
 PARTNERSHIP

BREAKTHROUGHS

The Troubled Family Initiative is spurring many local authorities and their partners to look at the different strategies being used around the country to help them deliver the best outcomes for their own communities. But what works and what doesn't?

Empowering-Communities took part in a recent online debate with a team of panellists from local government, charities, support agencies and IT providers who were keen to share their views and opinions about which interventions are getting positive results and saving public money.

We share with you here some of the key points raised:

Focus on Troubled Families – What works?



Amanda Whittaker-Brown - Programme Manager in the LGA productivity team

Are staff skilled enough to cope with change? I believe that some authorities are finding the current skills and capabilities of the workforce are not fit for purpose and will need to implement a more radical culture change programme. Redesigning services could help the troubled families agenda: Local authorities and partners have been focusing on and spending significant amounts of money on complex families for years, so the emphasis is now about doing it in a much more co-ordinated, efficient and effective way. Several councils are taking quite a radical new look at the way services are designed - I think there is great potential to share that learning.

Steve Skelton - Head of Policy and Partnerships at Stockport and Greater Manchester combined authority (GMCA)

Funding is a big problem: A strong return on investment case still needs investment, and there's scant around at present. Self-funding in reality is additional funding now and reduced funding later. Where's the additional funding at scale currently? The challenge is to re-profile existing spend – from reactive to preventative services – but that requires either decommissioning reactive services before the benefit of earlier intervention is felt, or double running and double funding both reactive and preventative services.

Rhian Beynon - Head of Policy and Campaigns for Family Action

We need to prevent the troubled families of the future too: This programme doesn't obviate the need for the multi-systemic approach, we actually need it more, as well as a more nuanced approach to the meaning of early intervention. Arguably the earliest time for intervening for children and tackling mental health during and after pregnancy is neglected. Family nurse partnership and extension of the health visitor programme will not cover all the bases. We need to be working with, not just for families: The challenge for councils and their partners is to translate looked for outcomes into monitoring and evaluation systems that will be easily understood and get buy-in from a wide range of partners: the political members, the practitioners working with families and of course the families themselves. The systems also need to support performance management to some extent. Family Action are working with Family Star, a model for monitoring families' progress which was developed in partnership with Triangle, local authorities, practitioners and families themselves. Families get some say in the reporting of their progress, which is important to bringing them inside with the outcomes.

Gary Rawlins - Public sector sales manager of Q Associates

Local government has a tendency towards over complication: And yet, the challenge is not in managing the families already categorised as troubled, it's looking for those with three or four of the risk factors and ensuring they do not develop further challenges. This potentially increases the scale massively and I'm not certain that the current detection methods are adequate.

Leora Cruddas - Harrow Council's divisional director for quality assurance, commissioning and schools

Having one key worker is often the best option: We have a consent-based model in Harrow and multi-agency approaches are powerful, but we have found that families do respond well to having a dedicated worker. Our view is that it is important to de-clutter the (often confusing) range of professionals working with a family and to enable the family to build a relationship with a key worker, who then pulls in support from the wider network as and when necessary.

John Curtis - Project Manager for the improving information sharing and management (IISaM) national exemplar

Information sharing is essential to making troubled families work: We have set up a site about information sharing which might be useful for councils. The toolkit is structured into six stages of the 'information sharing journey' and provides practical guidance. The site includes a number of case studies (such as developing a better privacy notice), video about one of our pilot sites (Leicestershire county council), templates and guidance and top questions.

Empowering-Communities' View

Sharing information, creating an environment where everyone knows what everyone else is doing and collating proper profiles on the individual family members is absolutely crucial.

A family is made up of individual members each with their own issues and problems and their own external influences that also have a bearing on their behaviour, choices and lifestyle.

Local authorities need to get an accurate picture of the needs of each person within a troubled family, and the past support and interventions they have undertaken with them. They need to collate information from other departments, authorities and external agencies including the police, schools, health, youth workers and support groups to find out what interactions they have also had with family members.

This information needs to be pulled together in one place where everyone who needs to can access and update it if required.

This allows issues to be quickly addressed, reduces duplication of effort and resources and equips key workers with the background knowledge they need to ensure that the right people are providing support at the right time.

E-CINS Family Assessment Feature

One of the ways E-CINS is helping customers with their Troubled Families Initiatives is through a new Family Risk Assessment Tool to be launched soon. The electronic E-CINS Family Assessment functionality is being developed in conjunction with a team of troubled families co-ordinators to ensure it properly reflects the needs and challenges of existing users. The project is ongoing and will be continually developed to ensure it meets users' shifting needs and requirements and the varying needs of future users.

The Questions

We will be creating a library of family assessment questions that are being supplied to us by partnerships from around the country and all participating counties will be able to submit questions. Troubled Families(TF) Teams will then be able to select the questions they want in their assessments.

The library of questions will be made up of both objective (factual) and subjective (opinion based) questions. Users will be able to download statistics from the factual questions to build a variety of different analytical data as required.

Family Assessment - Stage 1

Case name:

Family members:*

- Sandeep Patel
- Rachel Walker
- Robert Wiseman
-

* required field

The Assessment

Once the assessment or assessments have been created they will be available to practitioners within that scheme. When an assessment is started it will automatically 'pull through' the family members. This will speed up the assessment process and provide critical data for practitioners' management and Payment By Results reports.

Once completed, users can apply their own access permissions to the assessment to restrict access to it, if required.

Completed assessments will be able to be duplicated at a later date if necessary. For example if an assessment is carried out in January it can be duplicated in April if the family are re-assessed, saving practitioners time and negating the requirement to keep asking the same questions of the family again and again.

Examples of the objective questions are listed below and, depending on the answer, another question might appear in order to collect more information:

Are any children excluded from school?

Do any children have Special Education Needs?

Have any adults been convicted of a criminal offence in the last 12 months?

Examples of the subjective questions include:

Tenancy History:

How do the parents/family members relate to one another?

Routines and boundaries:

Are there good routines and boundaries?

A number of counties are intending to complete some or all of their electronic assessments at the families' address saving them a considerable amount of time.

The Family Assessment is a significant development and will provide counties with a library of core questions that will enable them to build up a richer picture of the families they are working with, the challenges they face and the differences or similarities between them. It will allow practitioners to monitor which interventions are working and to carry out assessment reviews at regular intervals so that they can record data over a set timeframe and compare results. The data will prove invaluable, particularly to government agencies, third sector voluntary and support organisations. This will help them understand the issues facing troubled families and the correlations between them.

For more information about E-CINS Family Assessment Tool or to arrange for an online demonstration please contact us at info@empowering-communities.org

'E-CINS is of significant strategic importance to the country'

by Gary Pettengell, Founder E-CINS and Empowering-Communities



In March we are having a meeting to brief a government department on E-CINS. This is because in their words 'E-CINS is of significant strategic importance to the country'.

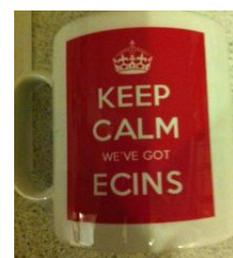
I have been asked 'why you?' or 'how have you managed to achieve what people said or thought couldn't be done?' The simple answer is that right from day one I knew that technology alone wasn't enough. Empowering-Communities is much more than just a not-for profit software provider. E-CINS is a marriage between technology and our desire to help and empower victims, communities, vulnerable people and their families. And E-CINS is testament to this.

My team and I also knew that for a system to be successful in the real world of practitioners, development must be; fast, decisive, practical, implementable and implemented. So obviously I am pleased that E-CINS is starting to get the recognition it deserves because our work has never been about money or wealth generation. It has always been about doing the right thing. The development of E-CINS has motivated and empowered practitioners. By applying our non-commercial principles we are maximising participation to solve community problems that we will have a positive impact on peoples lives.

Keep Calm We've Got E-CINS - Derbyshire

E-CINS may have been described as "The grass roots worker's holy grail" but Inspector Barry Thacker from Derbyshire Police is taking it to a new level with his latest corporate gift for his E-CINS team.

The "Keep Calm We've Got E-CINS" mug will be adorning the desks of Derbyshire's ASB team. Good luck Derbyshire and welcome to the E-CINS family!



Focus on:



Empowering-Communities' Heather Ette spoke to Andy Solomon, ASB Team Leader of the Community Protection Team at Ipswich Borough Council

HE: What issues were you looking to address when you first started using E-CINS and have you found your use of it has expanded or developed into new areas since then?

AS: Our issues were agencies not exchanging information, not having one central point to store Information and not being able to pull evidence together so that a quick decision on what actions to take could be made.

Our use of E-CINS has expanded in as much as we now have documents stored on one system, the number of docs that can be stored is limitless and it does make a very good evidence base. We can store such things as letters, ABC's, Injunctions, Noise Abatement Notices etc. We have used this recently to evidence why we should not house a couple who had caused some serious neighbourhood problems.

We have expanded this system beyond the Police SNT's into our Housing Team, Environmental Protection team, some of our Registered Social Landlords and I am hopeful we can expand it to the Lead Professionals involved in our Troubled Families work.

HE: What features on E-CINS do you find particularly useful and helpful in your day to day to work?

AS: The tasking process cuts down on phone calls and e-mails explaining what the issues are, a quick note on a task leads them into the case/report e.g. "see case log" is much better than an explanatory e-mail. The running list of cases and reports is useful as I can see what is new and the ability to store profiles, cases and reports on an individual's workload is useful in monitoring high profile cases.

HE: Which other agencies are involved in your E-CINS partnership and how easy did you find it to get them on board?

AS: Housing, Environmental Protection, RSLs are our main users. It wasn't that difficult to get them on board the hardest challenge has been to convince them that E-CINS is not a Police system and that they can legitimately update and input onto it.

HE: How do you feel E-CINS has assisted you in your multi-agency work, is it helping you to deliver a better service?

AS: It is the having of all information under one case that is assisting in day to day work, we are not there yet as there is still some training issues to be sorted out with some agencies and we still have a number of new users to train and get on the system. It's still a work in progress but those who have been users the longest can see the benefits.

Case Studies:

Case Study 1 - Anti Social Behaviour Network

by Andy Solomon, ASB Team Leader, Ipswich Borough Council

The Issue:

The case started to escalate when an 8 year old boy (Tom) threatened the victimised family with a knife. Tom was from a family who had recently moved into the area and very little was known about them. It was later established that there were high levels of domestic abuse within the family home involving Tom's Mother with his step father being the perpetrator.

The Immediate Action

A referral was made to the local Family Intervention Programme. The Mother had serious mental health issues, she was in and out of hospital, frequently overdosing and frequently found drunk. All events about this family were documented onto E-CINS case management system. The family were subject to the involvement of Social Care Services. A number of agencies including Education started to flag up concerns and things very quickly started to spiral out of control.

The Result

Due to the relevant agencies inputting data onto E-CINS the family, within just one day, went from some organisations believing this to be a low level case to the family being classified as a 'high risk' case with the social worker sleeping at the address that night. The initial report was put together very quickly because information was all in one place on E-CINS and this then allowed for a more comprehensive report to be put together. It also saved a great deal of time, sped up the processes and potentially prevented a serious case review as there were genuine fears that this situation could have resulted in a death.

'The information collated onto E-CINS was vital in producing a report to Social Care which helped in identifying that more intense help was urgently required with this family. E-CINS was instrumental in the information sharing process. E-CINS in this case may well have prevented a serious case review having to be carried out.'

"E-CINS in this case may well have prevented a serious case review having to be carried out."

Andy Solomon – ASB Team Leader

Case Study 2 - Vulnerable Adult

by Andy Solomon, ASB Team Leader, Ipswich Borough Council

The Issue

A 23 year old single female in an RSL property, she is vulnerable and was persuaded to give up her 2nd floor one bedroomed flat to two friends of her cousin, who came from London, whilst she moved out to live with the cousin in her accommodation. The visitors started to deal heroin and crack cocaine from the property, loud music was played at all times of the day and night, there were frequent visitors, and disorder nearby. The girl wasn't seen for sometime as she was with her cousin as instructed. This activity resulted in several complaints to the Police and the RSL.

The Immediate Action

The flat was raided, the two young men from London arrested and Class A drugs were recovered. Also in the flat was some cannabis and a bottle of Methadone. The young girl admitted possession of the cannabis and methadone. She was aware of what was happening at her flat. She was given a Police Caution for possession and it was considered that a Crack House Closure should be applied for.

Because, together with Sanctuary Housing, we had uploaded all information about the case to E-CINS, we were able to quickly involve and task the Safer Neighbourhood Team at Suffolk Police who had all the information they needed in one place.

Longer Term Action

Due to her vulnerability we did not go down the closure route, she was issued with a Notice Seeking Possession of her property and entered into an Acceptable Behaviour Contract with conditions around the management of her property, the access given to it by people who did not live in the area, her non-association with local drug dealers and her accessing treatment services.

The Result

Whilst her appointment keeping was poor, she did complete the ABC successfully, the drug dealers were kept away from the area, she accessed help and support, kept her property and turned her life around.

“There was no repetition in workload or communication as all the information was there for us all to see and updated in realtime so that everyone knew what everyone else was doing.”

E-CINS ensured that everyone involved in this case paid attention to the actions that were needed to deliver a positive result. We were able to task each other and communicate more effectively because everything was done electronically rather than relying on people to be around to answer the phone. There was no repetition in workload or communication as all the information was there for us all to see and updated in realtime so that everyone knew what everyone else was doing.

In this case we had a positive result but if it had turned out differently and Class A dealing had started up from the premises again then we had everything we needed to go straight to court for a Closure Order. Not only that, but the time spent on pulling that evidence together would have been drastically cut down as it was recorded all in one place on E-CINS.

“By using E-CINS in this way we saved the Police and Local Authority money, sent a message out to the community that drug dealing wouldn't be tolerated and were able to divert one young vulnerable person away from crime and disorder.”

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Current E-CINS Users

Below are just some of the organisations accessing and sharing information on E-CINS. There are more joining all the time.

