What research was used? Why was it appropriate?

Existing evidence, such as Scottish Government Homelessness statistics and previous research carried out by the Cyrenians, suggested that relationship difficulties are having an impact on the lives of young people and families. We wanted to build on this information and find out how best to support families across Scotland. In view of this we decided to carry out our own research.

Electronic Surveys were the main tool for this research, as it enabled us to seek views from across Scotland. We also used focus groups and paper copies of the survey.

The questionnaires were specifically designed for each target group. They were sent to organisations working across the 5 Housing Options Hubs and Families and Young People and Into-Work programmes, with young people from a range of backgrounds.

Who benefitted from the research?

The research undertaken, highlighted that many families were experiencing conflict and struggling behind closed doors and professionals didn’t feel they had the experience or skills they needed. We used this research to shape our work and the resources we designed to better support young people, parents/carers and professionals across Scotland.

Some key findings and impact change:

• A lack of confidence in skills for managing conflict that was occurring at home
• Feelings of isolation, failure and stigma
• A lack of knowledge about mediation and services
• A desire to do things differently, for information & online support about relationships and managing conflict

We provided:

• Free high quality and successful events across Scotland to support everyone to become more confident and skilled in managing conflict.
• An interactive digital hub which provides information, innovative resources, online support and connects people across Scotland.
• A successful National Campaign to raise awareness and dispel the stigma associated with family conflict.

How did you evaluate the impact?

The research directly shaped the content and delivery of resources and events across Scotland. The impact of these events for parents/carers and professionals included:

• 86% / 88% Increased Knowledge
• 81% / 86% Increased Skills
• 86% / 85% Increased Ability

These events were 1st and 2nd stage evaluated. A comprehensive report is available 'Improving Relationships Improving Lives 3 year report'.

An external evaluation was also conducted by Blake Stevenson in March 2015. Website analytics show:

• 27,778 visits
• 16,872 Unique visits
• 3:23 average pages per session

What did the team learn from the project?

The initial National Survey research that was undertaken has influenced and shaped our work for the last 3 years. Some of the statistics we gathered were surprising if not shocking in terms of the extent of the problem across Scotland. Over the course of the last 3 years we have learnt the importance of continuing to evaluate our events and ask young people, parents/carers and professionals what it is they need in relation to managing conflict and improving relationships.

We have learnt the importance of a good research base in terms of statistics and hard evidence associated with family conflict.

We have also learnt that working collaboratively with professionals across different fields is vital to creating innovative and engaging events and resources which we will continue to do under the new Scottish Government Children Young People and Families Early Intervention Fund.