

STRONGER FAMILIES

Building a future together

The Stronger Families project operates a Keyworker model and takes a whole family approach.

The project supports families to identify what is important to them through a variety of tools, employing motivational interviewing techniques and setting actions and goals inline and at pace with the parents' goals and aspirations.



“
My mum smiles a lot more now
Child whose parent is taking part in Stronger Families
”

“
I didn't have a life before and I have an amazing life now
Parent taking part in Stronger Families
”



“The key thing that makes the difference is the relationship between the Keyworker and the family.”

Lesley Wilkinson, Service Development Manager, Early Help, Leeds City Council

The partnership that underpins the programme has been a crucial part in supporting successful outcomes for the parents. The combination of the strong infrastructure that the local authority brings and the diversity and community engagement that third sector brings to the table are really strong ingredients and the best of both worlds. From the outset we recognised that support needed to be rooted in the local community where there was local knowledge and intelligence to add value to this work.

Not only do third sector partners know their communities well, but we know that those who are socially excluded are far more likely to engage with a local agency than someone from the local authority who may be perceived differently. The wealth of knowledge, resources and skills that the partners bring to the table provides a rich tapestry to support families and improve outcomes. It allows for the sharing of ideas, peer support, sharing knowledge and all the added value of the wider work that the third sector partners are involved, in which can often be a pathway to encourage parents onto the programme. The breadth of the Local Authority enables the programme to be part of a wider landscape of support in addition to broad expertise regarding workforce development, governance, national policy and also links with the wider employment strategy. This has supported a strong interface with the Supporting Families programme and strong partnerships with DWP colleagues as those relationships were already established prior to the programme. This has enabled a good interface between the two programmes but also a strong pathway into support from DWP. The partnership has been the glue and connectivity and enabled the programme to grow and flourish.

“The whole family approach is unique in that it looks at the positives and builds up from the whole family’s skills and abilities.”

Helen Hart, Managing Director, Barca Leeds

The project included real consultation right from the start, and parents had a voice in designing the project.

“Keyworker, hub and spoke, where the hub referral process is that referrals come in and are cascaded out.”

Dave Benn, Children’s Services Manager, Barnardo’s

“Working across two different regions have been really helpful and there has been a flow of ideas.”

Dave Benn, Children’s Services Manager, Barnardo’s

“There is a clarity of roles and joint ownership of the project’s ultimate goal which is one of supporting the whole family and is only achievable through the partnership.”

Helen Hart, Managing Director, Barca Leeds

Training included: motivational interviewing, assessment training, smart planning, outcomes, Barca, and everyone accessed the outcome star training

“Third sector partners understand our landscape in terms of early help and they have been able to access training that they wouldn’t have been able to access before.”

Lesley Wilkinson, Service Development Manager, Early Help, Leeds City Council

“Across the two cities, they have collaborative meetings where they share learning and all of the different strengths of the partnership come together.”

Helen Hart, Managing Director, Barca Leeds

“People have worked incredibly hard at this programme... we’re really proud of the outcomes we have achieved.”

Dave Benn, Children’s Services Manager, Barnardo’s

“The Keyworker approach is fundamental... it is one consistent, trusted person to help the whole family.”

Helen Hart, Managing Director, Barca Leeds

“Stronger Families has really helped me and my son... I can’t believe what I have achieved so far and how far I have come already.” *Parent*

“I look different, I’m really happy and love getting up to go to work in the morning.” *Parent*

“The added value of working in partnership with other organisations has been invaluable. Each organisation has been able to offer their own specialist areas of support which has been incorporated to the full package of support offered to families. Manager meetings have provided opportunities to share different practices, look at trends within the families we are supporting, discuss any problems that organisation may be having and to work together to resolve problems.”

Stronger Families partner organisation, Barnardo’s Leeds.



“The way we work is what do you need and what do you want and how do we support you to get there.”

Helen Hart, Managing Director, Barca Leeds

**Stronger Families
have worked with**



Those 1592 have 3448* children and 454* partners meaning **5494 individuals** have benefitted from the programme in total.

About the parents taking part:

81% (1290)
come from the three most deprived backgrounds.

This is a measure of poverty in effect; most deprived include areas with low incomes, where crime is high, and the living environment is not ideal, where there are lots of people not working, and where health issues are high.

84% (1337)
come from a 'jobless household'.

38% (608)
did not have basic skills.

5% (82)
were homeless individuals.

66% (1056) of those go on to positive results including...

294 parents gaining employment;

533 parents engaging with education and training; and

119 parents actively searching for employment.

In total:

302
parents volunteered.

637
parents increased their confidence.

525
parents saw improvements to their mental health.

669
parents felt happier.

2362
individuals had better family relationships.



"Involvement is long enough to make a consistent change and not just 'fire fight'."

*Keyworker,
Stronger Families*

For every

£1

invested in Stronger Families brings a Social Return on Investment of:

£9.08

89%
of parents would recommend to a friend.

90%
of parents find staff friendly, helpful and knowledgeable.

87%
of parents rate the programme as excellent.

*the number of children and partners has been estimated from a sample of parents about whom we knew how many children they had.



Deena's* Story



I was a bit weary of being referred onto the stronger families program I thought someone was just going to come and take my kids away and tell me I was a bad mother. Because I didn't have it together. I felt lost not sure what I was supposed to be doing.

I cried every day I was so low I walked the streets every day I didn't know where to go. I was so lonely I never had anyone that was there for me. Then I got a phone call one day to tell me that I had been given a keyworker and that I would get a home visit. I didn't know then that I was going to meet the most caring supportive, loveliest woman that was going to change my life for the better. At the beginning I never thought this programme would help at all and that no one really cared up till now so nothing would change but it did.

My health was really bad I was in and out of hospital. My mental health was really bad. I had a lot of crippling debt I wasn't getting the right benefits.

I was stressed and worried and {my Keyworker} just took all that stress and worry away. My benefits was sorted my debt is under control. I got to meet touch stones who helped with my mental health we had lots of chats and went on lots of walks. Then I learnt about participation. I didn't even know that was a thing. I got to go to forums and met lots of lovely people. I made some good friendships. I was taking part in meetings planning forums I took part in helping to develop the peer mentor service

I was doing and learning things I had never done before. I got to go on trips with the kids, walking being walks. Lunches in the park, roasting marshmallows in the woods making friends.

I got all the help I need with my health.

I feel so much better I'm no longer sad or lonely I can get through the day without crying.

I have a much better relationship with my children now I'm able to spend more time with them and enjoy the time with them. I started distance learning I never thought I could do a course but {my Keyworker} believed in me and that meant a lot I have never had that before.

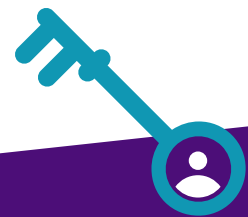
I have now passed three courses and have now started volunteering at a job I could only ever dream of.

I have a lot of dreams that are now becoming reality.

I feel so much stronger so much more confident and happy.

My life has changed so much whatever I needed {my Keyworker} was there whatever problems I had are gone. I lost my mum quite young and never got to experience that motherly figure that just had your back. [My Keyworker] was like the mum I never got to have and I will always be eternally grateful and thankful for everything. **I couldn't recommend the stronger family's program enough.**

*names have been changed to protect privacy



"I feel that one of our unique selling points has always been that we are able to offer support in the family's homes - we offer a down to earth service that puts our participant's minds at ease - the fact we have specialist provisions within Stronger Families makes this another great selling point and knowing that the Keyworker stays with them till the specialist provision support has ended helps their path of support."

Keyworker, Stronger Families

"Agencies are well known and thought of by families in that area and are trusted as a place to go to get high quality support."

Keyworker, Stronger Families

& Designed to include specialist support & Delivered stronger emotional wellbeing

Specialist provision delivered across a range of partners has meant people can get the exact help they need; with mental health, domestic violence, parenting skills, support with childcare and training, CV support and employment training, drug and alcohol support, and debt relief support.

★ Outcome Star results for wellbeing* 53% started the programme feeling stuck, accepting help or trying to improve. 88% of those grew or maintained their star, and 55% of those grew this by 2 points or more, indicating significant change.

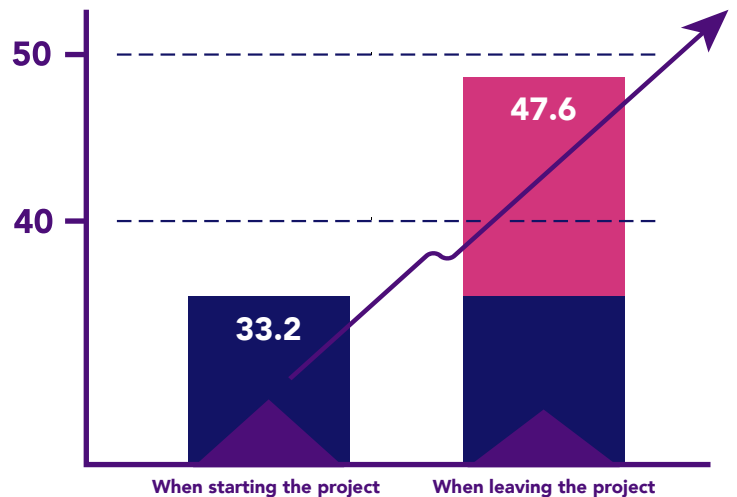
🔑 “We know the barriers are around mental health, skills and confidence. We wanted to wrap that work around the whole family.”
Lesley Wilkinson, Service Development Manager, Early Help, Leeds City Council

🔑 “Access to emotional and mental health support has been a really unique offer and is really helpful.”
Dave Benn, Children’s Services Manager, Barnardo’s

Community Links offer mental health support in Leeds and Touchstones in Bradford. Helping people with a range of mental health needs including low mood and motivation, confidence building and self-esteem, stress and overthinking, anxiety and depression - with tools including mindfulness, improving social skills, developing coping strategies, and leading a healthier lifestyle.

*these results are based on self-assessment by parents through the Outcome Star framework

374 individuals have accessed mental health specialist support. On average they start with a Warwick Edinburgh Scale of Wellbeing score of **33.2** and leave with a score of **47.6** – that’s a **14.4 point bump in wellbeing!**



50 is the National average, whilst scores of under 40 are at risk of severe mental health problems

Source: NHS Digital

“Stronger Families helped me a lot with mental health and also helped with creating a cv”
Parent

“I’m not as stressed now and have a much better relationship with my kids”
Parent

“I am so so grateful for everything you have done”
Parent

& Designed to support financial wellbeing & Delivered debt relief

★ Outcome star* results for home and money 53% started the programme feeling stuck, accepting help or trying to improve. 88% of those grew or maintained their star, and 50% of those grew this by 2 points or more, indicating significant change.

Stronger families have worked with 863 parents who had issues with debt. The average person referred had £7418 worth of debt. Most debts arise from high energy costs and falling behind on payments, and a few are due to long-term illness and unemployment. Most people are social tenants or renting from private landlords. **In total Stronger Families have helped people to deal with £1,595,000 worth of debt.**

Each person referred to the specialist debt support is £311.47 better off, on average.

One Keyworker sat on a doorstep to make sure they could keep helping people during Covid-19:

“I did parent forums over Zoom and a WhatsApp group.” *Parent*

🔑 “The mental health support access is imperative as there is no other service that offers this specifically for parents and supporting them to get back into work or education. This alongside the practical support the Keyworkers provide gives participants the best chance to succeed.”
Mental health support worker, Stronger Families

🔑 “By working 1:1 and focusing on employment/training it allows us to work directly with the parent which other services do not. However, the flexibility and ability to signpost and support in other aspects of family life means parents feel comfortable discussing any issues they may be facing, especially when they are becoming a barrier to work. The majority of support that parents require is also within the same place. For example, if they need debt or mental health support, Stronger Families have available specialist provision to support this.”
Keyworker, Stronger Families

🔑 “Working alongside Keyworkers to provide mental health support, while practical support is offered by other providers, means we can focus on therapeutic interventions... our main priority being the improved mental health of participants.”
Senior mental health support worker, Stronger Families

“I got help with my debts.” *Parent*
“It really does change your life for the better.” *Parent*
“Brilliant, really helpful and kind.” *Parent*

& Designed to help the whole family Delivered Stronger Children

“Things have changed in our house. My mum was so miserable before when she was in the house all the time but she goes to college now and we do our homework together at the kitchen table.”

Child whose parent took part in Stronger Families

“When I’m older, I want a job like my mum... if I can’t be an astronaut.”

Child whose parent took part in Stronger Families



“It was a lifeline for me. I was leaving a domestic violence relationship... I used to have panic attacks but I feel more in control now.” *Parent*



“I’ve noticed a change in me. I’m out of the violent relationship. I’m confident, happy and feel like I can do anything.” *Parent*

& Designed to support families Delivering specialist parenting support

Home Start provide parenting support to families with children under 7. They help parents deal with whatever they need including faddy eating, not sleeping, being clingy, inappropriate behaviour at school, structures for bedtime, play ideas, and much more.

57 families have accessed support and the team have worked with **71 children**. 13% of children have a disability and many are going through behaviour assessments. Other families have children diagnosed with Autism or some with learning or behavioural issues.

Referred from Stronger Families; 10 volunteers worked with Homestart.

People saw large increases in parenting skills (42% increase in coping skill), parent and child wellbeing (36% increase) and family management skills (45% increase in coping skills).

“They’re so much happier.”

Parent talking about their children

“I’m volunteering at my dream job and I’m also studying.”

Parent

“My confidence and my anxiety under control makes me a better mum.”

Parent

“I love stronger families and what they have done for me and my family.”

Parent



“The Keyworkers are amazing, they put so much time into our lives and rebuilt mine and my boy’s lives from scratch.”

Parent

“Now she’s confident and I can give her the mum she deserves.”

Parent talking about the impact on their child

“My daughter is now in a better nursery.”

Parent

“My son has improved so much at school. He has gone from the bottom of class to the top, he has a poem published in a book and even got mathematician of the year.”

Parent, talking about changes in their child since joining Stronger Families

“They have their mum back.”

Parent talking about their children

“Doing really well at school [now].”

Parent talking about their children



“I would say the unique selling point is the sense of family support, it isn’t just individual support... we end up supporting partners and children and others in the household and I really feel participants appreciate this and it helps them immensely. We tailor support to individual participants and adapt our working method to a way that best supports them so they feel unique, important and championed.”

Mental health support worker, Stronger Families



“I got a phone call one day to tell me that I had been given a Keyworker and that I would get a home visit. I didn’t know then that I was going to meet the most caring supportive, loveliest woman that was going to change my life for the better.”

Parent



Donna's* Story



When I fell pregnant I was struggling with an eating disorder in and out of hospital. I was also trapped in a violent and abusive relationship. I tried to better our lives and fled the relationship. I got a little flat and got ready for my baby to arrive. I got a job and we seemed to thrive but addiction was always there. It took over and by 2018 my daughter had to go live with my mum. I couldn't look after myself let alone her.

I went to rehab out of area. A year later I faced coming back to Leeds with no support network or friends and strained relationship with my family.

It was quite a relief the first time I met my {Key}worker as she seemed to have a calm solution for all my worries. The move back to Leeds was so overwhelming, I sadly relapsed with a bang. But my Keyworker was by my side and had my eyes and ears as I was unable. I only saw my daughter once or twice a week and everything seemed hopeless.

I was incapable of holding anything down, I couldn't look after myself let alone my daughter, a job or a course. I couldn't ever remember or make it to simple appointments. My Keyworker made sure I was able to attend, she even took me to my first day at detox.

I had no confidence or hope.

I had damaged my child. She was always late for school and was petrified all night when she should have felt the safest.

My Keyworker got me to and from assessments when I couldn't have got there, she made sure the house was alcohol free on my return. She set up meetings with all my and my daughter's workers and gave me prompt reminders when I would have forgotten. She helped my confidence in applying for courses and made sure I have everything in on deadlines.

As I got weller she stepped back
but I know she's there if I wobble.

Now I see my daughter every day. {My Keyworker} got us both counselling, sorted housing issues, helped work out debts, helped me arrange doctors' appointments and helped me sort out applications and assessments for college.

My Keyworker has supported me through Covid-19. She has kept regular contact and come to our house to sit on the doorstep.

There was one week I had no money or food. She didn't know but came with a food parcel and Morrison's voucher. She has supported me in applying for college courses. She has emailed them when we were unsure of deadlines and printed different forms I have needed.

I am starting college in two weeks. I have my daughter every day and twice a week over night (to be full time in a staggered way. My Keyworker continues to support me with my low mood and prompts me to seek my GP's advice.

I would say to anyone with children who's struggling to get in touch with Stronger Families/ Barca. You have to put the work in but so long as you know they are on your side, **it's so much less lonely to have support.**

My daughter and I still have a way to go but I couldn't have done this without my Keyworker's continued support. My daughter has also had someone to talk to. I hope I can volunteer or work in a job to help people eventually as **this support has been our lifeline more than a handful of times.**

*names have been changed to protect privacy



"Caseloads [are] manageable so able to build up a positive working relationship with participants rather than having vast caseloads where the personal touch is unachievable... [means we can] get to know family members are well as participant."

Keyworker, Stronger Families

"We can offer flexible appointments to fit around the participant's lives. Many other projects require service users to come to them and offer rigid weekly appointments at set times... this is particularly hard for parents without childcare."

*Stronger Families partner organisation,
Touchstone Bradford*

& Designed to improve employment chances Delivered key job skills

Stronger Families offer job support including:

IT Skills / language for work / help with self-employment and setting up a business / specialist careers advice

“[Stronger Families helped] me turn my life around, built it back and be prepared for a great future with the job I want.” *Parent*

“There isn't enough words to say how grateful I am”
Parent

“I'm working at my dream job. It was worth going through everything to get where I am now.” *Parent*

“I went into part time work. I really enjoy it.” *Parent*

“I can deal with things better when they go wrong.” *Parent*

“Bradford really values the programme... employment is a clear priority for our families.”

Dave Benn, Children's Services Manager, Barnardo's

“They get the structured, visible, intentional support that comes with an employability project... but they also get the softer outcomes...you can't have one without the other.”

Helen Hart, Managing Director, Barca Leeds

“If there are barriers to work... you need to take a holistic approach.”

Lesley Wilkinson, Service Development Manager, Early Help, Leeds City Council

“Whilst co-ordinating referrals from Leeds Job Centres to Stronger Families over the last three years I've always been struck by how passionate DWP Work Coaches are to seek help for their customers and how equally passionate the Stronger Families team and Keyworkers are in providing that help. I regularly promote the Stronger Families programme within our seven Job Centres, often with the help of a representative from Stronger Families. I have made the referral process easy for the Work Coaches and every referral gets checked and acknowledged before being securely sent to the Stronger Families team. Referral volumes have been consistently good. On a regular basis Stronger Families send updates about the customers currently being worked with. The Keyworkers often use me as a DWP contact point for various reasons, for example proof of benefit letters, benefit questions or contact details for Work Coaches. When a Work Coach refers a customer to Stronger Families they are effectively adding more resource to their efforts to help customers who are often in difficult situations.”

Rob Slater, Employment Co-ordinator, Department for Work and Pensions

“As a work coach, I have a caseload of many individuals with extremely different individual needs. There is only so much I can do myself and with the support of excellent programmes out there we can hand off to experts like staff at stronger families who can work on a one-to-one basis with individuals to support them back to work but also to look out for the wellbeing of their whole family not just the subscriber. A programme such as Stronger families is amazing for families who are striving to make a better life but need the added support to achieve their goals.”

Work coach, Department for Work and Pensions

“Progress is shared from start to end of the intervention so that participants can see their journey... [which] helps to motivate them to progress to the world of work more effectively and reduce the barriers that were preventing them from moving on.”

Keyworker, Stronger Families

“I will always be eternally grateful and thankful for everything [my Keyworker] did for me and my kids, she went above and beyond for us.” *Parent*

“I just don't think Stronger Families get the praise they deserve. My Keyworker really is an amazing person.” *Parent*

“They don't give up on you. Even when you wanna give up they give you the fight to tackle your problems and oompf.” *Parent*

★ Outcome star* results for progress to work

77% started the programme feeling stuck, accepting help or trying to improve. 92% of those grew or maintained their star, and 62% of those grew this by 2 points or more, indicating significant change.

★ Outcome star* results for education and learning

41% started the programme feeling stuck, accepting help or trying to improve. 88% of those grew or maintained their star, and 53% of those grew this by 2 points or more, indicating significant change.

“Unlike other programmes we focus on the adult and then the family around trying to remove barriers to employment. There is no rush for outcomes, we can go at participants pace in order for them to achieve their own personalised goals.” *Keyworker, Stronger Families*

* these results are based on self-assessment by parents through the Outcome Star framework

& Designed to give parents a voice Delivered together

Co-creating services with parents

Stronger Families have taken parent voice into the heart of the whole project. Parents now co-produce key elements and are integrated into the service model. In 2020/21 they carried out peer interviews with other parents taking part in the project and helped to design this whole impact assessment document. Parents are now co-delivering and designing many elements of the project and, in addition, parents have taken an active role in:

- Organising celebration events
- Volunteering time
- Interviewing new project staff
- Approving information
- Planning communications,
- Sharing challenges

“I know what it is like to be cut off and I want to help develop a role that avoids that for other parents. It gave me some time for myself... It felt equal and comfortable. I have a sense of self, of getting back into the world. I have felt the benefits of being involved.”

Parent Voice Forum Member

“I always knew I had a voice; I just didn’t believe anyone was listening. Stronger Families gave me a chance to speak and has heard what I had to say.”

Parent Voice Forum Member



& Designed to make long term differences Delivered lasting change



“We support the parents’ wellbeing and improve their confidence, to help them feel ready for work but also to deal with issues within everyday life, so that the functioning of the family unit is strengthened and they can reduce reliance on services and continue to support themselves after they exit the programme.”

Keyworker, Stronger Families

“They don’t give up on you, even when you wanna give up. They give you the fight to tackle your problems”

Parent

Made life long friends

Parent

I can describe it like she put my life on track

Parent

Thank you... you saved my life

Parent

Thank you... that’s all... you saved my life man

Parent

Contact Details

Stronger Families is part of the Building Better Opportunities programme, and is funded by the European Social Fund and The National Lottery Community Fund.

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Barnardo’s
Humankind

Specialists

EASA
Community Links
Touchstone
Karmund Centre
Better Leeds Communities



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