

# Anchor, Early Action System Change: One year of delivery – progress against objectives

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# 1 Introduction

The Anchor project is at an important junction in its development. The report asks the following questions on behalf of the Project Board:

- to what extent is Anchor achieving its objectives;
- what are the key features of Anchor that have enabled success; and
- what learning is there for year two?

## 1.1 Aim and objectives of Anchor

The aim of Anchor is to facilitate learning and action that demonstrates the value of family-led problem solving and early intervention. The expectation is the learning will lead to system change which puts families at the centre of decision-making and directs resources towards early action rather than crisis management.

The objectives of Anchor are:

- objective one - to facilitate family-led problem-solving with those families engaged with Anchor;
- objective two - to record and share learning on barriers and opportunities to family-led problem solving and the value of early intervention; and
- objective three - to demonstrate the potential value of system change, and facilitate system change through stimulating either small incremental changes or step-changes.

## 1.2 Methodology

To answer the questions posed above, the report presents findings from information gathered through Anchor's monitoring activities, including:

- Family Centred Impact Analysis (FCIA) activity;
- records of Project Officer interactions with representatives of family support services; and
- quarterly performance reports to the Project Board and discussions at the Project Board.

The findings are supplemented by discussions with project staff.

## 1.3 A changing context

The Coronavirus pandemic has had far-reaching consequences across the globe and Shetland's residents, public services and wider economy have been deeply affected. Anchor adapted its operations quickly, supporting families and school staff remotely, and shifting resource to support the local Coronavirus Support Hub.

In addition to the direct impact of Coronavirus on the activity of Anchor, one consequence of the pandemic is that it has tested the capacity of Shetland's public services and third sector to implement rapid change. Things that once seemed near impossible have been achieved virtually overnight and

this has opened up new opportunities for achieving the system change envisaged when Anchor began.

The year one review is therefore timely and will help to guide the development of Anchor in support of its aim and objectives within the new context, which includes responding to Covid-19.

## 1.4 Key findings

A summary of key findings from the year one review is provided below.

### To what extent is Anchor achieving its objectives?

In year one the priority for Anchor was to make substantial progress against the project's first objective of working with families and its second objective of recording and sharing the learning from family-led support. By focusing on these objectives Anchor aimed to create a solid foundation that would enable progress towards its third objective – system change – as the project matures.

In its first year Anchor has established effective processes and practices for working with families. The 'Anchor approach' has been thoroughly welcomed by families and the schools involved. The approach adopted by Anchor has generated positive outcomes and impacts for the supported families. The number of families supported has been relatively small, eight in total, but each engagement has generated a wealth of information that can support Anchor to achieve its overall goal of system change.

Anchor works with supported individuals to break-down the challenges they are facing as a family unit into issues for which specific action can be taken or support can be sought. Anchor works directly with families to support the family but, more importantly, so that evidence can be gathered on where system change might be implemented to improve the outcomes for many more families.

A common feature observed by the Anchor officers is that when an individual engages with Anchor they feel that their situation is out of control and/or overwhelming. Stress, worry, lack of trust, family conflict and financial difficulties are commonly reported characteristics encountered by the Anchor officers.

Anchor has implemented effective monitoring practices that operate alongside its family support which helps it to understand the difference the support has made. A full FCIA has been conducted with six of the supported families. After working with Anchor, the supported individual reports and displays improved confidence as well as a new perspective on their challenges. Importantly, Anchor supported the individual on a journey from feeling overwhelmed to a position of understanding and learning and finally to a position where they take action.

The impact of the action taken by supported individuals includes new or improved relationships with support services, reduction in stress and mental health issues, improved family relationships and wellbeing, and improved financial stability.

Supported individuals were asked to what extent they might have achieved the positive benefit from the engagement with Anchor in a different way. The findings suggest that for all six families the benefits experienced through engaging with Anchor are extremely unlikely to have occurred without Anchor.

Through working effectively with families and undertaking research activity that records learning and progress, the Anchor project has made strong progress against its first two objectives in its first year of activity.

Although only in its first year of delivery, Anchor has also made progress in influencing system change. Observed impacts include stakeholder organisations prioritising the development of softer skills in order to better support families, stakeholder organisations displaying a willingness to move towards more family-led approaches and shifts in attitude towards more open partnership working.

The additionality of Anchor activity in the observed system change (objective three) has not been formally tested but it is acknowledged that there are complementary activities elsewhere in the system affecting change, and the local response to the Covid-19 pandemic is also stimulating change.

## What are the key features of Anchor that have enabled success?

The FCIA research findings highlight that critical features of Anchor that support success with families are:

- The skills and experience of the project officers, including their listening, enquiry and conversational skills, and their knowledge of the support system which enables them to guide families towards appropriate services.
- Placing the supported individual or individuals at the centre of the problem-solving process. This is the core ethos of Anchor. This helps to build the individual's confidence, as they receive reassurance that their issues are important, and helps them to gain a new perspective and a sense of control over the issue.
- The individual is supported along a pathway that begins with the development of a trusted relationship and moves on to disentangling the issues, awareness raising, identifying potential action and finally taking action intended to improve conditions for them and their family.
- Individuals commonly reported that the characteristics of Anchor that supported success are: the project officers are approachable, supportive i.e. 'on my side', independent and non-judgemental. The lack of a time-constraint is also viewed very positively.

However, the project officers and the families recognise that the Anchor intervention is not a solution to all the challenges faced by the family. The officers recognise that the supported individuals still have unresolved issues that will continue to create challenges for the family and require external support. However, it is hoped that the experience and impact of working with Anchor, and the system change that Anchor aims to facilitate, will mean that family need can be more easily connected to appropriate and timely support in the future.

Under its objective to affect system change, the key features of Anchor that enable success include:

- The seniority of individuals, and the organisations represented, on the Project Board. The Project Board is a vital component in the capacity of Anchor to inform and influence system change.
- The willingness of Anchor to engage with and learn from other service providers.
- A commitment to active research supports continuous improvement of project delivery and helps Anchor officers to maintain an understanding of how families are benefitting from the approach adopted.

## What learning is there for year two?

The following points highlight key learning points for Anchor that may influence its second year, and anyone wishing to replicate Anchor's success:

- To reach families, Anchor must develop effective and trusted relationships with staff in the wider support system to connect with families who might benefit from support. In year one, staff in the targeted schools have played a vital role in linking Anchor to families.
- The key features of the Anchor approach, as described above, are fundamental to success and cannot be watered down.
- The Project Board plays a vital role in translating the learning from Anchor into system change.
- Covid-19 and the resulting challenge to public and third sector services has provided a glimpse of what is possible when different partners are motivated by a common goal. However, the support system for families is incredibly complex with a multitude of organisations and roles in the public sector and third sector.
- For widespread adoption of a family-led approach, there is need to invest in workforce skills including active listening, powerful questions, being curious and evaluating impact. There must also be improved knowledge and awareness of the wider support system.

Anchor is not the only voice promoting system change. There is rising awareness of the need for change, accelerated by Covid-19, and a growing number of voices promoting system change. System change will be complex and challenging but, with other stakeholders also promoting change, Anchor does not need to try to answer all the questions that will arise. There is an opportunity for Anchor to focus on key issues around implementation and the direct delivery of support to families. In the remainder of Anchor's programme, it is expected that Anchor will have a key role in informing and influencing how resources are redistributed in order to have the greatest benefit to families and the system.

## 1.5 Report structure

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 provides an overview of Anchor activity in year one;
- Section 3 provides further detail on activity undertaken to provide and record evidence around family-led support and the key findings from the research undertaken; and
- Section 4 provides further detail on the activity undertaken to inform and influence system change.

## 2 Overview of activity in year one

There are two interrelated streams of Anchor activity, with the first stream expected to inform and influence the second:

- **Family-led activity.** Anchor project officers work with families to understand the challenges families face, the barriers to improvement they face and the support they need to enable positive change. The purpose of this is to identify and collect evidence that can be used to support the system to overcome weaknesses or gaps that, if addressed via system change, could increase the value/impact of intervention and lead to better family outcomes across Shetland; and
- **System change.** Anchor works with service providers to explore the need and potential for system change around support for families. This is informed by experience from Anchor's family-led activity, but Anchor is also encouraging those involved in the system to engage in problem-solving activity using their own knowledge and experience.

The activity undertaken under each stream of activity is described further below.

### Family-led activity

The Anchor Project Officer will support any member of a family who is, for whatever reason, finding it difficult to cope with life's challenges.

One key challenge in undertaking work of this nature is making contact, and establishing effective relationships, with those families who could benefit from support.

Anchor has achieved this by working with two schools to establish a connection to families who could benefit. The two schools are Sound Primary School and Brae High School.

Anchor has established a physical presence, a hub, at both schools in order to create an offering that is open and accessible for all families in that school community.

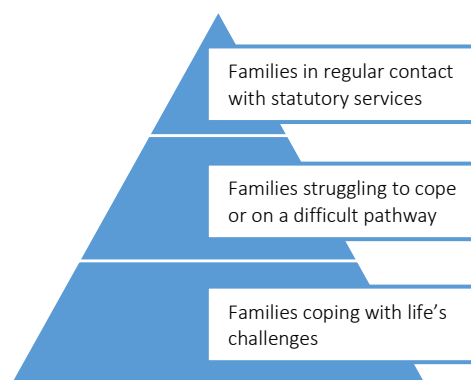
Activity undertaken by the project officers to specifically to connect with families has included: attendance at events, production of a leaflet to explain Anchor to families, social media promotion and information sharing, and drop-in sessions at the hub.

Building relationships with staff in the school to explain how Anchor works and who it might benefit has been particularly beneficial as school staff can speak directly to a family member and recommend they contact Anchor, or ask for the family's permission to provide their contact details to Anchor so that a Project Officer can make contact. Building relationships with staff has involved: provision of a leaflet to explain Anchor to service providers, presentations at staff meetings, building effective relationships with the senior management teams and informal one-to-one chats with staff members.

### System change

The Anchor project officers and project manager engage in several activities that explore and test the wider system of support for families in Shetland. The main activities designed to influence system change are:

- evidence-based reports for the Project Board;



- one-to-one meetings with service providers; and
- workshops with representatives of different service providers.

The approach of Anchor was to build the evidence base first in order to influence and persuade decision-makers to act. The impact of Covid-19 is that system change is being actively and more widely considered and it is possible that Anchor might find it possible to leapfrog some steps previously considered necessary to achieve system change. The challenge of reformatting Anchor to build on the success of its first year of activity and in the new context of Covid-19 is underway in a separate exercise.



## 3 Family-led activity

Section 3 reports in more detail on the activity and impact associated with Anchor's family-led activity. The Family Centred Impact Assessment (FCIA) was designed to capture the impact of the family-led intervention provided by Anchor. The FCIA can be used to assess progress against two objectives of Anchor:

- objective one - to facilitate family-led problem-solving with those families engaged with Anchor; and
- objective two - to record and share learning on barriers and opportunities to family-led problem solving and the value of early intervention.

The methodology for the FCIA was described in a report to the Project Board in February 2020. In summary the FCIA consists of user-friendly tools that can be used to collect data to demonstrate:

- the benefit to the supported individuals;
- the impact that the benefit to the supported individual has had on their family, e.g. improved family life, and on the family's wider network, e.g. the class of the child/children in the supported family; and
- the characteristics of Anchor that have supported success.

To understand the impact on families and the wider benefit of the direct interventions with families, the FCIA uses a package of tools to understand impact. Three primary tools exist:

- a questionnaire to capture the perspective of the supported individual on the outcomes and impact for their family from Anchor support;
- a questionnaire to capture the observations of the Anchor project officers on the outcomes and impact for each supported family (one questionnaire per family); and
- a questionnaire to capture the observations of support service staff on how Anchor support is benefitting the supported families (one questionnaire to cover all supported families known to the interviewee).

All three tools are designed to be used by the Anchor project officers.

### 3.1 Activity

The family-led intervention undertaken by Anchor is designed to be flexible to the needs of the family and key to this is creating an environment through which need can be established. Activity undertaken by the project officer varies by family and can range from the simple provision of refreshments during a drop-in session, to helping with transportation or shopping, and support to complete benefits applications. This flexible but supportive approach builds the trusted relationships required for guiding and facilitating change.

Since April 2019 eight families have received support: seven at Sound and one at Brae. Of the eight, three were involved in GIRFEC, either closed or open, and none had an Understanding You.

The project officers spent an average of 11.2 hours working with each supported individual or family, this time was spent in either direct contact with the family or working indirectly on the family's behalf,

for example, exploring avenues of support. The total time spent supporting each family varied from between 5.5 hours and 22.5 hours.

## The Anchor approach to family-led problem-solving

Throughout the first year the project officers have developed their skills base around supporting and monitoring families' progress. Improvement methodology was applied to help families identify their own goals and measure their successes. PDSA cycles easily break down tasks into achievable sections, giving them a sense of achievement before moving onto the next challenge. Motivational interviewing when appropriate has been beneficial in bringing individuals on board and assisting them to take a new approach to their challenges. Engagements with individuals, have been based around strengths, and building on these to counteract their weaknesses.

Assisting supported individuals to set their own agenda has empowered them to take control of their choices, witness the positive impacts and reflect back on how much progress they have made. Time to build meaningful relationships with the project officers allows supported individuals to feel supported and valued when they are struggling with life's challenges. Reflection is a strong tool to help supported individuals to see their progress when they might otherwise focus on the negatives and forget how far they have come.

The engagement between Anchor project officers and a family is characterised by the following features:

- asking if someone is alright, as soon as there is an anxiety / change in circumstance;
- neutral, non-judgmental;
- engagement without obligation on the supported individual;
- taking the time and having the skills, permission, and confidence to develop a trusting empathic relationship;
- flexibility, to be led by the needs of the family unit;
- more listening and less (no?) external solution provision;
- equipped to respond, knowledge of sources of support and family entitlements;
- willingness to work closely with other support services; and
- involvement until the family has (at least) regained stability, with an open-door to return.

The FCIA process has been completed for six of the eight supported families and a summary of the support provided by the Anchor project officers to each of the six families is summarised in the following table.

Support provided by Anchor project officer	Number of families
I listened	6
I provided reassurance	6
I supported them through a problem-solving process (analysis, planning etc)	6
I signposted them to sources of support	6
I provided advice	6
I accompanied them to an activity/appointment	0
Other (please describe) Shared personal information with another service at their request or contacted a service to find out more.	6

The research undertaken with families as part of the FCIA often highlighted that they had been engaged with services before and/or were struggling to cope with the challenges they faced. Comments that demonstrate this include:

- One supported individual reported that prior to Anchor they felt exhausted, that they had exhausted the available support (social work and early intervention) and that they just couldn't cope with the challenges they faced.
- One individual reported not knowing where to go for help and another individual commented that they were not coping with the challenges of parenting.
- One individual reported that they felt like they were the only parent in their situation and that working with Anchor has helped them to understand what they are experiencing is normal.

### 3.2 Impact of family-led activity

Project officers were asked for their views on the immediate effect of Anchor support on the individual. In all cases, the officers reported that the individual developed new knowledge or understanding, was more willing to engage with support services, and was reassured that their issues or concerns are important. The project officers also noted that five out of six had a new perspective on their challenges and a new willingness to act to resolve their issues.

Observed impact on the supported individual	Number of individuals
New knowledge/understanding	6
A new perspective on the challenge(s)	5
More willingness to engage with support	6
Reassurance that their issues/concerns are important	6
A new willingness to act on issues of concern	5
A change in opinion/attitude	3
Other (please describe)	2

### Research with supported individuals on benefit gained

The following bullet points refer to feedback from supported individuals on the immediate impact of working with Anchor:

- Supported individuals commonly reported Anchor had helped them to work through what they want, to make sense of their situation and to prioritise what they need to do.
- All respondents made comments relating to improved confidence and that they better understood the steps they can take to improve their situation.
- One respondent, who was experiencing significant friction within the family, said that Anchor had helped them to understand the issues and triggers for the conflict and that this had helped them to find a better level of engagement and understanding.
- One supported individual can see how additional parenting support will help them to learn to deal with some parenting issues.

The following bullet points refer to feedback on action taken as a result of engagement with Anchor from two supported individuals interviewed as part of the Family Centred Impact Analysis pilot:

- Two supported individuals took employment related action, one has secured employment and the other has given up employment (because of reflection after discussion with Anchor).
- Two supported individuals are working better with estranged parents to support their family.
- One supported individual contacted their MSP about issues they were facing, something they would not have done before.
- Four supported individuals are accessing new welfare benefits.
- One supported individual reported shifting responsibilities within their family unit which had helped to reduce pressure.
- One supported individual was considering formal relationship support prior to lockdown but has not progressed this due to lockdown and improved circumstances.
- One supported individual has joined a parenting group.
- Five individuals have engaged with other services either in a different way or for the first time.
- There was a clear sense from two individuals that Anchor has supported them to make life-changing decisions, with one specifically using this terminology.
- All families have received additional support from services that they would not otherwise have engaged with.

The following bullet points refer to feedback on impact achieved from the action taken:

- Three supported individuals reported increased confidence and a feeling of being more in control of their lives.
- Two individuals commented on how the improved relationship with estranged partners had reduced the pressure and strain on them.
- Two reported a reduction in stress and an increased ability to cope.
- One individual reported that the reduction in family conflict had a positive mental health benefit. They also reported on the knock-on benefit to other family members through reduced conflict
- Four supported individuals reported the increase in welfare benefits secured has made them more financially secure and one said it is helping them to reduce debt.
- One supported individual who secured employment as a result of support from Anchor is using it as a first step towards a longer-term career goal.

- One supported individual who gave up employment has done so to get on top of things at home and in the family.

## Observations by Anchor project officers

The following bullet points summarise the common observations made by the project officers in relation to supported individuals' learning, action, and impact.

- Supported individuals experience improved confidence and self-esteem.
- Supported individuals have become more pro-active, taken positive action and feel more in control.
- Where officers were able to observe wider family life, officers report a more settled family environment, especially where behaviour issues were a substantial trigger for the problems being experienced.
- One commented on how the supported family had been ticking along under the radar of more official interventions.
- Officers recognise most supported families will have ongoing needs.

## Research with school staff on the benefit of Anchor to families

The following bullet points reflect observations of the supported families from staff at the school:

- Staff noted more confident, calmer children who appear to be benefitting from support their parent is getting.
- Staff also noted that the capacity to learn of children in some supported families has increased.
- Staff felt there is less need for other services and issues are resolved before it gets escalated to social work.
- Increased parent confidence has led to greater openness between family and school about issues that families are facing, which enables school to engage better with family and child.

The staff were also asked about the impact of Anchor on the school:

- There is less disruptive behaviour in class and therefore less teacher time required to deal with issues, as a result the rest of the class benefits.
- Teachers benefit when there is reduced pressure. For example one staff member said "We don't need to spend a lot of time phoning around to try and work out how a family can be supported as we just direct the family to Anchor making support more direct and the process smoother". Another staff member said "[Anchor] has eased pressure on me. Not just time pressure but sometimes parents come to you and they are desperate, aside from the time I'm not trained enough to know where to signpost them. I'm wary of what advice I am giving them and if it's the right thing".
- Some pressure on the management team has been relieved.
- Some staff also noted an increase in their own confidence because they know Anchor is there to provide support therefore they feel more able to talk to families about wider issues.

- A member of staff noted “Anchor just makes us more aware and more empathetic. It has taught me to be less judgemental” and another noted “Anchor has been empowering for school community”.

There is further added value from Anchor engagement in Sound Primary School. Anchor undertook promotion and provided advice to supported families on the availability of free school meals. This work is believed to have increased the uptake of free school meals benefitting the family but also the school through the potential for increased PEF funding. Furthermore, Anchor has transferred new knowledge to the school, for example “School has been made aware of things that families can access that would otherwise have been unknown to the school.” Whilst these issues are not necessarily directly linked to the purpose of Anchor, they do demonstrate the value of close working and improved communication.

One comment made by a member of school staff perhaps hints at a further source of success “Small things that would seem insignificant do have a bigger impact than we realise. Don’t underestimate the impact that small changes can make.”

### Additionality of Anchor support

For any funded intervention it is important to ask, might the same benefit have been achieved anyway? The supported individuals and the staff in school were asked to what extent Anchor had an impact on the outcome for the family. The research with supported individuals demonstrates that the intervention and benefit of Anchor is fully additional, i.e. the individuals could not have achieved the same benefit without Anchor (see table).

When asked about the additionality of the Anchor support in securing the benefits achieved, five out of six respondents would not have achieved the same benefit without Anchor, and the other individual said they would have achieved it but over a longer timeframe but did not know how they would have achieved it. Without knowledge of how they might have achieved the same benefit, it can be assumed that the benefit attributed to Anchor is full additional, in at least the short to medium-term.

Supported individuals’ perspective on the role of Anchor in the benefit achieved (additionality of support)	Number of respondents
Yes, I’d have got same benefit at same time without Anchor	
Yes, but it would have taken me longer (less than 3 months)	
Yes, but it would have taken me longer (more than 3 months)	1
No, I would not have got the same benefit without Anchor	5

Staff at Sound School were also asked for their perspective on the additionality associated with Anchor. Four of the six staff interviewed said the observed benefits could not have been achieved without Anchor, two responded ‘don’t know’.

### 3.3 Characteristics of Anchor that supported success

The following bullet points refer to feedback on what it is about Anchor that made the difference to the supported individuals:

- “I like that we have spoken about all sorts of things related to family life and dynamics and hasn’t all been focused on my children’s needs, but instead identifying that as adults we also have issues that need to be considered.”

- “[Anchor] provides support that helps you to achieve things for yourself”
- “I found the support really relaxed and supportive covering practical issues and helping me make sense of things.”
- “Never really had this sort of support to before. Someone who is there, non-judgmental, there where I needed them by message or phone that gets back to me quickly.”
- “You can speak for as long as needed, [it’s good to have] someone listen to all your issues and not just the ones specific to their work. Talking through each problem and prioritising how to manage them has really helped me focus and get things done. Also, I got to decide what was more relevant and what I wanted help with.”
- “You’re really approachable. Down to earth, never judge me.”
- “I have really appreciated having one person to go to about our issues and not needing to repeat my story over and over. [The project officer] being linked into the school made it feel joined up that she could pass on information if it was necessary.”
- “The less folk (services) that are involved with families the better – don’t want to keep telling your story over and over. I can’t be bothered to speak to lots of folk (multiple agencies).”
- “Having a ‘go to’ person has made a big difference for me. Just touching base as and when its needed makes me feel supported. Before when I contacted the school, I would feel lost or I was being a nuisance as it wasn’t really anyone’s job in particular to help sort out our issues.”
- Four respondents reported the importance of Anchor being non-judgemental, and individuals commented on Anchor being approachable, that they were given the time to speak openly and in confidence, and they were listened to.
- One person commented that if there was support for families from within the school setting that she would not feel stigmatised getting help because of her experience with Anchor. Although another respondent thought they would not feel comfortable contacting a service in the school for fear of judgement from teachers and other parents.

The following bullet points refer to feedback from school staff on what it is about Anchor that they think makes a difference:

- “Anchor have time to sit down and listen, which has helped increase their (parent) confidence. As a result, the parent is more willing to go to other agencies to seek help.”
- “I honestly think a big change is everybody coming together and sharing info.”
- “[Anchor] isn’t intimidating and the fact that it’s about a conversation and voicing a problem that you wouldn’t normally voice. A worry that you wouldn’t necessarily go to the school about.”

## 4 System change activity

Section 4 reports on the activity and impact of Anchor's system change activity. The activity, and its subsequent impact, can be used to assess progress against Anchor's third objective: to demonstrate the potential value of system change, and facilitate system change through stimulating either small incremental changes or step-changes.

### 4.1 Activity

Anchor activity which directly targets system change includes:

- sharing evidence from Anchor's family-led activity, including:
  - quarterly Monitoring Reports: summary of activity, learning and action for the previous quarter;
  - e-newsletters; and
  - story boards (appendix A contains examples).
- working with service providers to understand opportunities and barriers to change through workshops and one-to-one discussions;
- working with complementary change projects;
- interviews with Project Board members; and
- survey of service providers to capture the views of service providers on Shetland's responsiveness to supporting families.

The audience reached by the activity includes:

- Project Board;
- the National Lottery Community Fund; and
- local partners engaged in family support, including attendance by Anchor project officers at over twenty different services and partnership service meetings.

### 4.2 Impact of system change activity

#### Findings

Through working with representatives of different services, Anchor has identified characteristics in the wider system of support for families that could hinder rapid progress towards widespread adoption of a family-led approach in service delivery. These include:

- Shetland's family support workforce continues to work in silos, and there is lack of understanding of the different roles and service offers within the system. A recent piece of work by Anchor demonstrated that there are more than 100 roles (universal and specialist) providing support to families.
- Staff lack the confidence, skills, and knowledge to pursue systematic early intervention and engage in co-production.



- Decision-making and control in the system is very top-heavy.
- There is no one accountable for a family's overall level of support.
- Front-line staff often do not feel they have the knowledge, or authority, to engage more effectively with a family.
- The staff member that may be closest to the family does not always have a communication or engagement channel into the wider system and this can mean that the potential value of the individual's knowledge is not understood and opportunities for early intervention support are missed.
- Families require flexible support and the back-office process, 9-5 working patterns and national guidelines continue to hinder family-centred approaches.

## Influence

The evidence provided by Anchor has helped decision-makers within the wider family support system to understand the need to engage with families in a different way and to value a family-led approach to change.

There are several examples of services becoming more flexible and responsive, such that families are getting what they identify and need, rather than being on the receiving end of a rigid service offer. This has required services to reconsider their approach to relationships with families, with the emphasis on a softer approach that can build a more trusting relationship. Anchor has acted as a catalyst for change and/or Anchor has supported change to occur. Primary examples are described below.

- The growing reputation of Anchor means that services have been proactive in contacting Anchor to seek support to improve their engagement with vulnerable families. They often wish to seek support from Anchor to investigate changes they could test to improve the support they provide. In recognising this shift, comments have included:
  - 'I think the tide is turning.'
  - 'People really understand putting families at the centre, through greater braveness to have conversations with people who are struggling.'
  - There is awareness (what does this mean?) of mature partnership working: strong leadership, open and honest conversations, consensus and common vision, understanding the culture of others, and investment of time to nurture.
- In Sound Primary School, Anchor has helped to raise awareness of Free School Meals and has supported the school to develop a new approach in support of access to free school meals (see Appendix A for a story board of this case study).
- Anchor supported a shift from Getting it Right for Every Child to Getting it Right for Every Family approach.
- In some organisations, training that reflects the Anchor approach has been prioritised.
- The evidence provided by Anchor is supporting improved allocation of national ring-fenced funding, for example Pupil Equity Funding (PEF).

## Active Schools

Discussions between Anchor and Jacqui Murray, Active Schools Co-ordinator has developed a wider appreciation for children's wellbeing, giving consideration to supporting them beyond the basic Child Protection issues. They are redesigning their Child Wellbeing and Protection in Sport course, exploring how coaches approach families when a child withdraws to ensure there is nothing more the club can provide for their continued engagement while adhering to Child Wellbeing and Protection guidelines. In addition, clubs have been provided with information relating to possible barriers that affect a child's ongoing engagement, what effect these barriers can have and where to seek advice to or signpost a family to help them overcome this. Anchor will work along with the Active Schools Team to support them in implementing this new approach. They are also:

- exploring accessing nursery settings to move to earlier intervention; and
- collecting evidence on reasons for non-attendance, to work with others to increase attendance at activities.

## Partnership working

In addition to the activity of the project officers, the Project Board has a vital role to play in translating the learning from Anchor into system change towards a more family-led approach across Shetland.

A key requirement is for the ethos of Anchor to be understood and embedded at the Board level. The Project Board established a clear vision to have in place strong working relationships: respect each other; trust each other; learn from each other; value each other equally, recognising everyone has something to bring to the project; openness and honesty.

The successful development of the Project Board in the first phase of Anchor implementation has undoubtedly helped the project to thrive and to make progress against its objectives. Furthermore, it has strengthened the relationship between the partners in support of progress in other strategic areas. Observed benefits of the working relationship within the Project Board include:

- Board members are more willing to share information with partners when they are experiencing difficulties;
- The relationship built between Board members is acting as a stimulus for conversations on other substantive strategic issues;
- Space has been created to think and improve understanding across the Board.
- Helped develop the new Children's Services Partnership
- One comment made by a Board member was "I'm really optimistic about the whole partnership (Anchor team and Project Board): relationships, enthusiasm, and optimism from key people."

### 4.3 Characteristics of Anchor that supported success

The following are the key lessons learned by Anchor around what is required to inform and influence system change to better meet the needs of families:

- a clearly defined and communicated common purpose;
- the development and nurturing of trusting relationships across partners, services, and with families - 'the glue';
- engagement with key decision-makers early in the process of designing the approach and building the evidence base;
- listening to and involving families in the improvement process;
- listening to and involving front-line staff in the improvement process;
- capacity and willingness to quickly identify and embed incremental learning, sometimes through failure;
- investment of time in evidence-based monitoring of impact; and
- a good understanding of information governance.

# Appendix A: Anchor Free School Meal Story Board



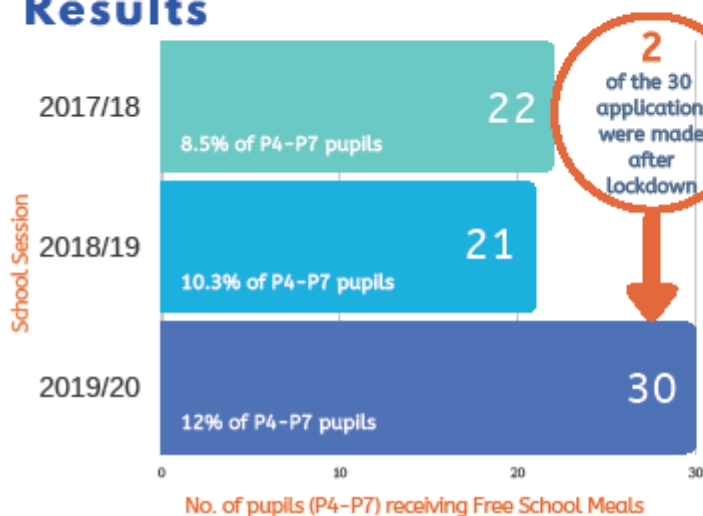
Free School Meals are provided for children in low income families who apply via the Council. In Shetland, similar to other rural areas, uptake tends to be lower than the number of families who are eligible.

The number of pupils accessing Free School Meals has been used, in recent years, to allocate Pupil Equity Funding in Scotland.

## Rationale

**Aim** To increase the number of families applying for Free School Meals (FSM) within Sound Primary School Catchment Area (10 by 31st March 2020) and to raise awareness of other relevant benefits available to families.

## Results



"(without Anchor) I wouldn't have had the guts to reach out to Beatrice Wishart about the heating or push for free school meals. I wasn't sure exactly what I was entitled to" - Anchor Family

"Small things that would seem insignificant do have a bigger impact than we realise. Don't underestimate the impact that small changes can make" - Ann-Marie, Head Teacher

"(without Anchor) I wouldn't have bothered with Universal Credit; it's overwhelming claiming benefits. You helped with FSM, clothing grants, electricity and talked about places I could go to speak to people" - Anchor Family

## Achievements

- Increased uptake of FSM at Sound Primary by 9 from 21 to 30 (10.3% to 12% of P4-P7 pupils).
- Potentially this could lead to an approximate increase in PEF from £24,000 to £34,286.
- Raised awareness of other benefits for families amongst staff in the school and staff at Hayfield who deal with FSM applications, e.g. Warm Homes Discount and Best Start Grant.

Receive £140 back with the Warm Home Discount Scheme

£250 Best Start Grant School Age payment for eligible families

## Key Learning

- School staff must be continually reminded about benefits for families.
- School staff must have the confidence to have discussions with families around finance and benefits.
- It must be straightforward and non-stigmatising to apply for Free School Meals.

## Next Steps

- Put in place a Shetland-wide programme to ensure all schools are equipped to support families to access the benefits they're entitled to.
- Revise the process of applying for FSM so it's straightforward and non-stigmatising.

The need to dispel myths: one family didn't want to apply for FSM, as they thought it would impact on other benefits they received. Their child's school-teacher reiterated this belief. However, FSM does not impact on any other benefits a family can get.

# Appendix A: Anchor Hub Story Board

## Anchor

Early Action Project

1 April 2019 to 31 December 2019

### Aim

To enable families to engage with Anchor support within the Sound Primary School catchment area (ten by 31st December 2019).

### Rationale

The foundation of Anchor is the belief that families who need help and organisations who can provide help are not working as well together as they could. Furthermore, it is accepted that inequality is growing and funding for support services is declining.

## Results

Date	Number of Families Engaged
01-Apr	0
08-Apr	0
15-Apr	0
22-Apr	0
29-Apr	0
06-May	0
13-May	1
20-May	1
27-May	3
03-Jun	3
10-Jun	3
17-Jun	3
24-Jun	4
01-Jul	4
08-Jul	4
15-Jul	4
22-Jul	4
29-Jul	4
05-Aug	4
12-Aug	4
19-Aug	4
26-Aug	4
02-Sep	4
09-Sep	4
16-Sep	4
23-Sep	4
30-Sep	4
07-Oct	5
14-Oct	5
21-Oct	5
28-Oct	5
04-Nov	5
11-Nov	5
18-Nov	5
25-Nov	5
02-Dec	5
09-Dec	5
16-Dec	5
23-Dec	5
30-Dec	5

### Achievements

- Establish the Hub concept, leading to families getting support from Anchor
- Built knowledge of the wider support available, within the school community
- Broadened the curiosity of staff members, to the wider needs of families

### Key Learning Points

- There appears to be a stronger correlation between staff contact resulting in engagement, than between social media and engagement. We've not been able to measure word of mouth but it appears to be the most effective.
- The Hub concept has been beneficial to the school community, as much as to the families, e.g. as an information source for teachers, so there needs to be ongoing investment in this.

### Next Steps and Sustainability

- Prepare an exit strategy at Sound, which maintains the Hub concept
- Expand the role of the Hub, in recognition of the value of the word of mouth approach

### Impact

*"[I've seen] positive changes with kids. If parents get support then that helps everybody in the wider family." School Staff*

*"Before coming to Anchor I was lacking in confidence, I find now I'm feeling better in myself and moving forward with my life, so my confidence is improving...By chance I popped along to one of the Anchor/CAB drop ins and have found out I'm better off on Universal Credit and now getting more money, along with still working part time...I'm financially better off, allowing me to start paying off some debt." Family*

*"[So far, for one family, I think Anchor's involvement removed] the need for social work because these issues have been resolved before it gets escalated to Social Work and has led to less stress. There are other options for families." School Staff*

*"The Anchor Project Officer has allowed me to speak openly and freely about anything and everything...Prior to speaking to the Project Officer I felt quite exhausted and frustrated that I have tried different supports with little sustained success...Anchor helped me make life changing decisions." Family*

*"[Anchor is] not intimidating and the fact that it's about a conversation, and voicing a problem that you wouldn't normally voice... Anchor knows of services that exist that schools aren't aware of." School Staff*

*"Support has come faster for families than if they had not accessed Anchor [in the sense that Anchor is the support and because of that Anchor has been able to direct families elsewhere should they need extra support]." School Staff*