



Family Learning Intervention Programme (FLIP) Evaluation Summary

Background

The Family Learning Intervention Programme (FLIP) is an innovative model for the delivery of residential interventions with young people on the edge of care and their families/carers, developed by Hackney Council. The full model involves a dedicated out-of-borough residential setting for delivering interventions of between 1 and 6 weeks in length. However, due to significant barriers in moving towards its full implementation, throughout the evaluation period, FLIP was operating as an interim model, based in temporary residential settings. In total, 14 families participated in a FLIP residential intervention during the evaluation period. As a result, it has not been possible to evaluate the full intended model. Rather, this evaluation is of an interim delivery model which is intended to precede the full FLIP model.

Aims and objectives

The overall ambition of FLIP is to improve outcomes for adolescents on the edge of care, through supporting them to remain with their families or within a stable foster placement. The model aimed to achieve this through tailored intensive residential interventions involving evidence-based therapeutic interventions for families, aspiration-raising experiences, and specialist support from practitioners with an existing relationship with the young person and/or family.

Evaluation

The aim of the evaluation was to assess the impact of the FLIP model against its intended outcomes for young people, their siblings, and their parents/carers. The evaluation also explored the process of FLIP's implementation. The following methods were used to conduct the evaluation of FLIP:

- Analysis of strategic and operational documentation and performance management information.
- Impact tools were completed by 21 children and adolescents, 13 parents and carers, and 37 practitioners. In total, 212 impact tools were completed during the evaluation, across 3 points in time (on entry to FLIP, on exit from FLIP, and 3 months after exiting FLIP).
- A total of 30 face-to-face interviews with children, adolescents, and parents/carers who participated in FLIP.
- Case file reviews of 11 FLIP participants, and 11 comparator matched pairs with similar characteristics to the participants, and of a further 15 LAC young people who did not participate in FLIP to support refinement of the FLIP eligibility criteria.
- Telephone interviews with a total of 57 programme staff and practitioners at 2 points in time.
- A cost benefit analysis using case file review data for 7 FLIP participants and their matched pairs.

Findings

It is still too early to reach any firm conclusions regarding the effectiveness of FLIP. However, the evidence in this evaluation of the interim FLIP model shows that: a) adequate referral, assessment and planning procedures have been established; (b) staff and stakeholders identified a need for more ongoing support to be provided to families

following the residential intervention; (c) FLIP has been communicating effectively with and engaging practitioners; and (d) staff and practitioners were largely positive about the governance and leadership of FLIP. Assessing the impact of FLIP on its desired outcomes for children and adolescents, siblings, parents/carers and practitioners is challenging for a range of reasons including attribution, the range of outcomes that FLIP aims to address, and the small population that has received support (14 families during the evaluation period).

The evidence collected suggests a complex picture concerning FLIP's impact on the outcomes it aims to achieve. There is emerging evidence that for a minority of interventions (4 of 13 for which data was available), FLIP has had a positive impact on at least one indicator for target children and adolescents and their parents and carers, whilst for all other indicators it has not had a negative impact (meaning there has been no deterioration – which given the nature of the target group may be interpreted as a success). In the majority of interventions (8 of 13), FLIP has had a positive impact on at least one indicator, whilst at least one indicator has deteriorated. In one intervention, indicators showed no positive impacts, and some indicators showed a negative impact.

Cost benefits

In terms of value for money, the evaluation shows the following:

- An average spend per intervention of £19,686.50, based on total spend and the number of interventions which have taken place in the first 12 months of the interim model's operation.
- Cost benefit analysis shows that based on observed outcomes 5-6 months following participation in a FLIP intervention for 7 cases where data is available, the programme has an average net cost of £7,534 per intervention; £105,477 if scaled up across all 14 interventions. However, if the outcomes observed 6 months following the intervention are assumed to be maintained for a further 6 months, the interventions result in an estimated average net saving of £12,327 per intervention; £172,576 if scaled up across all 14 interventions. It should be noted that this is based on the assumption, rather than the evidence, that outcomes observed 6 months following the intervention are maintained for a further 6 months, and should be treated with caution.
- Compared with a comparator matched pair group of 7 young people with similar characteristics, FLIP participants incurred costs on average £4,262 less in the 6 months following participation in FLIP than comparator young people who did not participate in FLIP; £59,668 if scaled up across all 14 cases. It should be noted that this comparison should be treated with caution due to: (a) a small sample size, and (b) whilst every effort has been made to ensure matched pairs have similar characteristics, there are differences between pairs.

Recommendations

- Focus on strengthening family relationships.
- Ensure referrals are edge of care due to internal factors within the family system that FLIP seeks to address.
- Continue to focus future interventions on adolescents on the edge of care, as opposed to children.
- Ensure that FLIP focuses on recruiting families where adolescents are at significant risk of going into care, or of a breakdown in foster care placement, and not likely to exit or avoid care independent of experience of FLIP, as these cases present a better opportunity for FLIP to result in cost avoidance and reduction.
- Continue to ensure that a focus on outcomes improvement is embedded throughout the FLIP process.
- Review paperwork levels and ensure its importance is communicated to practitioners.
- Review FLIP lines of accountability.
- Review plans for ongoing support following participation in FLIP.
- Ensure that evaluation is embedded into FLIP including a focus on cost benefit analysis.

This evaluation study was carried out between August 2015 and September 2016 by Cordis Bright.

The DFE's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme funded this project and its independent evaluation. Co-ordination of the evaluation was undertaken by the Rees Centre from the University of Oxford (www.reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk.) A full copy of this report can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications