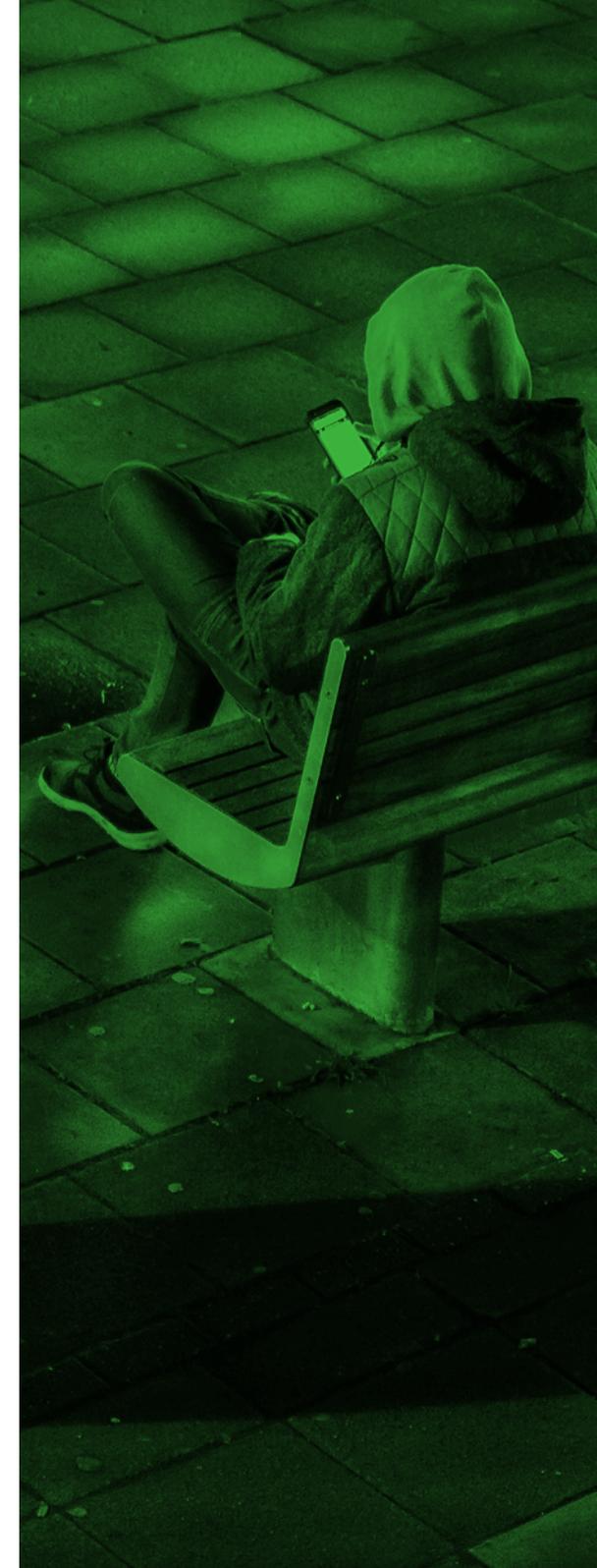
Young people especially appreciated their Family Entrepreneur's role as someone who would listen to their concerns and problems. For some young people, 'the listening ear' of their Family Entrepreneur helped to resolve situations that were close to a 'crisis point'. One young person explained how their Family Gateway worker supported them to manage their emotions when they faced difficult situations:

"Knowing that I've always got someone on the other side of the phone because they're really good when it comes to picking up the phone for you, so there have been a couple of times I've been in a situation

and I haven't been able to know how to handle it so I've rang [my Family Entrepreneur] and I've just said, look, this is my situation, I'm really angry and I don't know how to calm myself down and she's like stayed on the phone, sometimes it's been hours, she's stayed on the phone with us and just talked, and just put it in perspective, if you know what I mean."

The Family Entrepreneurs also provided this impartial supportive role for members of the family other than the focus young person and the parent. One younger-brother of a focus young person explained that their Family Entrepreneur's support to the whole family had been valuable to him and had potentially reduced conflict in the home.

"If I said to me mam, oh I think me brother's so-and-so. That's always going to be like... pretty bad because my brother'll find out pretty soon. But it's easy if you talk to someone else 'cos they'll understand it and they'll like help you give you advice on that but they also won't tell other people because of confidentiality so it's pretty easy to get stuff off your chest...it stops arguments most of the time."



6.

Conclusions

- Working with Family Gateway appears to have had a positive impact on young people and parents' ability to manage their relationships, and consequently in most cases has improved family relationships, repaired relationships where they had broken down and reduced the likelihood of future relationship breakdown.
- Most young people felt that their relationship with their parent had improved on the eight relationship dimensions measured between the start of the intervention and the end. The largest improvements were in the extent to which young people felt:

 - family members (including themselves) could express their emotions honestly;
 - their parent encouraged them;
 - their family (including themselves) followed rules.
- Similarly, most parents felt that their family relationships had improved during their time working with Family Gateway. They reported the largest improvements in the extent to which their family:

 - could deal with conflict without it escalating;
 - expressed warmth and affection for one another
- Homelessness was prevented in seven of the ten families (for eight young people). For five young people this meant staying in the family home, for three young people this meant being supported into independent accommodation.
- Three young people did become homeless. One stayed with their partner while two were supported by Family Gateway to access temporary accommodation. Following mediation, two young people returned to the family home successfully. One young person did not return to the family home and was supported by Family Gateway to arrange permanent independent accommodation.
- Young people and parents highlighted six key features of Family Gateway's practice which they felt was beneficial:

 - A clear distinction between Family Gateway and other official support services, in particular Social Services
 - The 'Barefoot Professional' model
 - Mediation
 - Acting as a hub linking families to other services
 - Early intervention
 - One to one support: 'A listening ear'





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This report was written by the education and youth development 'think and action tank' LKMco. LKMco is a social enterprise - we believe that society has a duty to ensure children and young people receive the support they need in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood. We work towards this vision by helping education and youth organisations develop, evaluate and improve their work with young people. We then carry out academic and policy research and advocacy that is grounded in our experience.

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