



The Gateway, Fife

Independent Evaluation Report

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The University of
Nottingham

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1.0 Introduction



1.0 Introduction

The Improving Futures programme was launched by the Big Lottery Fund (The Fund) in March 2011. The £26 million programme supported 26 pilot projects across the UK, to test different Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) led approaches towards achieving the following outcomes:

- Improved outcomes for children in families with multiple and complex needs.
- New approaches to local delivery, demonstrating replicable models which lead to more effective, tailored and joined up support for families with multiple and complex needs.
- Improved learning and sharing of best practice between public services and VCS organisations.

1.1 Evaluation Overview

In October 2011, Big Lottery Fund awarded an evaluation and learning contract to a consortium led by Ecorys UK with Ipsos MORI, the University of Nottingham and Family Lives. The evaluation is funded over five years, to assess programme effectiveness and impact, alongside continuous dissemination activities. Further information on the national evaluation can be found on the Improving Futures website¹.

This report presents the evaluation findings of The Gateway Family Support – Levenmouth Partnership ('The Gateway') project at Fife Gingerbread. The findings are based on:

- A desk review of various documents including business plans, application forms, steering group minutes and monitoring reports
- Analysis of project monitoring data inputted by project staff and collected through the Improving Futures Monitoring Information System (IFMIS)
- A qualitative case study visit in 2013, during which researchers interviewed staff, stakeholders and families
- An in-depth interview with the project coordinator

The views expressed in this report are those of the independent evaluators, based on a review of the available evidence, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the project or the Big Lottery Fund.

1.2 Project Overview

The Gateway project began in August 2012 after Fife Gingerbread was granted £1 million by Big Lottery to deliver the project for an initial three and a half years. The Gateway applied for extension funding from Big Lottery and will continue until March 2017. The project is led by the core Gateway project team, in partnership with key local organisations such as Barnardo's, Fife College, Fife Voluntary Action and the Family and Community Support Team, amongst other supporting agencies.

The project covers Levenmouth, a relatively small geographical area, and a series of 5-6 urban/rural settlements in a deprived area of Fife. The project uses a 'gateway' approach to provide an early response to families and refer them onto services they need, which are spot-purchased or commissioned by the Gateway project. Families are supported by 'family mentors', who are from the various partner organisations, and who bring their own experience and expertise.

¹<http://www.improvingfutures.org/>

The project aims to support families who experience multiple and complex needs, but who are deemed ineligible for statutory support. The Gateway aims to support these families to address their needs before their issues escalate to crisis point.

1.1.1 Key project activities

The project is described in greater depth in section 3, but it follows a three strand approach:

- 1) Family mentoring – one-to-one support from a family mentor, to support with a wide range of issues and to help families to realise their potential through accessing relevant support.
- 2) Family learning – supporting whole families (including wider families) to spend quality time together whilst learning valuable skills or information.
- 3) Volunteering – supporting families to access volunteering opportunities to further embed them in their local community.

The approach is flexible and can be intensive or light touch depending on the needs of the families involved.

1.3 Report Structure

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter Two** gives a profile of the families supported, drawing upon both the monitoring data and practitioners' accounts of the main presenting issues for families, including risks and strengths.
- **Chapter Three** reviews the main lessons learned from project delivery. The chapter starts by examining the key learning points from each strand of the project in turn, before going on to consider the overall messages in terms of partnership working, challenges and how these were overcome.
- **Chapter Four** considers the main achievements of the project, including the type of outcomes that were recorded and reported and the strength of this evidence. It also considers sustainability in the context of the wider project.
- **Chapter Five** draws the report to a close, with a set of overall conclusions for the project partners to consider in potentially developing the model further.

2.0 Profile of the Families Supported



2.0 Profile of families supported

2.1 Key target groups

The Gateway project was developed in 2012 as a response to an identified gap in services in the Levenmouth area, where some families were being adversely affected by issues such as unemployment, poverty, substance misuse or domestic violence, but were not eligible for support from core statutory services. The aim of the project is to reduce the risk of these multiple and complex disadvantages from reaching crisis point (and consequently statutory services) to provide early intervention support to families. By tackling these issues early on, the project aims to prevent families from having to experience potentially severe traumas, so that they have increased opportunities to fulfil their potential.

- The Gateway initially aimed to support approximately 500 families, where the eldest child is between 5 and 10 years old, in line with the Big Lottery funding requirements.² Both managerial and operational staff commented on the age criteria causing confusion, particularly as Scottish primary schools go up to age 11, so families of a cohort of children within primary school are ineligible for support. As a result the project team has found that quite a lot of families who could have benefitted from the support have been turned away. Nonetheless, project staff highlighted that the criteria enables them to provide more focused support and provides them with scope to do more to support children. In March 2015, the Big Lottery Fund removed this age restriction, following feedback from projects about the restrictions this placed on the families they could support.

Table 2.1.1 below indicates the gender and ethnicity demographics of the 200 adults and 299 children that began receiving support from the project, captured by the IFMIS system:³

- The majority of adults supported have been female (71%) and White British (96%)
- Further IFMIS data reveals that 94% of adults that entered the project had a parental caring role, with 1% being the grandparent and 4% being classed with having an 'other' caring role
- Adults were most likely (40%) to be in 25-34 year age band
- The majority of children that began receiving support were male (59%) and White British (96%), with over half being aged 5-9 (54%) and 27% being aged 1-4

Table 2.1.1 Demographics of adults and children supported. IFMIS data.

	Adults	Children
Gender		

² Fife Gingerbread. Big Lottery Fund – Improving Futures. Gateway Family Support – Levenmouth Partnership. *Business Plan*.

³ Results capture the IFMIS data recorded as of August 2016.

Female	71%	41%
Male	29%	59%
Transgender	0%	0%
Ethnicity		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	<1%	0%
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2%	2%
Mixed – White and Asian	0%	<1%
Mixed - White and Black African	0%	<1%
Other ethnic group – Gypsy or traveller	<1%	1%
White – British	96%	96%
White- Other	1%	<1%

In addition to individual adult and children data, the IFMIS system also collects information about families at the baseline:

- According to IFMIS data, the majority of families (62%) were lone parent families
- Almost 72% of families were eligible for free school meals

Alongside basic demographic data, the IFMIS system also provides information on the key risk factors and key strengths of adults, children and families at entry to the project. The Gateway recorded a total of 27 different risk factors that could affect adults receiving support from the project, broadly covering issues such as mental health and wellbeing, physical wellbeing, crime, and basic and functional skills. The most prominent risk factor for adults captured at entry to the programme (see Table 2.1.2) was parenting anxiety or frustration (65%). Another key risk factor that affected adults was having problems with discipline and boundary setting (55%), followed by adults having suspected or reported stress or anxiety (44%).

The Gateway also recorded some of the main strengths that adults were displaying upon beginning the project. 19 different strengths were identified, ranging from good levels of involvement with school, structured and appropriate boundary setting, volunteering, employment and training or education. The majority (57%) of parents had awareness of safe practices for their children, including internet safety or road safety. Many adults (41%) also reported having regular face-to-face contact – and held positive relationships - with school staff.

Table 2.1.2 Adult risk factors and strengths. Baseline IFMIS data

Adult risk factors	Percentage of adults
Parenting anxiety or frustration	65%

Problems with discipline and boundary setting	55%
Suspected or reported stress or anxiety	44%
Heavy smoker	18%
Adult strengths	Percentage of adults
Parental awareness of safe practices (e.g. internet safety, road safety)	57%
Regular face-to-face contact with school staff, reporting positive relationships	41%
Appropriate boundary-setting for children	35%
Supporting with school work / homework	27%

Table 2.1.3 highlights the main risks faced by children supported by the project. These risk factors included behavioural issues, school exclusions and absences, educational needs, physical health, mental health and wellbeing and local authority care support. Given the breadth of potential risk factors, the proportions of children that were presenting with these factors were much lower than those for adults. At entry to The Gateway, children were most likely to present with low-level behavioural difficulties (27%) and almost one fifth of children had suspected or reported stress or anxiety (18%).

In terms of the strengths for children, over half of children benefitted from attending routine GP appointments, health checks and immunizations (58%) and dental care appointments (51%). However, only a third of children were reported to have supportive peer friendships at school and even less had regular participation in play opportunities.

Table 2.1.3 Child risk factors and strengths. Baseline IFMIS data

Child risk factors	Percentage of children
Low-level behavioural difficulties	27%
Suspected or reported stress or anxiety	18%
Persistent disruptive behaviour	13%
Persistent unauthorised school absence	10%
Child strengths	Percentage of children
Attending routine GP appointments, health checks and immunizations	58%

Attending dental care appointments	51%
Supportive peer friendships at school	33%
Regular participation in play opportunities	29%

Similar to the data captured at entry for adults and children, a wide range of potential risk factors were recorded for families (Table 2.1.4). Again, given the breadth of factors (28 in total) the proportions of families that presented with these issues at entry are relatively low. Over a third (34%) of families had experienced relationship dissolution (divorce or permanent separation) at the beginning of the project, and 27% of families had been workless for over 12 months.

The IFMIS data recorded 11 key strengths of families when they first began receiving support from the Gateway. In nearly two thirds of families (64%), adult family members were accessing appropriate benefit entitlements and just over half of families (55%) benefitted from Child Tax Credits. In addition, just over two fifths (41%) of families had active and regular support contact with grandparents and other relatives.

Table 2.1.4 Family risk factors and strengths. Baseline IFMIS data

Family risk factors	Percentage of families
Relationship dissolution (divorce or permanent separation)	34%
Workless family (over 12 months)	27%
Family reporting social isolation	23%
Some difficulties in keeping up with debt repayments, household bills or rent	22%
Family strengths	Percentage of families
Adult family members accessing appropriate benefit entitlements	64%
Take-up of Child Tax Credits	55%
Active and regular supportive contact with grandparents / other relatives	41%
Take-up of free childcare entitlements	41%

2.2 Identifying and referring families

According to the staff that were interviewed for the case study visit, the project was mainly advertised to the local community through word-of-mouth, schools, health centres, church centres and the family support team. As the project had developed strong relationships with some of the primary schools in the

local area, schools have provided a key route to identify potential families to be involved in the project. Other strategic stakeholders felt that the Gateway's wide partnership approach lends itself to a wide range of referral opportunities. However, managerial and delivery staff stated that the majority of referrals were self-referrals by families, who volunteered to be part of the programme after hearing about it through some of the aforementioned routes.

Project staff did not feel like there had been many issues with referrals to the project, because aside from the age ranges, there are not any strict criteria for engagement. The biggest problem that they faced was receiving referrals (and self-referrals) for families whose eldest child was older than 10, or families whose eldest child was younger than 5 years of age.

As all participation in the Gateway is voluntary, engagement – to a large extent – is dependent on the impetus of families to self-refer to the programme. Nonetheless, during the case study visit, frontline workers highlighted some of the critical factors necessary to ensure that families return for support following their initial referral. Frontline staff emphasised the importance of building up relationships with families and supporting them in a non-judgemental way, maintaining that all participation is voluntary and staff are not there to tell families what to do. In addition, the family workers have found that being flexible in how they initially engage with parents (using approaches such as texting and Facebook) can make parents feel more comfortable and therefore more likely to engage.

3.0 Lessons Learned from Project Delivery

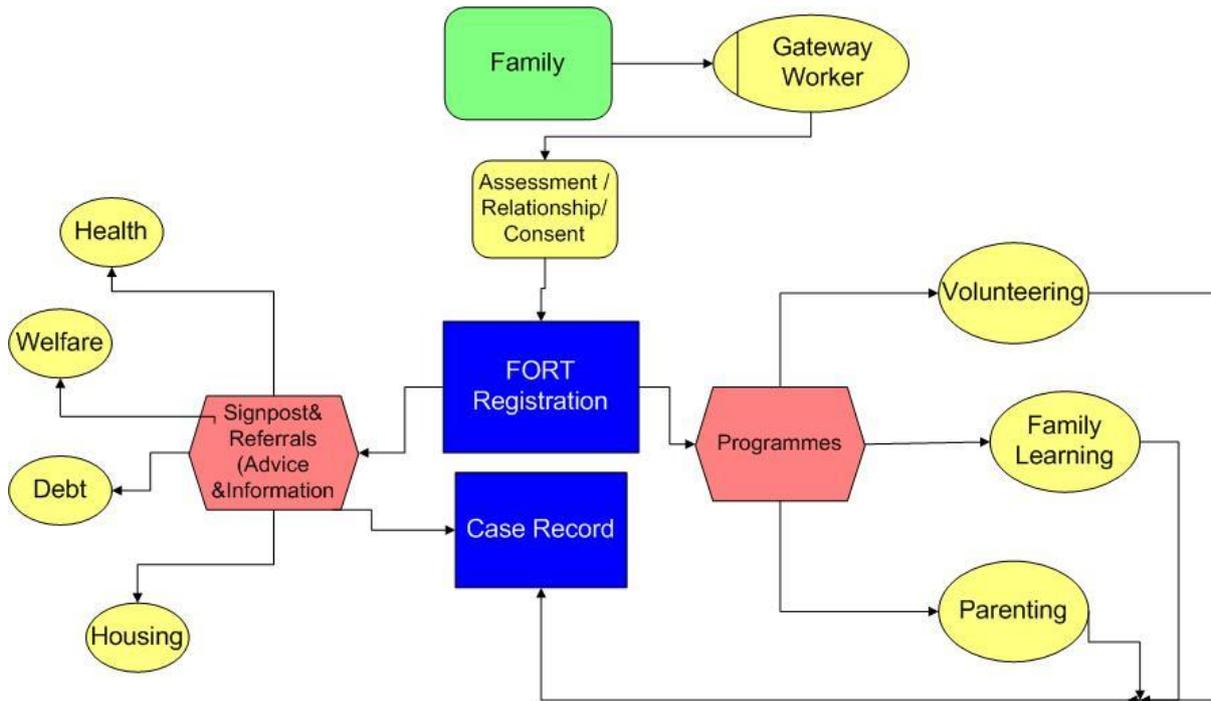


3.0 Lessons learned from project delivery

3.1 Working with families

Figure 1 below highlights the typical route of support for families through the Gateway project; although it is by no means a prescriptive account of the support that is provided. The following section will discuss each of the Gateway's key project elements, drawing out the main lessons learned by frontline staff, managerial staff and strategic stakeholders throughout the course of the project's delivery.

Figure 1: Typical route of support for the Gateway project



Source: Fife Gingerbread. Big Lottery Fund – Improving Futures. Gateway Family Support – Levenmouth Partnership. Business Plan.

3.1.1 Initial assessment

Once families are referred to the Gateway (either by another agency, school or by themselves) they are assigned a family mentor. The family mentor is typically assigned based on the locality that the family is in, as each family mentor has a different area that they support. Family mentors generally felt that this was a useful approach to allocating families because it means that they usually support families from the same schools and their approach can be consistent. In addition, mentors felt that building up a strong relationship with a particular school means that schools will be more likely to pass on information about other families that could potentially benefit from support. However, schools are not the only source of information for the family mentors. Frontline staff also felt that the strong relationships that the Gateway has with other agencies across the Levenmouth area has been conducive to gathering information about families:

“One good thing about Levenmouth is that everybody is on board and everybody works together... the sharing of information is vast in Levenmouth.” - Family mentor.

After a family mentor has read through any available information about a family, they will arrange an initial home visit with the family to have a general chat about their circumstances and discuss some of

the key areas that they want to address. Together with the family, the family mentor draws up a family action plan which details the aspirations and outcomes a family wants to achieve and the types of support they will access to address them. The assessments are conducted in line with the Scottish Government's 'Getting it right for every child' (GIRFEC) model, which is a way of working with children and families that puts children at the centre of support, considers their – and their parent's – wishes, and involves them in the decision-making process.⁴ According to the most recent project monitoring report, the Gateway continues to successfully use the GIRFEC model to help family mentors assess the needs of the whole family and develop an action plan to address the needs of the child or children.

To ensure that the outcomes and progress of families can be consistently and robustly recorded throughout their period of support, Gateway's family mentors use the 'Family Star' outcomes tool at three different points.

3.1.2 Integration of project data into the advanced client relationship management systems (CRMS)

Alongside the development of the Gateway project, a range of agencies in the Fife area (such as health, housing and the wider Fife Gingerbread organisation) were involved in the development of an advanced client relation management system; the Fife Online Referral Tracking system (FORT CRMS). The purpose of FORT was to improve the maintenance and sharing of client information across the Fife area. In the initial Gateway plan, it was intended that the project would further develop FORT so that information about families (in addition to individuals) could be shared between relevant agencies, to ensure that the whole-family approach became further embedded in the way of working in Fife and that there would be less duplication of work across agencies. It was envisioned in the business plan that following a family assessment and the development of the action plan, information would be placed on FORT by Gateway to be shared with partner agencies to facilitate the delivery of support to families.

According to Gateway's project monitoring reports, the FORT system became live in the middle of January 2013. However, the implementation of the system was not smooth as several external factors, such as staff changes in partner organisations and developmental change in agencies across Fife, meant that Gateway could not progress with the system as anticipated. In 2015, Gateway was able to revamp their FORT system so they can collect more robust and meaningful data about families. The process of changing the FORT system identified that there had been some errors in terms of data duplication, which resulted in the total number of families being supported through the project reducing slightly.

All data about families is shared through the FORT system, to help shape further Gateway project activities, as well as to appropriately refer families to agency support in other areas such as money, housing, welfare and health.

3.1.3 The three-strand delivery model of support

After families' information has been inputted into FORT and action plans have been developed, the Gateway's following key support activities are based on three strands of support: family mentoring, family learning and volunteering. The duration and intensity of this support differs depending on the strand, the needs of the family and their level of engagement with activities.

1) Family mentoring

The family mentoring strand of support is the most intensive of the three, and it is based on one-to-one support from a 'family mentor' to a whole family. As mentioned in 3.1.1, family mentors are assigned to families at the point of referral and help them to develop an action plan of support. Their support is not prescriptive; instead they focus on helping families identify for themselves what support

⁴ <http://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/1141/0065063.pdf>

works best for them. The support that family mentors provide is wide-ranging, in areas such as budgeting, parenting, relationship issues, housing, domestic abuse, managing children's behaviour, isolation, organising trips and volunteering opportunities, and signposting families to other relevant services. Initially it was envisioned by the Gateway project team that family mentors would support families for between 8 and 12 weeks, but during the first year of delivery, they learned that the approach needed to be more flexible to account for the differing needs of their clients.

During the case study visit, family mentors highlighted that in some cases there was a need to increase the support they were providing to some families whose needs were more complex, whereas other families just needed a light-touch intervention. One family mentor described how there are some families who need support for 8 weeks and then just need reassurance that there will be somebody on the end of the phone if they need it. Family mentors therefore identified the importance of ensuring their offer is flexible to address the multiple needs of the families that they support.

2) Family learning

The family learning strand of the support offers a light-touch way to engage with families as a whole, including wider family members such as grandparents, during a range of learning activities. The types of activities that the project has supported through the family learning strand range significantly, including family cooking, literacy sessions, recreational and leisure activities, activities to specifically engage dads (such as bicycle repair workshops and football sessions) and safety awareness sessions.

Over the course of the delivery of the family learning strand, family mentors have learned that the strand complements the family mentor strand, especially as the programme of support comes to an end. One family mentor highlighted that although family mentoring might come to an end, some families may still feel like they need some light-touch support to keep them on track. Family learning helps to engage these families on a longer-term basis and keeps them in touch with family mentors without it being too resource-intensive for the Gateway project to manage:

"Once you've got that relationship with them and they're coming along to the groups... you can say right, lets deal with it [an issue] like this and they can go away and they see you the following week and they say it's all fine." - Family mentor

Managerial staff at the Gateway also felt that the family learning strand really added value to the overall provision of support. One manager highlighted that it enables families to spend quality time together and utilise that time to make practical improvements to their lives:

"There is nothing like it. Parents can spend an hour with their children together after school, and genuinely learn something from it." – Project manager

Members of staff have also learned about the benefits of utilising community assets to deliver the family learning strand. Community locations such as schools, gardens and parks have been used throughout the project to deliver the strand, which has been beneficial for families because it has made them aware of places that they are free to utilise that they might otherwise have not visited.

3) Volunteering

The final strand of the project is the volunteering strand, which was initially envisioned to not only provide opportunities for external individuals to come in and offer support and expertise to families, but also to support families into finding their own volunteering opportunities. It was anticipated in the project business plan that the volunteering strand would serve to anchor the project into mainstream provision and prevent the stigmatisation of families being supported through Gateway.

There is evidence from several sources including the case study consultations, project leader consultations and the project monitoring reports to suggest that the delivery of the volunteering strand has been very successful to date, particularly in terms of rooting people in their communities and bettering parent relationships and responses to schools. A key lesson learned is the value of utilising schools and

community assets to support parents to become involved in volunteering. For example, they have learned that having parents volunteer in the classroom helps to get them better involved in school life and helps them to become more embedded in the local community.

During the case study visit, one of the managerial staff highlighted that a benefit of the flexible delivery model is that the strands can overlap and complement one another. For example, the Gateway has learned about the value of supporting adults to become volunteers for family learning interventions. 'Food Time Fun Time' successfully used parents to help deliver the project, to the extent that the group of parent helpers no longer need any support from formal staff. The model is being replicated with a new group of parents, with the intention that a new self-sustaining group will emerge. Given the success of this model of working, Gateway will continue to work with the partners that have supported the successful delivery of the project, to ensure sustainability within the area.

3.2 Working with partners and other services

The Gateway project was initially built on strong principles of partnership working across the Fife area; Fife Gingerbread already had strong links with other agencies and had experience in partnership working. Early on in the delivery of the project, managerial staff felt as if they were in a strong position to deliver the support because they were voluntary-led and had a lot of support and co-operation from the council. As the project is based on three different strands of support – family mentoring, family learning and volunteering – it was necessary for Gateway to have support from partners with the appropriate expertise and experience to help deliver each strand. Key partners of the project include:

- Barnardo's (providing integrated packages of support for families and children)
- Fife College (to help develop family learning packages and support community development)
- Fife Voluntary Action (to promote volunteering opportunities in the local community)
- Family and Community Support Team (providing access to different levels of family support depending on the needs of the family)

In addition, the Gateway has worked closely with other organisations in the area to work on specific types of help for families, including health and financial matters:

- Citizens Advice
- NHS Fife Health Improvement Team
- Schools
- Police
- Relationship Scotland
- Homestart
- Drug and alcohol services

The partner organisations all have partnership agreements in place, to support decision-making and information sharing. The ethos of partnership working is further solidified through the FORT CRMS system, which has been designed to facilitate information-sharing between individuals and families.

The Gateway project is governed by a board comprised of individuals representing a range of organisations across Fife including housing, social care, childcare and development, further education and credit unions. Below the board sits the Gateway Stakeholder group, which is a group that represents the partner organisations involved in the project, including the core Gateway management team. In addition, there are different operational steering groups that represent the three strands of project delivery. The aim of having the three different groups is to ensure that the project's activities keep in line with the overarching aims of the project, local strategies and national strategies. The project manager reports to the board and sits on the steering groups. The project manager changed midway through the project, which briefly impacted the delivery of the project.

Although the wider Fife Gingerbread organisation had history working with the partners and experience working the in multi-agency way, throughout the first year of project delivery there were some

challenges with some partners, which were addressed through quarterly meetings and the operational steering groups for each strand. The first key difficulty that the project leads reported facing was ensuring all partners were aware that the project was voluntary and community sector-led. Particularly as the way-of-working in the area had typically been led by the public sector, the Gateway project team had to do some work with partners to convey that because they are third sector, they have a lot more independence, they can be more innovative with their offer and they do not have to align with a particular policy direction. Although this provided the project with more freedom and flexibility, the managerial staff felt it took some time for partner organisations to adjust to the changes in governance.

Although there were some tensions with partners, the Gateway team learned some key lessons around partnership working. Firstly, they learned the importance of constantly reviewing and refining partnership agreements as the project progresses to allow for the roles and responsibilities of partners to change depending on what is working well and less well. Secondly, Gateway project leads felt that they needed to have had earlier discussions with partners about what their expectations were for the project, how they would fit in with the delivery structure and what their role throughout the project would be. Many of the early tensions between partners were around this lack of clarity and the project leads felt that they could have been addressed earlier on, before the delivery had begun.

The partnership working for the Gateway was also significantly impacted by various changes within the partnership organisations across Fife and more general children's services in the area. Organisational changes in Barnardo's and the Family and Community Support Team, mergers between further education colleges and the merging of Fife Voluntary Action meant that there were significant changes in personnel across all key partners of the Gateway project. As a result, some of the terms and conditions created in the original partnership agreements had to be amended and the Gateway could no longer rely on the original buy-in from these organisations as many of the personnel had changed. As a result, the Gateway management team has had to be more flexible and rethink how different partners can contribute to the project.

The Gateway has faced challenges in recent years due to wider structural changes, including changes in government policy and welfare reforms. For example, the Levenmouth area has suffered from high levels of unemployment, so some families have needed more intensive support. As a result the Gateway has had to use its contingency budget to support a lot of families, which has impacted on the level of support they can provide in other areas.

Despite some of the challenges faced through partnership working and the broad policy landscape, frontline workers at the Gateway have reported building strong relationships with a wide range of partners from across the area, and have benefitted from learning and sharing good practice between the organisations. This has become magnified in recent months as the team is now based in one office, so it is easier to share information with one another. One strategic stakeholder highlighted that the family learning strand of the project has brought together partners to co-ordinate and deliver family learning opportunities in the Levenmouth area that would otherwise have been slow to develop. By co-ordinating the strand through the voluntary sector-led partnership, the approach has become embedded in the local community and has the potential to be sustainable. Project monitoring reports highlight the success of partnership working within the family learning strand, and the Gateway continues to work with its partners to successfully deliver this strand of support to families.

4.0 Outcomes and Sustainability



4.0 Outcomes and sustainability

4.1 Outcomes for children and families

As highlighted in section 3.1.1, the Gateway project works in line with the GIRFEC model and utilises the Family Star tool to measure the outcomes that families experience. There are a range of different sources of information, including the case study consultations (including family interviews), project monitoring reports, project leader consultations and IFMIS data, which provide evidence on the various outcomes of the Gateway project. As the project has progressed and various external factors (such as welfare reforms and changes in partners' provision) have influenced the shape and delivery of the Gateway, the types of outcomes recorded for families can vary. Nonetheless, the IFMIS data system provides a comparison of both the risk factors and strengths of adults, children and families at both entry and exit.

According to the most recent project monitoring report (April 2016), 496 families have been supported across the lifetime of the project; four short of the project's target of 500 families. At the time of this project report (August 2016), entry and exit data was recorded on IFMIS for 64 families. Due to the flexibility of the support, and the significant variations in the intensity of support needed, some families may stop contacting the Gateway after they have received a service, so the project is unable to conduct an exit interview and thus record IFMIS data. In addition, some families may simply stop engaging with the service, due to numerous reasons, including a breakdown of a relationship, moving out of the area or entering employment. Therefore a caveat with the IFMIS findings below is that they are not representative of all families that have received support at some point from Gateway. To improve the robustness of the data, the IFMIS findings have been triangulated with qualitative findings from interviews and the project monitoring reports.

4.1.1 Outcomes for adults

Chart 4.1.1: Changes in adult risk factors at entry and exit

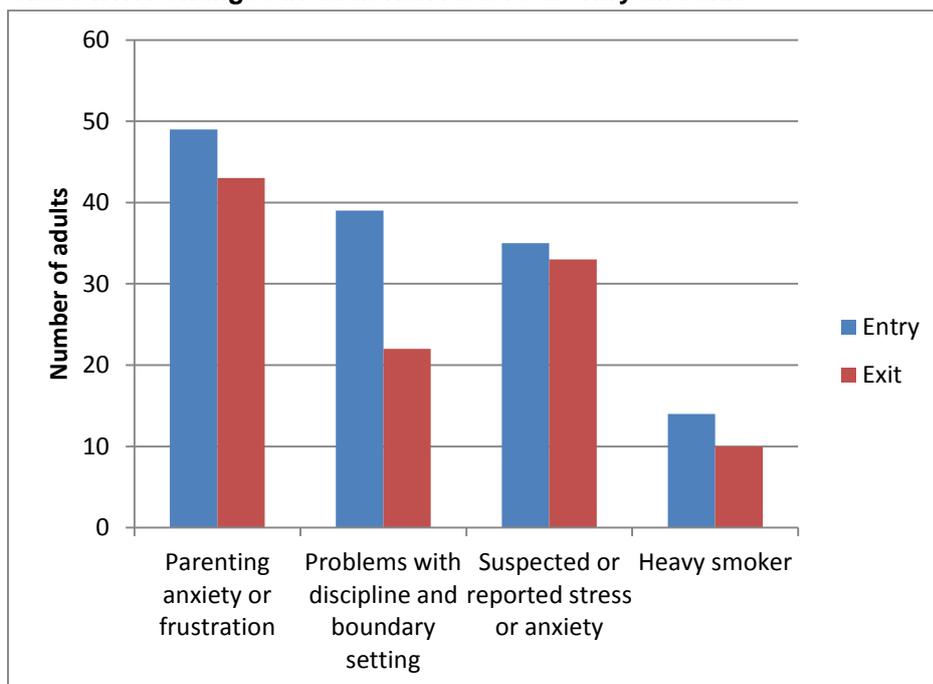
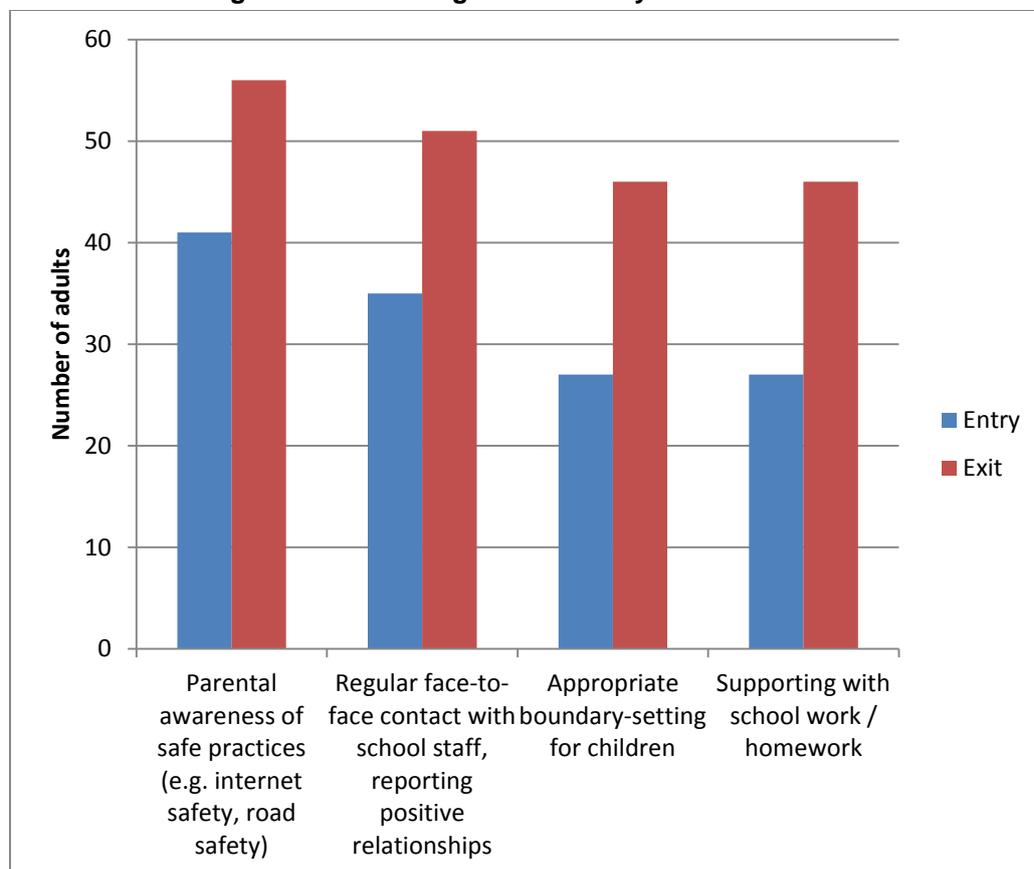


Chart 4.1.1 displays the changes in adult risk factors at entry and exit, using the four most prevalent risk factors for adults upon beginning the Gateway project. From the chart it is clear that the prevalence of

all four risk factors decreased from entry to exit, with the greatest decrease being in cases of adults having ‘problems with discipline and boundary setting’ (44% decrease). Of the 26 risk factors, there was no change for 12 risk factors, and three risk factors (other physical health problems or lifestyle factors, suspected or reported illegal drug use, and basic numeracy and literacy skills) worsened slightly over time.

Similar positive changes could be seen for adult strengths from entry to exit. Chart 4.1.2 highlights the change for the four most common adult strengths, indicating an increased number of adults experiencing all four strengths. The greatest increase could be seen in ‘appropriate boundary-setting for children’ (70%) and supporting with school work/homework (70%) suggesting that the interventions that have been targeted at supporting parenting have been successful. As of mid-2015, the Gateway had run 153 parenting programmes, exceeding their target by 33%. To date, the project has been successful in supporting adults’ strengths to thrive. Increases could be seen in all 19 of the adult strengths, with adults’ participation in structured family learning activities increasing by 200% over the course of the project. This finding reflects the Gateway staff’s perceived success of the ‘family learning’ strand of the project; frontline delivery staff felt that a key outcome of the strand was that families have been able to spend more time together and they have been able to develop a sense of community.

Chart 4.1.2: Changes in adult strengths from entry to exit



Interviews with some of the families involved in the project highlight other outcomes that have been achieved for adults that have not been captured in the IFMIS data or interviews with project staff. One mother who had been supported by the project said that it has helped her to feel much less isolated knowing that there are other families in a similar situation and she “*doesn’t feel so lonely*”. Through the programmes that she has attended she has been able to build up new friendships, which she thinks has been very valuable.

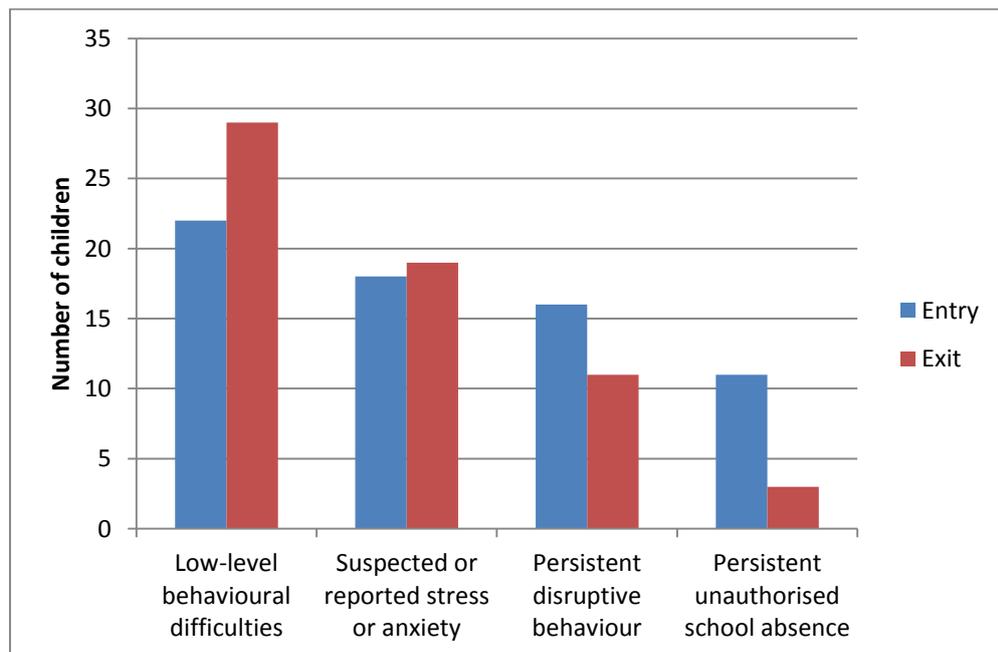
Another mother who had been supported through the programme found it really beneficial because as English was not her first language, she had struggled to navigate through services. Through the project she has now been able to address some of her financial difficulties (through support from the Citizens

Advice Bureau), start to find a job, and get involved in some of the trips that have been organised by the Gateway team.

4.1.2 Outcomes for children

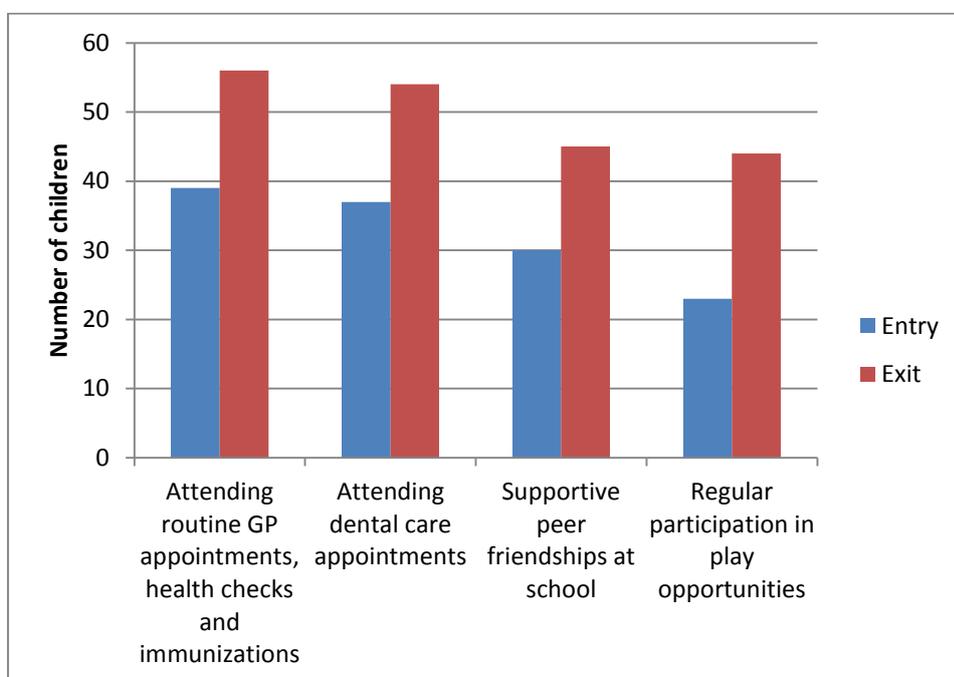
Unlike the outcomes for adults, the prevalence of the top four risk factors have not necessarily decreased for children over the course of the project. Levels of low-level behavioural difficulties and suspected or reported stress or anxiety have both increased slightly. This is likely due to an overall reduction in higher-level behavioural problems. For example, promising results can be seen through a decrease in persistent disruptive behaviour (31%) and there has been a vast decrease in persistent unauthorised school absence (73%). These findings are consistent with the perceptions of the Gateway staff, who indicated that the project has also seen improved attendance issues.

Table 4.1.3: Changes in risk factors for children from entry to exit



Similarly to adult strengths, the project has encouraged the frequency of almost all child strengths to increase. The four most common strengths have all improved significantly and are displayed in the chart below (4.1.4). Promisingly, there has been a 91% increase in the number of children regularly participating in play opportunities and a 50% increase in the number of children with supportive peer friendships at school. These findings are consistent with the findings from the family interviews; one mother reported that her children had become much more outgoing since being involved in the project. The greatest change from entry to exit within the IFMIS data is where there has been a 175% increase in children’s involvement in local and community organisations. This finding provides further evidence for the success of the family learning strand, and the utilisation of community assets to deliver activities across all three strands.

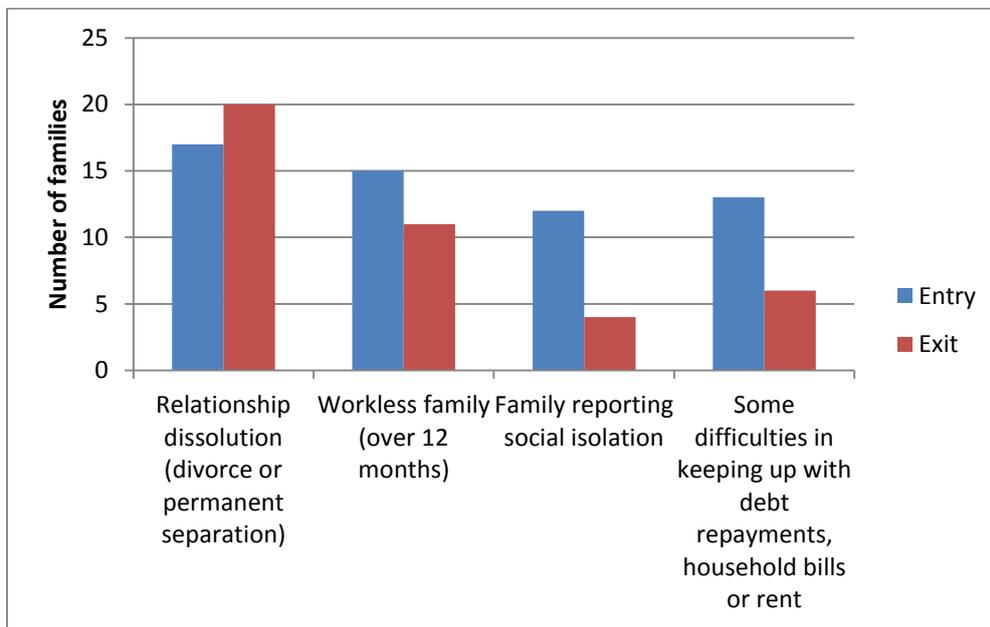
Chart 4.1.4: Changes in child strengths from entry to exit



4.1.3 Outcomes for families

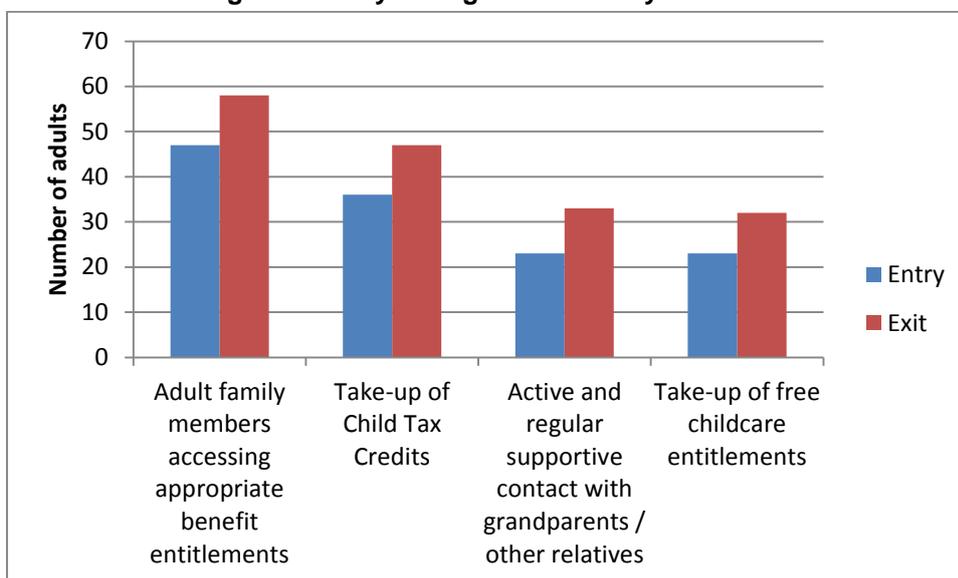
In addition to outcomes for adults and children, the IFMIS data also records changes in risk factors and strengths for whole families. The four key risk factors for families identified at their entry into the programme have changed somewhat upon exit. As demonstrated in chart 4.1.5, the number of cases of relationship dissolution in families increased by 18% over the course of the project. In addition, the number of workless families has decreased by 27%, and there has been a 67% decrease in families reporting social isolation. This finding aligns with findings from the family testimonials; one mother highlighted how she specifically joined the project to find new opportunities for her children to socialise with other children and for her to meet other parents. The project has allowed her to do this and she has been able to develop new friendships and she has seen her children have increased confidence to build their own friendships. In addition, there has been a 54% decrease in the number of families struggling to keep up with debt repayments, household bills or rent. Support from partner agencies such as Citizens Advice Bureau has helped to address some of these financial problems; one mother was able to get support with council tax issues and rent support through the help she received through Gateway and Citizens Advice Bureau.

Chart 4.1.5: Changes in risk factors for families from entry to exit



Similarly to the outcomes for individual adults and children, the Gateway project has helped to build on the existing strengths of families. Chart 4.1.6 provides an overview of the changes in family strengths from entry to the project to exit. The four most prevalent family strengths have all improved, particularly in terms of active and regular supportive contact with grandparents/other relatives (43% increase). This is notable as one of the aims of the project has been to improve intergenerational involvement through the family learning and volunteering strand. Overall there have been improvements across all 11 family strength indicators, particularly in terms of active and regular supportive contact with friends or community members (200% increase) and a 111% increase in the regular involvement of non-resident parents.⁵

Chart 4.1.6: Changes in family strengths from entry to exit



Although there have been largely positive outcomes for families, frontline workers did describe their concern about the ‘revolving door’ cases they had, where families kept being referred back onto the programme. This is particularly the case for families who have deep rooted and complex issues, particularly where parents with drug misuse problems can struggle to maintain stability. These families tend to stay on the programme longer than the original 8-12 weeks and can go back and forth each of the strands depending on their needs and circumstances at the time.

⁵ IFMIS Change (Entry to Exit) data

Overall, the outcomes of the project have been varied in terms of improvements of risk factors. However, across all indicators for adults, children and families, the project has largely built on and improved family strengths. In particular, families have benefitted hugely from the family learning strand of activities, particularly in terms of improving family relationships, reducing social isolation and improving community links. In addition, for both adults and children there have been marked improvements in relation to parenting, suggesting that the family mentoring strand has been beneficial for families.

4.2 Services and systems outcomes

Throughout the course of the project, it has become clear to the Gateway team and to wider partners that the project has addressed a gap in service provision:

“Where would families be if Gateway didn’t exist? This is a scary thought... Gateway has the ability to work in partnership with other organisations and encourage partnership working within the local community. Lots of things have happened which, if the Gateway project wasn’t in place, would never have happened at all (for example the Family Fun Clubs).” – Local community manager

The project was innovative for the area in that it was led by the voluntary sector and could be more flexible in its offer. Whilst this brought some challenges (as highlighted in section 3.2) both strategic partners and project staff felt that it could improve the way of working in the area to ensure that a seamless provision of multi-agency support could be delivered. One strategic stakeholder felt that Gateway has *“galvanised the family working approach in the area”*, through using mechanisms such as the FORT CRMS and steering group meetings to improve multi-agency working.

Gateway has also supported the relationship between the voluntary and community sector and statutory services. According to the most recent project monitoring report, family mentors continue to participate in planning meetings with statutory services and at times are part of the child’s support plan.

In addition to statutory services, Gateway has also helped to solidify relationships between schools and the voluntary and community sector. As family mentors have typically been working in the same localities, they have been able to build up relationships with local schools to deliver support. For example, the project has recently developed its Family Learning work with a local primary school into a ‘Fun Club’, which has brought parents from Gateway and other parents from the school together to deliver activities to families. This had also fed into the volunteering strand as through the initiative, seven parents are being trained to deliver the support.

4.3 Sustainability

The three strands of the Gateway project have provided positive outcomes for many of the families involved in the support, particularly in terms of improving parenting behaviours and techniques and supporting families to be more active and integrated in the local community. Through recent project interviews and steering group meetings, it is evident that the Gateway project has addressed a gap in local service provision and has brought something new to the area, particularly in terms of the family learning strand of support.

Going forwards, the Gateway board and steering group is looking at which elements of the project should be sustained and which should be improved. Throughout the project - during the case study visit and in recent project interviews - staff at the Gateway have highlighted how they are looking at how they can sustain the family learning work, through working with partners and building up resilience in the communities. Family mentors expressed how they want to continue supporting families to maintain stability and relationships in the community, by encouraging families to take on volunteering roles and get actively involved in the delivery of activities in their area. Recent steering group discussions have

emphasised how the Gateway team is working towards defining the focus of the project, in terms of building community capacity to provide self-sustaining support that can create resilient communities.

Steering group members have indicated their interest to expand the Gateway model across the rest of Fife, but they are aware that it needs to be done slowly and cautiously, as not every community has the same issues and needs. Partnership working with wider agencies in the Fife area will be necessary to identify any gaps in provision, and to ensure that the most appropriate services are commissioned. Given that the availability of funding is likely to be less than before, due to changes in Big Lottery funding, Gateway is looking at which project elements can continue to add the most value to families in the area. Strategies will include ring-fencing money for certain aspects of the project that will likely create the most sustainable outcomes, such as improving family and community resilience.

5.0 Conclusions



5.0 Conclusions

5.1 Concluding thoughts

Overall, the Gateway project has addressed what was a clear gap in local service provision to support families to improve on a wide range of outcomes. Despite facing challenges such as changing structures of partner organisations, national policy changes and an ongoing backdrop of welfare reforms, the Gateway project has been able to adapt quickly and provide innovative solutions to support families experiencing a multitude of often complex needs. The three-strand approach has enabled support to be flexible and as intensive or as light-touch as families require, and overall it has helped to increase families' community engagement.

5.2 Key strengths and learning points

There are a number of key learning points that can be taken from the evaluation:

- Being led by a voluntary sector organisation has meant that support can be provided in a much more flexible, innovative way, without having to align to a particular policy direction. As a result, the project has been able to adapt quickly to challenging situations such as changes in management, policy reforms and new national strategies, to provide consistent support to families.
- Strong communication is necessary to ensure that partnership working can be effective. Holding steering groups (for both Gateway and each of the three strands) on a regular basis enables partners to share best practice and discuss strategies going forwards.
- It is important that the project team spends time to build robust partnership agreements to ensure that partners' roles and responsibilities are clearly set out. This is important as the Gateway project looks to expand across the Fife area, as some organisations unfamiliar with the project might not be used to working with a voluntary and community sector lead. Ensuring that efforts are made to explain the project governance and partnership dynamic should help to support the smoother implementation of the project across the wider Fife area.
- If possible with any future funding arrangements, the Gateway would benefit from expanding the age range up to 11 years old, to reflect the Scottish primary school age limits. Although the narrower age range has allowed the Gateway to focus its remit, project staff at all levels have commented that they have had to turn down a large number of families who would have benefitted from the support.
- The family learning strand of the support has been successful and has helped to build up families' resilience and community relationships. The strand has complemented – and has been complemented by – the other two strands, providing a light-touch and more sustainable route for families to be supported on an ongoing basis. The family learning strand has the greatest potential for being sustainably implemented in the Levenmouth area as communities build up the capacity to deliver support themselves.