

GoddardPayne and Temperley Research

Transforming Early Years: different, better, lower cost services for children and their families

Learning Partner's Final Report on the Transforming Early Years
Programme January 2010 – July 2011

Caireen Goddard and Julie Temperley October 2011

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Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Doing better with less

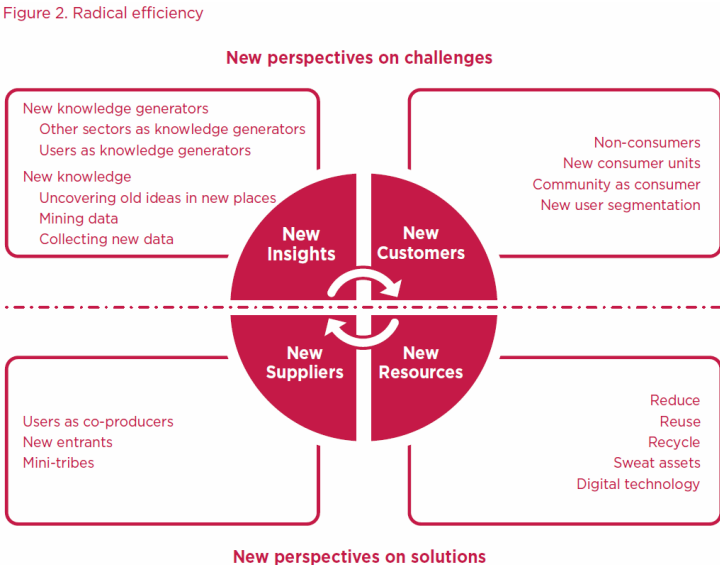
In the spring of 2011, deep spending cuts became a stark and unpleasant reality for public services in England. Councils were called upon to improve efficiency and many local services came under review, with the expectation that they could be delivered at lower cost or decommissioned altogether.

At the same time there were increasing calls for public services to do better in addressing the needs of families with the most complex needs as a route to reducing the cost of failure to help such families to the public purse; costs relating to family breakdown, emergency housing, poor health, low educational attainment, unemployment and so on.

As demand rose and income fell, it became obvious that more creative solutions than simply cutting costs would be required. Historically public sector organisations have been less focused on promoting innovation in times of financial crisis than their private sector equivalentsⁱ and in local government in particular, although many officers express a belief that the drive to reduce the deficit should prompt more innovative approaches, their focus remains firmly on delivering the same for less.ⁱⁱ

Since 2010, Innovation Unit and NESTA have been working together to take a fresh look at this problem. Their model for **Radical Efficiency** holds out the promise of different and better public services, which can be provided at a lower cost.

From a data base of one hundred case studies of innovations around the world that solved what had seemed to be intractable problems, at the same time as delivering very significant cost savings, the Radical Efficiency team distilled the features and patterns that seemed to explain why these innovations were so successful:



In the resulting Radical Efficiency model, the four drivers for innovation are new insights, new customers, new resources and new suppliers. Together these amount to:

- **new perspectives on challenges** – changing the lens or viewpoint brought to bear on the problems that public services seek to address; and
- **new perspectives on solutions** – looking to alternative providers, including users themselves, and rethinking the resources available to meet need.

In public service examples of Radical Efficiency, service users frequently assume a more active role in their delivery, which serve to enhance the benefits of the service for these and other users and to reduce the costs of provision.

Cost savings come in the form of short term reductions in the number of interventions made by professionals, as citizens take more of a role in managing their own solutions. Where services are delivered in the community and in people's homes rather than expensive public buildings, decommissioning of space provides opportunities to save money too. Longer term economic benefits are indicated by a reduction in the cost of failure and so avoidance of expenditure relating to public health, welfare and criminal justice.

But cost savings are not the principle focus for Radical Efficiency; different kinds of services delivering improved outcomes are. Radical efficiency:

“turns the role of provider for public services on its head. They are no longer solution deliverers crafting better answers to decades old questions about mass consumption of standardised services. They are pioneers of a new kind of public service with a new perspective on the challenges they face...”ⁱⁱⁱ

Radical Efficiency points to five general principles for innovators and policymakers seeking to deliver different, better, cheaper public services:^{iv}

- Make true partnership with users the best choice for everyone
- Enable committed, passionate and open minded leaders to emerge from anywhere
- Start with people's quality of life, not the quality of your service
- Work with the grain and in the spirit of families, friends and neighbours
- Manage risks, don't just avoid them

These principles underpinned the design for the Transforming Early Years programme which was led by Innovation Unit (IU) and NESTA and which ran between January 2010 and July 2011.

GoddardPayne and Temperley Research were appointed in October 2010 as Learning Partners to the IU and NESTA teams, with a brief to help the programme team to gather evidence that would be useful both within and beyond the programme. New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) was engaged in December 2010 to support work on estimating the costs savings that could be achieved through Transforming Early Years.

Part chronicle, part evaluation, our report captures the work of six locality teams who took part in the programme, as well as the activities and reflections of the IU and NESTA project team. It synthesises the key messages and insights generated through their work and explores these in the context of a wider research and evidence base about the importance and impact of early years services for improving outcomes for very young children and their families, and about innovation in the public sector.

1.2 Demonstrating radical efficiency in early years services

Transforming Early Years (TEY) started from the position that budget cuts (which at the time the programme was designed were looming and seemed inevitable) did not have to mean reduced or inadequate support for families with very young children. A practical demonstration of the principles of Radical Efficiency, the TEY programme set out to explore instead what would happen if service providers explicitly set out to design and deliver a radically efficient early years service – to tackle the goal of improving services and saving money hand-in-hand; to design a service that would look very different and deliver better outcomes for users, at significantly lower cost.

The core aim of the TEY programme was to support six localities to design and implement radically efficient services that would deliver better outcomes for service users. But Innovation Unit and NESTA also articulated a broader set of aspirations for the programme. They hoped for:

- more and different leaders emerging and playing a role in design of services
- increased practical knowledge in the system about how to do innovations that can work with less money
- a shift in the relationship and expectations between families, community and early years providers
- locality leaders to believe in the value of radical efficiency principles and practices as a route to achieving different, better, lower cost services, and for them to advocate for the approach elsewhere in their local authorities^{vi}
- new models for how professionals from all services might interact with and support their communities^{vii}
- learning and insights for central government about the strategic implications of ‘letting go’ of policy-making to localities, based on successful ‘bottom up’ innovation in six sites.^{viii}

Section 2: Supporting Transforming Early Years

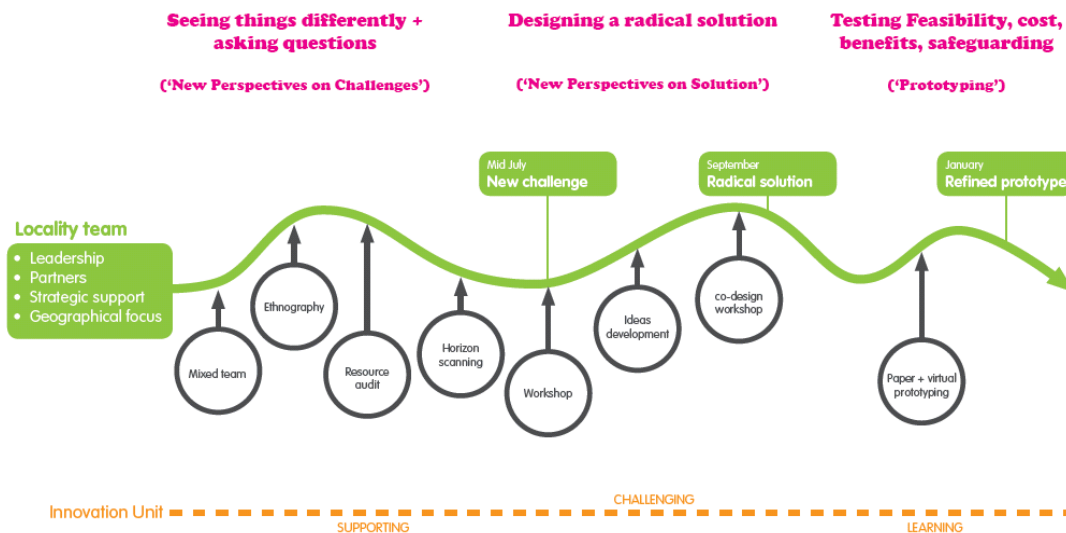
2.1 The design for the Transforming Early Years programme

The TEY programme design team turned the international research about radical efficiency into a framework and a core set of principals, then designed a practical sequence of activities to be undertaken by local project teams over the course of a year.

Support for localities participating in the TEY programme comprised workshops, practical tools and 1:1 consultancy support. The programme of activities was intended to support and embed a ‘radically efficient’ approach to innovation in each locality by offering experiences and access to expertise in all four areas of the radical efficiency model: ‘new insights’, ‘new customers’, ‘new resources’ and ‘new suppliers’.

There was a carefully planned sequence, illustrated in Fig 1 below. The programme supported locality teams to (i) gather insights through ethnographic research, resource audits and horizon scanning in order to clarify the challenges they faced. They then (ii) identified new solutions through co-design workshops and (iii) tested them using rapid prototyping.^{ix} Alongside this service design process, teams were asked to estimate the cost of their new service and to model the savings that could be achieved on implementation.

Fig. 1



The nature and purpose of each of the activities is summarised briefly here.

Ethnographic research

Working with and listening to parents and children in the community to gain a fresh perspective and new insights on old problems

In order to gain new insights into the communities they served, each locality team carried out open, non-judgemental conversations with families to understand what their lives and their experiences of existing services were really like. This gave them a rich understanding of the challenges for families and helped to dispel many misconceptions. The research was carried out by early years professionals and parent volunteers and revealed common issues that families faced as well as opportunities to do things differently.

Resource audit

Reviewing how much is spent, on what, for whose benefit stimulates important conversations about equity and value for money

The aim of the resource audit was to encourage locality teams to generate a single, shared and accurate view of current resources, to think beyond costs to impact and the public value of their service, and also to consider the 'costs of failure' (e.g. future spend on NEETs, looked after children etc). Teams identified and mapped for their locality what was spent on families with young children, and what the impact of the spending was. Teams could use a mixture of approaches: 'top-down' - gathering data about spending of 'public money' on services within early years, and 'bottom-up' - stories of families' experience of early years service, costing the interactions with different service providers.^x

Horizon scanning

Exploring research and practice from other contexts to shed new light on existing arrangements and help providers to see their problem – and possible solutions – from a different angle

Locality teams participated in a 'horizon scanning' day that presented case studies of radical innovations from around the world. Examples were drawn from beyond the early years and were relevant to the big themes which were starting to emerge from localities' work, which at that stage were:

- Uncover, build and really work with existing community capacity
- Overcome barriers to engagement in services
- Meet people where they are at
- Work with new 'units' of users

- Rethink the role of the professional and create a much more mixed economy of support
- Create a system with a diverse mix of service providers^{xi}

Clarifying the challenge

Bringing together early insights and collaboratively developing a clear view of the problem(s) to be solved

After a period of intensive research and insight gathering, the locality teams (including community members) met to discuss what they had discovered and to think about how they needed to reconceive the challenges faced by families in their locality. This was a fundamental building block for the rest of the work. Being clear about the most important challenges for families started to point to new and more appropriate solutions. For all locality teams, their reframed challenge centred on how to support families and communities to create excellent environments in which their children could grow and develop.^{xii}

Service design and blueprinting

Co-designing possible new solutions

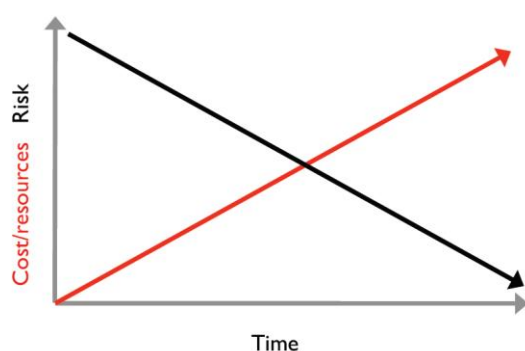
Each locality team held a brainstorm session to come up with new service models to tackle their reframed challenge. Within their teams, they voted on their top ideas and then took their favourites out to the community and other professionals to get their views. Sites selected their top idea and worked it up into a service 'blueprint', which focused on mapping a users journey through the service and identifying all the service dimensions, from users becoming aware of the service, using it and ultimately leaving it. The blueprints also described the necessary work by frontline staff, and the behind the scenes support and processes to make the service happen. This provided the basis for localities to begin prototyping different elements of the service.^{xiii}

Prototyping

Testing elements of the new service idea(s) with potential users and providers and making improvements

Locality teams spent a day together learning about methods for prototyping and were offered specialist on-site support to help them develop and enact a prototyping strategy suitable for their project. Prototyping was seen as a way to support locality teams to test their ideas with a view to making them more relevant, cost efficient and effective^{xiv}. It was also hoped that the support would build capacity within the locality teams for using prototyping techniques in future.

In the public sector the big opportunity that prototyping offers is to de-risk innovation. Two significant barriers to innovation for public services are risk aversion and cost.^{xv}



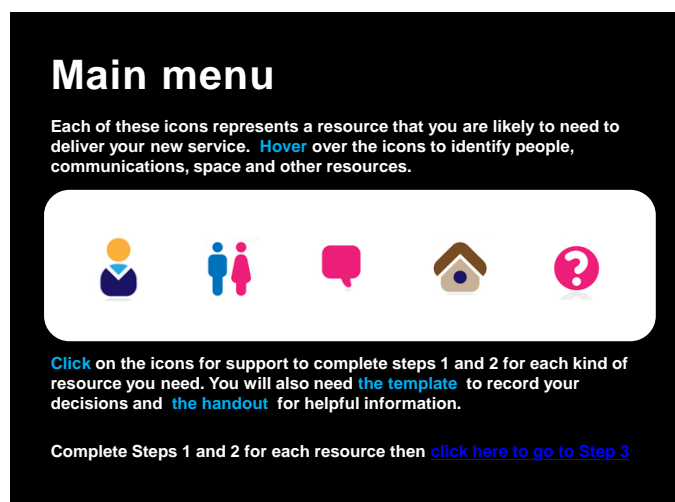
Prototyping deals with both of these by accelerating the design process to develop early, inexpensive almost-certainly-not-right-yet experimental models which can be tested until they fail. The ways in which they fail and the reasons they fail become a rich source of learning. This is an entirely different approach for most public servants who

are far more used to a consult – design- pilot- refine-roll out sequence. In this more traditional approach, the risk arrow would go up instead of down over time as more and more is invested – confidence and careers as well as resources - in the success of the pilot. The advice of the prototyping specialists was captured in their three key messages to the locality teams, which were:

- fail early to succeed sooner;
- perfection is the death of an idea; and
- prototype quickly, cheaply and often^{xvi}.

Cost analysis

Detailing the costs of the existing service and comparing these to the costs of the new service in order to assess savings



To demonstrate the potential for cost savings that new services offered, a new process and tool were developed by the learning partners with support from New Philanthropy Capital.^{xvii} The process involved clearly defining both old and new services by setting out the inputs needed to deliver them. These inputs (e.g. staffing, space, communications etc) were allocated costs using widely recognised and used values^{xviii}. Then the number of families being reached by the old and new service were estimated. By dividing the total cost of delivering the service by the number of families being reached teams were able to identify and then compare unit costs.

2.2 Discussion: What we learned about supporting Transforming Early Years

There were key features of and moments in the programme, which seemed to be more important than others in TEY teams' decision making and design processes and had implications for the way their plans unfolded.

The balance of time and emphasis

"It is more fun to do exploration than to think up tough questions about how you are going to make it work."^{xix}

In terms of time and energy spent, the programme design heavily emphasised the process of gaining new perspectives on the challenges that the new services should set out to solve. Opportunities for solution development or definition were deliberately suspended and teams spent a relatively short period clearly defining what the final service would look like and how it would operate.

"There was a lot of emphasis put on coming up with radically efficient ideas so of course clarifying the challenge is going to carry a lot more weight than finding the solution."^{xx}

In public sector innovation, it's argued that too often changes to services come about incrementally, i.e. improvements to existing models, because problems are identified and solved within the bounds of existing services, frameworks and organisations instead of as a response to user need.^{xxi} When seeking radical innovation; innovation that fundamentally re-designs existing public services or develops entirely new ones - the aim of the Transforming Early Years programme - understanding the specific and real nature of the challenge is essential.

“Clarifying the challenge is critical based on the culture that so many people who are participating are coming from, i.e. so many times people have said ‘This isn’t the way we work, usually what happens is that someone snaps their fingers and there’s twenty grand to spend by Friday and we figure out a way of doing that’.”

The challenge of keeping things open

This ‘front-end’ problem definition part of the TEY programme, which included horizon scanning, ethnographic research and a resource audit, posed some challenges for locality teams.

It was important that locality teams remain open to insights on the problem and the possible solution for an extended period – not to jump too early to defining what ultimately might be delivered or what success might look like. So locality teams needed to hold back from clearly defining solutions and, where they were looking at solutions, to look towards the most radical versions of these.

Locality teams found it hard to adjust from their normal way of working, i.e. focusing on the operational aspects of service delivery – identifying explicitly what services are and how they should be provided - to consider instead why the service exists in the first place.

“Normally you talk about what you are doing not the need for it. But for nearly a year we were gathering insights and trying to understand the problem. Now I feel confident to explain what we were doing and why we were doing it. But back then I found it difficult to communicate this to other colleagues and other services. For a long time it didn’t look like we were solving anything or undertaking activity to making a difference.”

Spending extended time on clarifying the challenge also created some internal communication problems for the local teams. Although teams agreed it was right and necessary to spend this time early on, at times they felt pressure from colleagues and parents to move more quickly. Communications did not feature as a strand of programme activity or support and so teams felt ill equipped to respond to this pressure.

The impact of ethnography

“Lots of things were coming out, like realisations about who is engaging with their services and what their real lives look like.”^{xxii}

This initial phase of research and thoughtful reflection was motivating and valuable for all the locality teams. Ethnographic research was experienced by professionals as a means of connecting, or in some cases reconnecting, with their service users.

“We had the opportunity to talk with and to hear perspectives from mothers and fathers who hadn’t been heard before.”^{xxiii}

“After being 10 years as an assistant director, I can’t remember the last time I sat in a mum’s front room and had a cup of coffee. I have so loved it. It took me back to why I became a

social worker. We have to look at the problem with a new set of lenses. And have a core belief that families can find their own solutions.^{xxiv}

Locality teams would have liked to devote more time to ethnographic research and for some it felt a little rushed. But overall the opportunity for professionals themselves to conduct the ethnography created a direct, profound and positive impact on individuals and teams without exception.

It also provided focus and inspiration for the next stages of the programme and, when teams experienced difficulties later on, their ethnographic insights served as a critical point of reference. When describing their 'journey' through the TEY programme, teams saw the ethnographic insights as an anchor point that they committed to holding true to throughout the programme.^{xxv} As a process for starting to think differently about problems and how services solve them it also motivated some teams to try ethnography in other areas of the authority.

"The process of 'reframing the challenge' has been fantastic and impacted on other areas. The Locality Achievement Partnership (26 reps from Children's Centres to secondary schools) is working on enquiry themes based on reframing the questions and ethnography work."^{xxvi}

The struggle with costs

In the early resource audit activity, TEY teams were asked to consider how resources were being used, for what purpose, for whom, and to what effect? Thinking about how to deploy resources differently and better was seen to be a prerequisite for designing new, radically efficient solutions.^{xxvii}

The audit was not intended to be a 'forensic analysis of pounds shillings and pence' rather an opportunity to use information about current spending to drive better, more joined up conversations about the use of resources and possibilities for decommissioning.^{xxviii} The process offered up important insights for most teams, but proved to be a very challenging exercise^{xxix} and was very frustrating for some:

"It was very difficult to get budget data from the council. There were worries about protocols for information sharing, and the specific task of pulling budget information from different teams didn't give much more of an insight. So we made some of it useful and we did costings for individual families then we saw the waste of money, and that was very helpful."^{xxx}

The programme design had assumed that early years service providers would have some knowledge of and access to information about the costs of their existing services. However this turned out not to be the case and it was an important learning moment for the IU and NESTA programme team:

"I've been shocked that no one can tell you what is spent, what it is spent on, and what kind of impact it has. Any kind of objective notion of how much money is it worth spending on people to what end - I just don't think it exists."

"I'm still not sure that people were really thinking about value for money. They weren't saying 'This is costing this much per family and that is insane' they were saying 'this isn't having an impact let's get rid of the things that don't have an impact'. It's a good conversation but not the same as talking about value for money."^{xxxi}

But demonstrating that new services had the potential to achieve cost savings remained essential; it was the only way to evidence the 'efficiency' part of Radical Efficiency. So the programme team commissioned a tool and process to support locality teams to do a better job of costing their new service, than they had managed to achieve in the resource audit.

This new process^{xxxii} had the potential also to inform and shape the new services that teams were developing, i.e. to use a broad but realistic analysis of likely costs as a way of highlighting where specific changes to the planned service, large or small, could be made to achieve greater efficiency. However, the process was introduced later than anticipated and by this point the teams' service designs were largely 'firmed up'. So, the extent of the tool's impact was limited to encouraging a sharper view of the service and to raising questions about the efficacy of those new service designs.

Instead of being used as a creative lever for the design of radically efficient services, discussions about costs were fed in as a later, evaluative task that was required in order to be able demonstrate that the new services were cheaper. In addition, many locality team leaders were not personally involved in the costs activity at all, with business managers or project managers completing it instead. As a result the process seemed peripheral to TEY teams; a technical task that did not feature in design and decision-making processes:

"We could have analysed it more. It doesn't feel like it is at the centre of what we are doing."^{xxxiii}

The programme design focused on achieving radical new service ideas through insights about who needed to be engaged and how, in the belief that this would lead to savings. Engaging earlier and more seriously with the idea of value for money and exploring different opportunities to save money during the design process could have made the costs exercise more meaningful and opened up more options and ideas for the locality teams.

Turning radical ideas into realisable plans

"Locality teams struggled with that part of the process when they went from having a great idea to trying to work out what it meant practically and operationally."^{xxxiv}

The early stages in the TEY programme were characterised by the introduction of processes, drawn from service design but fresh to early years practitioners, which stimulated new conversations and connections and gave rise to radical ideas with the potential to transform their services. But teams needed explicit support to turn these ideas into plans for services that could be tuned into practical plans for implementation and not "frustrated, filed away or simply forgotten" as is so often the case in the public sector.^{xxxv}

Taking good ideas for innovations and making them real is tricky, even in the most conducive environments. Research commissioned by NESTA in 2010 advocated that to create "game-changing new services that deliver much better results for less money" organisations need to engage in structured and rigorous processes after the early creativity that generates ideas in order to develop them into services that will work.^{xxxvi} In the TEY programme the shift from ideas to solutions and new services happened slowly at first and then with more speed and concerted attention.

There were some clues from the early part of the programme to possible ways of realising the big ideas they were generating. Conversations with families had pointed opportunities to do things differently, for example building on existing community capacity and skills, seeing families as experts on parenting and their communities, capitalising on existing community networks, using existing community hubs, and making better use of technology.^{xxxvii}

But as they began to map out and operationalise their ideas, teams resorted to familiar frames of reference and more conventional ways of working and ideas started to lose their radical edge.^{xxxviii}

“The process encourages big and wide thinking – looking at the whole problem. But when it comes to thinking about delivery of the big ideas, inevitably people think about the small, doable activities that may not have a significant impact on the problem.”^{xix}

In response to the problems that locality teams were encountering in developing implementation plans, the programme team designed a new process to remind locality teams of how radical they had wanted to be. Consultants developed and shared with each site the ‘most radical’ version of their idea, and were able to stretch and challenge teams again as they planned for implementation.

Dedicated consultancy support

The tailored and focused support provided to local teams by the consultants working within the programme team was experienced as a source of knowledge, challenge and encouragement. That this support was ongoing throughout the programme helped locality leaders immensely, and gave them the confidence to keep going when things were unclear or difficult. It is unlikely that any of the locality teams would have chosen to undertake this work, or be able to complete it, without the programme and the programme team.

“Because he has been outside the organisation – he brings a different perspective – and an attitude of ‘just do it’. He has an energy, he wants 100% and won’t settle for less than 100%. We came with problems / challenges and he always helps us see the other perspective. If we are tunnelled, he reframes the challenge on everything.”^{xi}

“I believe that all sites have developed new skills and capabilities, understandings, and a capacity to use different processes which will be sustained in their work, even if they don’t achieve all their objectives with the project.”^{xii}

Section 3: The locality teams and the leadership of Transforming Early Years

3.1 The locality teams and their challenges

Locality teams taking part in the TEY programme were selected in part on the strength of their early ideas for transforming early years services. These ideas were taken as a proxy for the quality of their analysis and levels of creativity within the teams. Their commitment and the capacity of their leaders to i) develop and lead cross-sector teams, ii) work in partnership with key agencies and iii) gain strategic buy-in, were also taken into account.^{xiii} Teams undertook to develop and advocate for new service models as a foundation for a new approach to radically efficient service development throughout their authorities and to achieve this by working closely with senior, strategic leaders in the local authority and in health.^{xiii}

The TEY programme would also require and support a different kind of leadership within public services and the potential for developing such leadership was taken into account too. The programme teams were looking for openness to new ideas, developing new skills and changing perspectives from current leaders and scope for the creation of new and different leaders (including parents and community members) playing a role in design of services, thinking differently and advocating for innovation.^{xiv}

Leaders of successfully recruited teams included a Group Manager of Children’s Centres, a Lead Director of Children’s Services, and a Head of Extended Services, as well as a local authority project manager, Heads of Children’s Centres and leaders of a social enterprise.

By the end of the selection process, six locality teams in England had been chosen to develop, test and implement their ideas for new services that would generate better outcomes for families and make cost savings of 30%. The localities were: Barking and Dagenham, Corby, Heaton in Bradford, Knowsley in Liverpool, Reading, and West Basildon in Essex.

Each locality team received funding of £15,000, as well as non-financial support in the form of workshops, practical tools and 1:1 support from a skilled process consultant. Specialists in specific activities such as ethnography, prototyping and service design were also brought in to support locality teams^{xiv}

The following are brief summaries of the locality teams and the contexts in which they were working. Full case studies are included as appendix c.

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBD)

On The Leys estate, there is a history of high dependency on public services and low aspiration. The estate is geographically isolated and poorly served by shops and services. Professionals struggle to engage a hard-core of white, working class families ,who want their children to do well, and who need support, but who don’t access services in the Children’s Centre that could help them.

Bradford

Heaton in Bradford is a culturally, socially and economically diverse area. The focus area for Bradford’s Transforming Early Years project was an estate in Heaton where there had been a demographic shift from predominantly white to a mix of white, South Asian and Eastern European families. The community is sharply polarised between people involved in crime and those who are ‘scared to go out’. A fragmented community with a significant number of vulnerable families and weak social networks, has been reflected in fragmented support, with poor links between professionals and services.

Corby

The Transforming Early Years team in Corby brings together representatives from children’s centres, the local authority and a group of parent users – Parent Coalition - who are committed to leading an approach that is inclusive and Corby-wide. There is a history in Corby of providers working in partnership with parents as policy makers and co-constructors of services, and a desire to take this further and deeper in order to engage families in some of the most deprived areas of Corby.

Knowsley

Volunteers in the Whiston area of Knowsley have set up a not for profit company called Family Voices=Family Choices Ltd. Working with the local children’s centre Family Voices are co producing services to respond to findings that the families most need in the local community were both dependent on public services and scared to access the children’s centre.

One plus One and Parents 1st

Parents 1st is a social enterprise dedicated to building the strengths and skills of individuals and communities. They are committed to improving outcomes for children and families through peer support programmes. One Plus One is a team of researchers, practitioners and information specialists whose aim is to enhance understandings of how family relationships contribute to the well

being of adults and children. They create resources for professionals and volunteers working in the frontline of family support. Together the two organisations are focusing on the families who were just coping in West Basildon.

Reading

This team was built on a successful partnership with the Children’s Trust Board in Reading where there were already strong systems for consultation with families. Their work focused on one children’s centre in the South Reading area of Whitley. Despite improvement in key performance indicators and £6 million a year spent on services for children and young people with perceived emotional and behavioural difficulties, some parts of the community in Whitley are characterised by a sense of powerlessness and social isolation with poor social capital and a lack of the services they wanted or needed.

3.2 Discussion: What we learned about locality teams leading Transforming Early Years

Leading innovation

We know that radical innovation in the context of local government is not easy – it is not actively encouraged, well supported (financially or culturally), or widespread. Local authority personnel are used to solving problems by delivering services, but generally this is within the confines of what local or central policy dictates as the problem, the nature of the service response, how the service should be delivered and the resources available to deliver it. As such, local authorities are carefully organised to deliver set services at scale and to certain standards. Capacity is focused on delivering related tasks according to set procedures. Effort and skills are diverted away from innovation and creativity towards compliance in areas like data security, financial probity, equal opportunities and open, competitive procurement.^{xlvi}

The TEY programme placed considerable demands on TEY teams to develop new skills for taking part in innovation processes at the same time as teams were themselves leading an innovation project in their locality. As we have seen horizon scanning, ethnography, prototyping, service blueprinting were all new to the teams and some of these processes had a profound impact on individuals’ professional identities and how teams worked together and with others.

For locality teams the programme required a significant commitment of time and energy. Although a 20 days per person commitment was made explicit in the original programme design, TEY team members still felt surprised by the complexity of the work and the extent of the commitment required, although looking back it seems not to have dampened their enthusiasm for the programme overall:

“At the beginning of the project it wasn’t clear about the time commitment and the different components of the programme. It’s been hugely time consuming. You need to be realistic about the time involved. But personally, for me and for the strategic group – we’ve loved every minute of it.”^{xlvii}

Team composition

TEY teams included members with a wide range of skills and experience who occupied different levels in the existing hierarchy and represented different services. This was important for balancing representativeness with authority and resources to act; generic with specialist skills; and local authority with other provider perspectives. TEY team members included:

- Children’s centre managers, some managing more than one centre

- Directors of children’s services
- Researchers
- LA officers working in children’s services
- Project managers
- Community activists and volunteers
- Parents, some on the way to becoming community activists and volunteers

As important as formal roles and responsibilities were skills, knowledge and dispositions. Project teams in localities were assembled on the basis of interest and invitation at the beginning of the programme, and so team composition was the ‘best guess’ that could reasonably be made at the outset of the right combination of skills, experience and perspectives required.

By the end of the programme TEY teams were able to articulate in interviews what skills mix was needed to successfully deliver this kind of service redesign. Their ideal team would include people who:

- are emotionally intelligent and understand the pressures that taking part in or being affected by an innovation project like this would mean for colleagues and the community
- can empathise and engage with parents and families
- are risk takers – up for a challenge and open to new ideas
- are energetic and resilient – able to keep up their commitment through turbulent waters
- have passion and vision, and are prepared to hang on to them when things get tough
- are well networked and connected into other services and the community
- are knowledgeable in particular about volunteering, other services and safeguarding.

Securing strategic engagement and support

As the programme progressed it was clear that, to become a reality, plans that some of the teams were developing would need more support from senior officers and elected members than some of the teams by themselves were able to command:

“It isn’t that people in more junior positions can’t do something really exciting, but that they are so far away from those who can make other people play”^{xlviii}

The need was especially acute where teams’ plans depended on replicating or taking a model or approach to scale.

Meetings were held with senior officers from the local authority and strenuous efforts were made to engage senior representatives from other services too, in particular health and adult social care. Where such meetings were intended to give cover and permission for the project team to do their work, they were largely successful.^{xlix} But TEY teams sometimes struggled to secure a more active participation and contribution from senior colleagues in other services.

To a considerable extent the barrier to ongoing participation on both sides was time:

“If we had more capacity we would have included more people along the way, say to get health involved. We do have links with midwifery and paediatrics but there are key things that we would have liked to spend time and energy on with the health authority that I don’t have the capacity to do.”

By the end of the programme, however some progress was being made:

“In May we had the first meeting where we invited all the different agencies. Some had been there at the beginning but hadn’t been involved since then. We got a really good turnout including health, the job centre, neighbourhood leaders, religious leaders, and the police. The Local Councillor has been very influential. He brought a couple of business owners from the local area. It’s all coming together, slowly but surely. ”

In any service redesign, early involvement of the full range of partners is key to generating the deep ownership and engagement. The necessarily slow and complex nature of the early stages of the TEY programme resulted in teams becoming more closed and inward-looking. Any delay in the active involvement of other partners along the way has made the task of holistic and effective implementation potentially more difficult, emphasising the need to get the right mix of personnel in the core team and to design-in strategic communications and engagement activities from the outset.

Section 4: Different, better, lower cost early years services

4.1 Exploring ‘different’

“We provide a good service for those who choose to use it but we are not well known to those who don’t. I used to think that we should do more – but now I know we should do different.”ⁱⁱ

Redefining the service challenge

For locality teams, identifying elements of their new early years service began with a process that supported them to look at the ‘real’ challenges and issues their service should be trying to solve. The programme team pushed them as service providers to ‘ask new questions about what public services are trying to achieve, as the catalyst for different and better outcomes.’ⁱⁱⁱ In the early stages of the programme, through a combination of ethnographic research, horizon scanning and a resource audit teams were confronted with a range of ‘new insights’ about their challenge.

The challenges that teams started to uncover broadly related to **who** engaged (or didn’t engage) with the existing service and **how** it was delivered. Across all projects the key issues that emerged were that:

- Existing services did not sufficiently engage ‘hard to reach’ families and those most in need (due to a fear of professionals, lack of information, physical barriers, low level aspirations and feelings of helplessness)
- Families who most needed support were often isolated and sometimes segregated
- There was a lack of effective outreach and poor communication by professionals with families
- Services were found to be uncoordinated, inflexible, bureaucratic and expensive
- There was limited involvement of parents in existing service design or delivery
- There was insufficient focus and spend on early intervention
- Stereotyping of families from other community members & professionals was widespread
- Families felt little control over their lives and how they interact with service professionals

Example: One Plus One and Parents 1st

Early work to look at the reach and spend of the current service revealed two profound insights, that:

1. families most in need had limited awareness of available services and were put off accessing them by what they saw as 'judgemental' professionals. As a result, much of the existing early years support was being accessed by affluent families who were already able to cope well.
2. existing resources were heavily geared towards families with children aged 2 ½ to 5 years old, rather than on pregnancy and the earliest months of family life when positive development is critical for long term health and social outcomes for children.

Comparing old and new services

In response to these insights, locality teams resolved to design early years services that would be significantly different from their existing offer in the way they engaged with families with complex needs. To achieve this they (i) focused on a reconceptualised view of the problem(s) that the service was trying to solve; and (ii) considered the full range of resources available to them to help solve the problem.

Through ethnography and resource audits, the teams identified key opportunities to improve their services, which were:

- Building on existing community capacity and skills
- Better integration of services and pooling budgets
- Capitalising on existing community networks
- Meeting people where they are at – using existing community hubs
- Providing a single point of contact for information
- Changing what outcomes are measured
- Looking at whole families, rather than just children
- Seeing families as experts on parenting and on their communities
- Making better use of technology ^{liii}

Although the new services differed significantly from the old, interestingly the designs for the new services were remarkably similar to one another. All took a community organising approach designing a range of volunteer and community based roles which envisaged parents working directly to support families in new roles with a wide range of titles, for example: Community Ambassadors; Community Champions; Chellows (named for the area they come from); Meeters and Greeters; Buddies; Mentors and Coaches and Saints.

Other common features in the six new services included:

- a shift from professionals diagnosing and responding to families' needs to families taking control over the design and delivery of services themselves;
- a change in focus from working with whoever turns up to the Children's Centre to reaching out into the community to make sure families in most need were at least aware of what's on offer; and
- an intention to prevent problems arising, rather than dealing with the consequences.

Fig. 2 provides some more detail on this:

Fig. 2

Old services	New services	Example activities (new service) ^{iv}	<p>“Our re-modelled centre will be in the hands of the parents and carers; the perception of ownership will be different.”^v</p> <p>“We’re seeking higher levels of participation, not just consultation, but true participation. Parents will have a real voice through governance.”^{vi}</p> <p>“Families that are not currently engaged will be engaged. This might not be in the current play centre building; it might be at street level or local level, so they do not have to come into the building.”^{vii}</p>
Designed and delivered by professionals to predominantly passive families	Designed and delivered by families (using volunteer roles), with professional involvement as required	<i>Introducing an expert parent club; a team of trained volunteers to offer high quality, evidence based support to their peers (Reading)</i>	
Governed and led by professionals	Governed and led by families, communities and professionals	<i>Supporting Family Voice, a group of parent volunteers to set up a social enterprise to partner the local authority in a community mutual to run the children’s centre (Knowsley)</i>	
Delivered from a central location, e.g. children’s centre	Delivered in a range of places and spaces within the community	<i>Renting an empty house on the estate to simulate a ‘real life’ environment in which to model effective parenting (Bradford)</i>	
Works with relatively well resourced and well organised families	Demonstrates awareness and understanding of, and actively engages ‘hard to reach’ families	<i>Combating isolation, poor facilities and mistrust of professional services by opening a community shop staffed by volunteers where families can buy the things they want, and find out about the services they need. (London Borough of Barking and Dagenham)</i>	
Consultation with families happens around the edges of the service	Insights from service users will inform service improvement and professional practice and to personalise and adapt services	<i>Engaging and training street champions; parents tuned in to local issues and needs, who will commission and shape the children’s centre offer (Corby)</i>	
Designed to solve a particular issue at a particular time	Holistic and designed to build family capacity	<i>Set up a community cafe run by volunteers where families can play and eat together during the day and evening without fear of judgement (Reading)</i>	
Money spent on dealing with families at crisis point	Target funding to prioritise early intervention	<i>Investing money currently spent delivering services for parents of 2 ½ to 5 year olds on pregnant mothers and newborns (One-plus-one and Parents 1st)</i>	

Example: Reading

The team developed new understandings about the reasons behind lack of engagement in services. They realised that ineffective or inconsistent services were leading to lack of engagement, and that biased or flawed professional attitudes (e.g. families being 'hard to reach', poor parenting) were contributing to families' feelings of powerlessness and ultimately resulted in their real needs not being identified.

"What we have been delivering has not made a big enough difference. That's very hard to own up to. We have to think about solutions not services. At the moment the service dominates the solution. So we are asking 'what does the service look like that reaches the right people and doesn't stigmatise?'"^{viii}

The Reading team developed a new service idea that would turn traditional service responses on its head by shifting the balance of power from professionals to families. The new service design started from the assumption that control over problems and their solutions should rest with parents and community members, so the role of professionals becomes providing an environment that will enable families to flourish, rather than coming in and 'fixing' things. A Community Café could provide easy, flexible and unthreatening access to co-located services and provide a base for a range of services and activities, run by parents for parents.

New services: New Skills

"At first they were saying that this was 'talking me out of a job', but then they started to see how it could change the work that they are doing and were very positive about the fact that they could spend more time doing the crucial stuff."^{ix}

The implications for Children's Centre staff of the direction of travel for the new services started to become clear very early in the design process. Teams identified significant changes to the number and type of professional roles. Some of the changes they anticipated were:

In Corby...

- Professionals will work closely with parent volunteers on practical decision-making and supporting families on specific issues
- Children's centres will have families as part of governance structures
- Parents will link with the borough council and the local authority on strategic decision making^{lx}
- Staff will help deliver training on a 'New Start' volunteer programme and support community champions^{lxi}

In Reading...

- Staff will support, train and advise volunteers
- Staff will engage in delivering and designing services, and will have a greater leadership and coordination role of individuals and services
- Evaluation that is currently done externally will be undertaken internally^{lxii}
- There will be a reduced workload (although increased attendance), more targeted referrals, better signposting, changed perspective, better use of time^{lxiii}

In Bradford...

- Managers will recruit and train volunteers

- Staff will be the co-ordinating and facilitating team for volunteers
- There will be fewer fulltime equivalent hours for professional staff^{lxiv}
- More time will be spent with the most vulnerable families and on prevention rather than crisis work^{lxv}
- Decision making will pass to volunteers (community ambassadors)^{lxvi}

In Knowsley...

- Parents will influence and provide high quality services^{lxvii}
- There will be more mentoring of parents and volunteers
- All members of staff will value community participation and build this into their role^{lxviii}

At One Plus One and Parents First...

- Health visitors / health trainers will be commissioned by the children's centres management team and located in the community hub

And in Barking and Dagenham...

- There will be community governance of the children's centre^{lxix}
- Staff will be working across the borough rather than in just one area^{lxx}

“Two people have volunteered for a change. My parenting commissioner is now the project manager for this. One of our Children's Centre workers has picked up a volunteer co-ordinator role.”^{lxxi}

The teams were also clear that these new and/or redefined roles would require different qualities of the people carrying them out. Fig 3 sets out the skills, knowledge, values and dispositions that locality teams specified as necessary in their new early years services:

Fig. 3

Core skills and knowledge	Values and dispositions
Marketing and communications	Empathy, an open mind and a willingness to shed preconceptions
Training and facilitation	Determination to make things happen
Data and intelligence gathering	Approachable
Matching volunteers to target groups	The ability to think creatively and differently
Mobilising and motivating volunteers	A learning disposition
Working as part of a multidisciplinary team	Loyal and committed
Knowledge of the local context	Commitment to co-production and user engagement
Commissioning and decommissioning services	
Credibility with other professionals	
Designing and delivering toolkits, special activities and events	
Broker relevant and timely support	

Example: Knowsley

The new service in Knowsley, which will transform the children’s centre into a ‘people’s centre,’ is being co-produced with a parent-led organisation called Family Voices who will take on a new role in the leadership and governance of the new service. Working with Family Voices will require a staffing re-structure to ensure roles are complementary in the new organisation. The proposed changes reflect an overall move from staff as providers to staff as enablers who would be largely responsible for high quality training and support for volunteers. Staff would also continue to deliver specific, targeted provision. The list of new roles will be:^{lxxii}

- Commissioning Manager
- Reaching Children and Families coordinator
- Early Learning and School Readiness Coordinator
- Parenting Capacity and Health Coordinator
- Customer and Facilities Coordinator
- Children's Centre Practitioner x2
- Customer and Facilities Assistant x3
- Care Taker

These 11 new roles replace 16 in the existing service plus agency staff who are engaged from time to time.

4.2 Discussion: What we learned about ‘different’

Changing hearts and minds

“There is growing recognition that seeing parents as drivers, co-leaders, and sharers in this (the service) is real. We are taking staff with us.”^{lxxiii}

At the heart of TEY Programme, is a belief in the power of true partnerships between professionals and service users borne from deep empathy and understanding. A growing recognition and understanding of users’ experiences, needs and capacities, alongside an acknowledgement of the limits and failures of existing services, has allowed powerful new service possibilities to emerge:

“This is about making partnership with users the best choice for everyone. Not by coercing users to be engaged or coercing staff to engage users, but by generating insights on both sides so that people understand it as being the best way to go about things.”^{lxxiv}

TEY teams have become increasingly aware of the need to share the opportunity to discover these insights with their colleagues as much as possible. They talk about ‘winning over hearts and minds.’ Partly this is about building support for the project. Partly it reflects the need to be sensitive and smart around managing the implications of the project for future employment and career prospects. Straightforwardly, people may lose or have to significantly reorientate their jobs.

“We have been involving the staff in those Children’s Centre teams as much as possible in what we are doing to get things off the ground. We’ve been running ‘what would success look like to you?’ workshops, going to staff meetings and giving presentations. We’re keeping feelers on the ground to see where people are feeling a bit threatened or where they are open to discussing it informally. Where staff aren’t positive they can influence peers, so where there are signs of people feeling uncomfortable or raising issues you try to nip in the bud rather than let them fester. You encourage people to question things, to encourage ownership.”^{lxxv}

Locality teams have been very careful to engage colleagues in the development of the new services in sensitive and positive ways. Where they have succeeded their efforts have paid dividends:

“There is loyalty and commitment in hearts and minds in the strategy team. They are of the same understanding in terms of the cultural change that needs to happen. They all believe in the ability of families to find solutions – we are just facilitators not experts.”^{lxxvi}

Working with the community

As we have seen all of the new service designs included roles for volunteers, offering peer support to families in their community, which were seen as:

- **a solution to engaging families with multiple problems** not currently using the children’s centre. Working with a peer is less threatening and stigmatising than working with a professional. Ethnography and other research revealed considerable enthusiasm amongst families for both being and working with a peer supporter
- **an opportunity to improve learning and employment opportunities** for parents. Volunteering and in some cases paid community based roles were seen as stepping stones to qualifications and improved employment and career prospects

- **a way to reduce costs.** Along with the promise of increased engagement and improved outcomes, deploying volunteers instead of professional staff in the new service, while not free of charge, is likely to be considerably cheaper.

But the context for developing and recruiting to new roles like these is complex. Although there has been a general increase in the amount of attention that volunteering is attracting nationally, boosted by debate about the Big Society, rising unemployment and pressure on public and third sector organisation budgets, the number of people actually taking part in volunteering has fallen slightly in recent years. In 2004/5 29% of people volunteered at least once a month. In 2009/10 it was 25%.

Also changing is the way people volunteer. Formal, regular volunteering is being replaced by short term ‘episodic’ and ‘micro’ volunteering in which participation is more fluid, for instance based on single issues or events or very short-term non-committal contributions. The national average contribution is estimated at 11 hours per month or 2.75 hours per week,^{lxxvii}

People are also more interested now in getting something back from volunteering. For instance, there is an explicit social dimension – volunteering as a way to have fun, get outside, make new friends – and schemes involving time banking are on the increase too.^{lxxviii}

The ‘typical’ volunteer is a woman aged 39-45, qualified to degree level and living in one of the most prosperous 10% of neighbourhoods. Around 57% of all volunteers fit this profile. The amount of voluntary activity in the wealthiest 10% of areas is well over twice what it is in the most deprived areas.^{lxxix}

So ideally community organising for early years services would feature:

- volunteering opportunities which don’t rely on large chunks of regular time, but can flex to fit with people’s busy life styles and match their expectations of how much time it is reasonable to give;
- recruitment strategies likely to attract volunteers from amongst more deprived communities, and not just ‘the usual suspects’;
- incentives for volunteers, which recognise their contribution in ways that they value; and
- administrative and training solutions to accommodate large volume intakes and high turnover . The national average ratio for volunteers to paid staff in third sector organisations is 31:1.^{lxxx}

TEY teams face a particular challenge in that their plans hinge on recruiting volunteers from within the communities surrounding the children’s centres. Children’s centres are not located in the most affluent 10% of areas for obvious reasons. They also need to recruit in numbers if the increase in demand that they envisage as a result of their improved reach becomes a reality. Early indications of the success of their various approaches to working with the community are good, but teams will need to continue to be creative and ambitious if volunteering is to live up to their expectations and help them to deliver on their plans.

Support in and accountability to the community

Teams learned that, to be successful their project would need to hear from multiple voices and grow a groundswell of support in the community, in particular for participation and engagement strategies. This was seen as a communication challenge:

“There’s been a mixed bag of responses – some are feeling challenged by it – by seeing something different happening. Some might be ‘fed up’ or negative because they feel they

are not part of it and it's going to be a runner. Perhaps I should have spent more time communicating across a broader range of people. But we have limited resource.^{lxviii}

In the later stages of the programme, prototyping created important and useful opportunities for both securing support and communicating the vision and potential of projects.

“We have run 4 different prototype events, involving between 20 and 30 families) focused on the different services and community based roles and incentives and rewards for volunteering. We had 61 expressions of interest to be parenting volunteers and we've recruited 16 volunteers to date. The first tranche of training starts next month.”^{lxviii}

As well as building interest in the project, participative processes like prototyping make it more likely that the service the team designs will meet families' needs. Publicising the intentions of the projects at events like this also sets up expectations amongst communities that change and new opportunities are on their way.

4.3 Exploring 'better'

The plan for delivering better early years services rested on being able to envision and demonstrate improved outcomes for children. Of course as the new early years services the TEY teams designed were intended to replace existing early years services, in many ways the outcomes they hoped for were the same as they ever were. The critical difference, as we have seen, was their ambition to achieve these outcomes for a larger number of children; and most especially for children in families not currently accessing the services on offer in the children's centres.

Outcomes for children

The improved outcomes for children they set out to achieve were:

- improvements in educational attainment at the foundation stage
- reduced child poverty
- improved housing conditions
- cleaner and safer communities to grow up in
- fewer looked after children
- improved health and wellbeing of children
- fewer obese children^{lxviii}

These clearly resonate with the 5 outcomes set out in Every Child Matters^{lxviii}, the framework within which children's centres were operating when they were rolled out nationally in 2004, to provide access to integrated early childhood services “when and where they were needed” in the 30% most deprived communities in England.^{lxviii}

The outcomes also helpfully reflect recent research, which consistently highlights the connection between children's early life experiences and their whole life chances. In particular, educational attainment in the foundation stage is linked to a range of indicators such as parental income and conditions for home learning on the one hand, and the likelihood of a happy home life, good health and wellbeing after the age of 25 on the other.^{lxviii}

Outcomes for families and communities

So to reach the children and influence these outcomes, the TEY teams realised they would need to focus on increasing participation of the hard to reach families of children most in need i.e. those not currently using the children's centre and its services. By involving families in new and different ways, they believed they could achieve a range of interim outcomes that would deliver improvements to family and community life likely to impact positively on children's lives. The teams hope for:

- more adults volunteering and taking up new roles in the community
- increased take up of learning opportunities
- an increase in peer-peer support between families
- more families with multiple problems spending time in children's centres
- improved communications between providers and families
- increased awareness and take up of the services available
- a more visible and explicit role for men in childcare and family life
- an increase in intergenerational connections within the community
- increased take up of preventative health care^{lxxxvii}

Resulting in:

- better qualified adults
- reduced unemployment
- reduced household debt
- increased social capital
- fewer reported incidents of crime and anti social behaviour
- stronger family relationships
- less family breakdown
- improved maternal mental health
- improved diet and nutrition
- an increase in breast feeding
- an increase in immunisation

Making the connection

Helpfully, interim outcomes for adults in families can be linked through research evidence to improved outcomes for their children. For example research carried out by the housing charity Shelter points to the significant adverse effects that poor housing has on children's educational attainment and health and wellbeing^{lxxxviii}. Earning enough money to pay the rent means that families can avoid being placed in poor quality emergency housing. So opportunities to become better qualified and increase their chances of finding work mean that adults in a family are more likely to live in decent housing, conducive to their child's health and wellbeing. Increased participation in community life, especially for fathers, increases social capital and reduces family breakdown. Family breakdown is also linked to poor housing. And so on.

Fig. 4 (in 2 parts) sets out the relationships between the interventions aimed at families and better outcomes for children as articulated by the locality teams.

Fig. 4

<p>Common and key features of new services</p> <p>The new services will...</p>	<p>Example activities</p>	<p>Outcomes for families and the community</p>	<p>Outputs</p>	<p>Outcomes for children</p>
<p>be designed and delivered by families (using volunteer roles), with professional involvement as required</p>	<p><i>Introducing an expert parent club; a team of trained volunteers to offer high quality, evidence based support to their peers (Reading)</i></p>	<p>more adults volunteer and take up new roles in the community</p> <p>increased take up of learning opportunities</p>	<p>better qualified adults</p> <p>reduced unemployment</p> <p>reduced household debt</p>	<p>reduced child poverty</p> <p>improved housing conditions</p>
<p>be governed and led by families, communities and professionals</p>	<p><i>Supporting Family Voice, a group of parent volunteers to set up a social enterprise and partner the local authority in a community mutual to run the children's centre (Knowsley)</i></p>	<p>increase in peer-peer support between families</p>	<p>increase in social capital</p> <p>reduced incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour</p>	<p>cleaner and safer communities to grow up in</p>
<p>be delivered in a range of places and spaces within the community</p>	<p><i>Renting an empty house on the estate to simulate a 'real life' environment in which to model effective parenting (Bradford)</i></p>	<p>more families with multiple problems and their children spend time in children's centres</p> <p>improved communications between providers and families</p> <p>increased awareness of and take up of the services available</p>	<p>more and better opportunities for children to play</p> <p>improved school readiness; i.e. physical and motor skills, cognitive skills incl language acquisition, disposition towards learning; general knowledge; emotional and social competencies</p>	<p>increased attainment in the foundation stage</p>

<p>Common and key features of new services</p> <p>The new services will...</p>	<p>Example activities</p>	<p>Outcomes for families and the community</p>	<p>Outputs</p>	<p>Outcomes for children</p>
<p>demonstrate awareness and understanding of, and actively engage 'hard to reach' families</p>	<p><i>Combating isolation, poor facilities and mistrust of professional services by opening a community shop staffed by volunteers where families can buy the things they want, and find out about the services they need. (London Borough of Barking and Dagenham)</i></p>	<p>more families with multiple problems and their children spend time in children's centres</p> <p>improved communications between providers and families</p> <p>increased awareness of and take up of the services available</p>	<p>more and better opportunities for children to play</p> <p>improved school readiness; i.e. physical and motor skills, cognitive skills incl language acquisition, disposition towards learning; general knowledge; emotional and social competencies</p>	<p>increased attainment in the foundation stage</p>
<p>use insights from service users to inform service improvement and professional practice and to personalise and adapt services</p>	<p><i>Engaging and training street champions, parents tuned in to local issues and needs, who will commission and shape the children's centre offer (Corby)</i></p>	<p>a more visible and explicit role for men in family life</p> <p>increase in intergenerational connections</p>	<p>stronger family relationships</p> <p>reduced family breakdown</p> <p>improved maternal mental health</p>	<p>fewer looked after children</p>
<p>offer holistic services designed to build family capacity</p>	<p><i>Set up a community cafe run by volunteers where families can play together and eat during the day and evening without fear of judgement (Reading)</i></p>	<p>improved diet and nutrition</p> <p>increase in breast feeding</p> <p>increase in immunization</p>	<p>increased take up of preventative health care services</p>	<p>improved health and wellbeing of children</p> <p>fewer obese children</p>
<p>target funding to prioritise early intervention</p>	<p><i>Investing money currently spent delivering services for parents of 2 ½ to 5 year olds on pregnant mothers and newborns (One-plus-one and Parents 1st, West Basildon)</i></p>	<p>improved diet and nutrition</p> <p>increase in breast feeding</p> <p>increase in immunization</p>	<p>increased take up of preventative health care services</p>	<p>improved health and wellbeing of children</p> <p>fewer obese children</p>

Evidence based interventions

So increasing the participation of hard to reach, previously disengaged families, increases the likelihood of the new services delivering better outcomes for the children in those families. But that's only part of the story. To be sure of 'better' the new services also need to create opportunities for families to engage in activities which are likely to impact on children's lives. In other words, what families do - whether its supported by peer groups or professionals, takes place in a shop or a children's centre - matters.

"Making contact with parents is a first step to changing children's outcomes, but it must be the right type of contact and deep engagement. Expensive contact that makes no difference is worse than no contact at all"^{lxxxix}

The TEY teams talked in terms of making 'evidence based' interventions; planning activities for which a firm link has been established between what changes about families' behaviours and circumstances and the effect that has on their children.

School readiness

But what kind of evidence and what kinds of activities? Key to early years provision is the idea of 'school readiness'^{xc}, which describes the stage of development a child has reached by school age in a range of physical and motor skills; cognitive skills notably language acquisition; his disposition towards learning and general knowledge; and his emotional and social competencies, including attachment.^{xcii} The more ready for school a child is, the more likely he is to do well when he gets there. So any activities included in the new services which can influence school readiness are likely to result in better outcomes for children.

The quality of the home learning environment has been shown to have twice the impact on school readiness as the next nearest indicator (household income). Good home learning environments include parents reading with their child, teaching songs and nursery rhymes, painting and drawing, playing with letters and numbers, visiting the library, teaching the alphabet and numbers and providing regular opportunities to play with friends at home^{xciii}. So services which simulate this environment and model what it looks like for parents who may not have been themselves brought up in such a home, make it more likely that parents can provide a good home learning environment themselves. And if they can provide a good home learning environment their child is more likely to be ready for school.

Positive parenting

Another strongly evidenced indicator is positive parenting, which manifests as an adult demonstrating affection, praising and empathising with and disciplining their child. The measure also considers the extent to which the child demonstrates openness and affection towards the parent and obeys parental requests.

Historically, mothers on low incomes are less likely to breastfeed. However, low income mothers who breastfeed for 6-12 months have the highest scores for positive parenting of any group. Because of this association with positive parenting, breastfeeding is a reliable indicator for better outcomes for children^{xciii}. So interventions which promote breastfeeding are evidence based and making them part of the new services will make it more likely that TEY teams can deliver on the better outcomes for children that they set out to achieve.

A recent systematic review^{xciv} of early intervention programmes identified 19 programmes that demonstrated significant improvements in outcomes for children at various stages throughout childhood and adolescence. Some had benefits for all children and some were targeted for children with specific needs or at risk in different ways. Not all were relevant to early years but here are four

that are directly relevant and, in some cases are delivered through children's centres or their equivalent:

Incredible Years^{xcv}

Is a parent training intervention focused on strengthening parenting competences (monitoring, positive discipline, confidence) in order to promote children's academic, social and emotional competences and reduce conduct problems. Programmes exist for all age groups, in the early years they run for parents of children from 0-3 years and 3-6 years.

Let's Begin with the Letter People^{xcvi}

designed to enhance early language and literacy skills, the programme targets many areas of language development, including building letter knowledge, phonological awareness, language and motivation to read, development of vocabulary, and receptive and expressive language development.

Family Nurse Partnership^{xcvii}

Family Nurse Partnership^{xcviii} provides intensive visitation by nurses during a woman's pregnancy and the first two years after birth to promote the child's development and provide support and instructive parenting skills to the parents. The programme is designed to serve low-income, at-risk pregnant women bearing their first child.

Parent-Child Home Program^{xcix}

promotes parent-child interaction and positive parenting to enhance children's cognitive and social-emotional development. It prepares children for academic success and strengthens families through intensive home visiting. Twice a week, home visitors bring a new book or educational toy that remains with the families permanently. Using the book or toy, home visitors model for parents and children reading, conversation and play activities that stimulate quality verbal interaction and age-appropriate developmental expectations.

We need to exercise some caution in interpreting the outcomes of systematic reviews as their findings can be significantly influenced by the research methods used by evaluators as well as features of the programmes themselves. In this case reviewers only considered programmes that had been evaluated using randomised control trials or quasi experimental designs, which are used a lot in the US and hardly at all outside of medical research elsewhere, including in England. This helps to explain the preponderance of US programmes making it into The Allen Review's top 19.

With this caution in mind, the review is nevertheless helpful for thinking about the TEY service designs in that it points to some recurring themes in effective early years programmes which are both interesting and achievable. For instance the four programmes outlined here are all intensive and programmatic; focused on positive parenting and use modelling as the principle teaching method for parents.

Two of the four involve frequent home visits. Two are tightly focused on engaging parents in their children's learning, specifically in language acquisition and literacy.

TEY Teams' interventions

As we have seen, TEY teams' designs for their new services all involve a shift away from professionals working with families to parents working with families, with well developed plans for the new roles and how to recruit and train for them. Volunteers and peer supporters will be working at the interface between professionals and families to encourage wider participation and model good engagement with the children's centre. How the parents in these roles will engage with the community has been planned and specified in some detail through service blueprinting and prototyping.

"Family Voices have plans to grow and, as they do, their menu of activities will become more varied and substantial. They have plans for generating an income by hosting children's parties, baby showers, birth registration celebration events and a cyber café. Already they have opened a Baby Boutique selling second hand baby clothes and equipment at prices affordable to disadvantaged families. As Children's Centre services will be delivered by local people, services will be more attractive to sceptical non-attendees. As a result, there is an expectation that the delivery of children's centre services will change and will be more in tune with the needs of the local community."^c

If the new services are to deliver on better than they need to offer families newly (re) engaged with the children's centre, access to the kinds of 'evidence based interventions' that we have been exploring here - support for breastfeeding and for home learning for instance.

"There will be more sessions and activities on offer and different types of people would run them. For example, a community ambassador might have a Thursday morning at their house on how they get the kids to bed. They could run one session at the Children's Centre with our support and then take it out to their own houses or spaces in the community."^{ci}

Key to the success of the redesigned services will be finding the balance between operating at scale on the one hand – to achieve the increased reach they're hoping for, and quality on the other – making sure that when families do engage they have great support in the right areas from the right people. They will need to think carefully about what support parent volunteers can offer and what professional teams will continue to provide.

Example: One plus One and parents 1st In the new service, the children's centre will offer the following **jointly delivered professional and volunteer services;**

- Pathway into volunteering – pregnancy pals and birth buddies (including breastfeeding support)
- Antenatal preparation for new parents
- Antenatal preparation for main carers
- Health promotion in pregnancy – exercise and healthy eating
- Supporting family relationships
- Services to support families who are separating

4.4 Discussion: What we learned about 'better'

Evidence based provision in the new services

There is a wealth of evidence in the system about the kinds of activities and support that families who are struggling to give their children the best start in life need. Locality teams are well aware of such evidence and, through the TEY programme, have also become better attuned to the needs of

families in their communities. So they are well placed to make the connection between the services they offer and what's most likely to make a difference to children's lives.

TEY teams' focus so far in designing their new services has been on **who** they will work with – identifying the families most in need and thinking about new roles for parents and others in the community - and **how** – bridging the gap between the professional services and the families that need their help. The opportunity exists now to focus on **what** their peer supporters and the professionals working with them will do; what activities and provision they need to offer.

Most exciting will be the roles that the evidence points to for parent volunteers in the redesigned services. Activities associated with important indicators for improving outcomes for children such as breastfeeding and providing a good home learning environment, could both be supported effectively and inexpensively by parent volunteers.

Plans setting out roles at the interface between families and professionals such as staffing the shops and cafes and signposting information and provision are an important first step. Next steps involving peer supporters in the 'real work' of modelling positive parenting and helping families get their children ready for school will really make the new services better than the old

Peer support: do we have the right model?

Critical to understanding how TEY Teams plan to deploy peer support in their new services is asking the question; who will gain? Is it the volunteer – the peer supporter – who benefits from being in a supporting role, or the person they set out to support?

The very helpful answer seems to be that both benefit; that the opportunity is distributed between both parents -volunteers and service users -in different ways. This surprising finding manifests in TEY teams' evidence about the success for both partners of existing programmes (e.g. Birth Buddies led by Parents' 1st) and in their rationales for why voluntary, parent-led, peer support is central to their plans. They link training and accreditation to improved learning opportunities for parents taking part, leading to enhanced employment prospects with all the associated benefits. Simply making a positive contribution to the community is linked to improved self-esteem with benefits for mental health and well being. And so on.

The success of TEY teams' plans to extend both the reach and impact of their new services relies on being able to recruit parents – in numbers - from amongst the communities that the children's centres serve to the new, voluntary roles. Being able to articulate the benefits of being a peer supporter in different ways to attract different people with a range of interests and motivations will be helpful.

Some of the current models for community organising which TEY teams are proposing rely on high quality training and accreditation, giving rise to concerns about the cost of recruiting and training volunteers, especially given what we know about the likely high turnover and very partial contributions. This assumes that training a parent who then does not become a parent volunteer is somehow wasteful. If however simply taking part in the training is one of the principle sources of benefit for parent volunteers, teams might think instead about increasing access to the training provision, regardless of whether parents then go on to take a role in the peer support offer.

Finally, if the opportunity to take part in training were to be broadened out it would mean that services could look beyond the 'best', most successful families in a community, to offer some who may be doing less well access to training and accreditation, making a contribution and so on. Limiting

these opportunities risks creating competition for places, which will almost certainly work to the advantage of parents who are already doing better and who are therefore best equipped to make the most of the opportunity.

4.5 Exploring 'lower cost'

The opportunity to save money was not the principle focus for the TEY teams' design process. As we have seen, teams were heavily invested instead in understanding the needs of families in their communities and significantly changing their offer to those families to make it different, so that it delivered better outcomes for children.

Nevertheless the promise that the radical efficiency research underpinning the TEY programme held out was that, done well, redesigning services to be different and better using the kinds of approaches deployed in the TEY programme, would make the services cheaper too.

In Transforming Early Years, this opportunity is created by two key and common features of the redesigned services, which connect 'different' to 'lower cost':

- reducing provision that is heavily dependent on expensive professionals and other paid staff, and increasing involvement of volunteers in managing support for families in their community; and
- increasing the reach of the new service compared to the old, so that the costs that are incurred by the new service pay for support for a larger number of families. This has the effect of reducing the unit cost, or cost per family, of the new service.

'Better' and 'lower cost' are also connected by reach. By working with more of the families with complex problems in a community, not just those who already attend the children's centre, the new service stands a much greater chance than the old of actually helping them to do better. And, as we have seen, if the family does better, the children can too.

But it is in the improved outcomes for children that new services set out to achieve that the greatest cost savings can be realised. In the first half of this section on how the new services reduce costs, we focus on the short and medium term cashable savings that the TEY teams envisaged for their children's centres. In the second we'll take a look at what the potential saving could be for all of us if they and others really can deliver on 'better'.

Lower cost locally

Locality teams committed to demonstrating significant (they had a target of 30%) savings on the cost of equivalent existing services. To model this they described in some detail the resources it would take to deliver their redesigned service, and then considered the scale and capacity, reach, frequency and, of course, costs of the redesigned service.

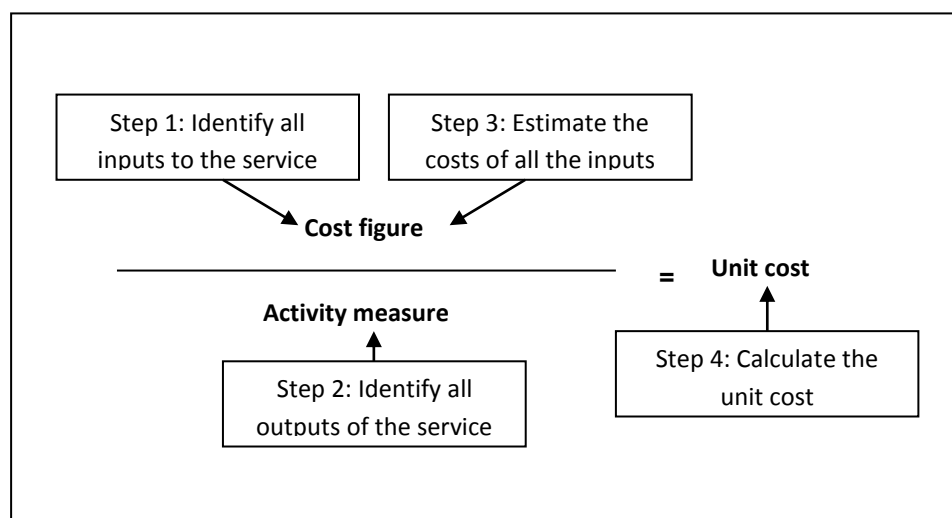
A process and tool were developed to support the teams to complete this analysis. It comprised four steps which would generate comparable unit costs for the existing and new service. The four steps were:

1. Identify all the inputs to the service (what is needed to deliver it, e.g. staff, facilities?)
2. Identify all the outputs of the service (how many families are engaging with the service, how often and for how long?)
3. Estimate the costs of all the inputs (what are the estimated or actual costs of delivering the service?)

4. Calculate the unit cost

An overview of the process for calculating unit costs is set out in Fig. 5.

Fig. 5



Locality teams^{cii} were supported by consultants to identify the data needed to undertake the unit cost calculations and an analysis of this data was undertaken by New Philanthropy Capital, who worked with the TEY programme team to develop the approach to assessing efficiency.

The final analysis showed that:

The redesigned services are budgeted to cost less money...

As shown in Table 1, all redesigned services except Reading’s were budgeted to cost less overall in the first year than the existing services^{ciii}. Overall cost savings range from 13% (Knowsley) to 38% (Bradford) in year 1.

Table 1: Total cost of resources for all sites

	Existing service	Redesigned service, year 1	Difference	Difference (%)
Bradford	£257,673	£159,256	-£98,417	-38%
Knowsley	£509,261	£442,150	-£67,111	-13%
Reading	£100,504	£129,154	£28,650	29%
One Plus One	£314,595	£249,725	-£64,871	-21%

Reading’s costs increase in year 1 because it plans to run both the old and new services for the first year. As shown in

Table 2, when it moves to only running the redesigned service in year 2, costs fall by 27% compared to the existing service.

One Plus One and Parents First have also projected total costs over several years. As shown in

Table 2, costs are predicted to decrease year-on-year so that by year 3, the redesigned service is half of the cost of the existing service.

Table 2: Total cost of resources over two/three years for Reading and One Plus One and Parents First

	Existing service	Year 1	Difference from existing service (%)	Year 2	Difference from existing service (%)	Year 3	Difference from existing service (%)
Reading	£100,504	£129,154	29%	£73,400	-27%	–	–
1+1	£314,595	£249,725	-21%	£192,458	-39%	£158,200	-50%

And yet reach more families...

All the new services (including Reading’s) are predicted to reach more families in the first year than existing services. This ranges from Reading’s plans to double the number of families reached to Bradford’s plans to more than triple the number of families reached.

Table 3: Total number of families for all sites

	Existing service	Redesigned service	Difference	Difference (%)
Bradford	165	550	385	233%
Knowsley	278	649	371	133%
Reading	180	367	187	104%
One Plus One	284	322	38	13%

As shown in

Table 4, One Plus One and Parents 1st are also expecting to increase reach year-on-year. These are the families who are not reached by the current model, and come from the most deprived areas surrounding the children’s centre. The families lost through moving to the new model are more affluent families who benefit least from support.

Table 4: Total number of families reached over two/three years for One Plus One and Parents First

	Existing service	Year 1	Difference from existing service (%)	Year 2	Difference from existing service (%)	Year 3	Difference from existing service (%)
One Plus One	284	322	13%	383	35%	430	55%

Together, this results in a reduction to unit cost

As shown in Table 5, all the redesigned services are predicted to have a substantially lower unit cost compared with the existing services. This ranges from a 54% reduction by Reading to a reduction of 81% forecast by Bradford. Reading expect to reduce unit costs even taking into account an increase in the cost of resources to meet increased demand.

Table 5: Total unit costs for all sites

	Existing service	Redesigned service	Difference	Difference (%)
Bradford	£1,562	£290	-£1,272	-81%
Knowsley	£1,832	£681	-£1,151	-63%
Reading	£558	£257	-£301	-54%
One Plus One	£1,108	£776	-£332	-30%

One Plus One and Parents First also project reductions in unit cost of £605 (55%) in year 2 and £747 (67%) in year 3.

This reduction in unit cost is more due to changes in number of families than changes to the cost of resources

As shown in Table 6, these reductions in unit cost can be explained by looking at the number of families the new services will reach. This is most obvious in Reading’s case: a reduction in unit cost is achieved in the first year, despite an increase in the total costs, because of a big increase in the number of families reached. The exception is One Plus One and Parents 1st where the reduction in unit cost is distributed almost equally between an increase in the number of families reached and the decrease in the cost of resources.

Table 6: Changes in unit cost

	Of which change in the cost of resources	Of which change in the number of families reached
Bradford	33%	67%
Knowsley	34%	66%
Reading	N/A	N/A
One Plus One	53%	47%

Looking at cost categories, staff costs dominate and are reduced — both absolutely and as proportion of the total budget — between the existing and redesigned services

As shown in Table 7, staff costs make up more than half of the cost of all of the existing services except for One Plus One and Parents 1st which has large commissioned services costs. In reality, One Plus One and Parents 1st staff were responsible for delivering a lot of the ‘commissioned’ services in the existing service. Three teams are predicting a reduction in staff costs — both absolutely and as a proportion of the total budget — between

the existing and redesigned services. Only Knowsley’s staff costs go up as a proportion of their budget in the new service.

Table 7: Reduction in staff costs

	% Of existing service	% Of redesigned service	Change	Change (%)
Bradford	69%	64%	-£75,964	-43%
Knowsley	53%	61%	£1,749	16%
Reading*	90%	77%	-£34,754	-38%
One Plus One	45%	40%	-£42,138	-30%

*Comparison between existing service and redesigned service in year 1

Volunteer expenses increase — both absolutely and as a proportion of the total budget

In Table 8, volunteer expenses are expected to increase between the existing and redesigned services — except for Knowsley, which is predicting the same volunteer expenses. Knowsley, Reading, and One Plus One and Parents First have nothing allocated for volunteer expenses in their existing service but are predicting that volunteer expenses will be a much bigger proportion of the budget of their redesigned service.

Locality teams accounted for this additional spend in different ways. For example, One Plus One and Parents 1st include funding for accreditation as well as training, which is expensive, and others do not. There is also likely to be some volunteer coordinator money in the One Plus One and Parents 1st volunteer expenses budget, which is absorbed in the staff category by other localities.

Table 8: Increase in volunteer expenses

	% Of existing service	% Of redesigned service	Change	Change (%)
Bradford	2%	5%	£2,156	36%
Knowsley	0%	14%	£64,000	N/A
Reading*	0%	23%	£29,550	N/A
One Plus One	0%	28%	£70,000	N/A

Volunteers are being used more

As shown in Table 9, all sites are planning to use more volunteers to deliver their redesigned service. On average, each volunteer is predicted to volunteer from 277 hours a year (One Plus One and Parents First) to 480 hours a year (Knowsley).

If we value each hour contributed by a volunteer at the current minimum wage of £5.93, volunteers contribute time worth from £34,157 (Knowsley) to £102,470 (Reading) a year. To be clear, this is not a cost saving but an additional resource, which we value using the so-called ‘opportunity cost’ of the volunteer’s time, traditionally valued using some estimate of the wage that he or she could have been earning.

Table 9: Number and value of volunteers

	Total number of volunteers, existing service	Total number of volunteers, redesigned service	Total number of volunteer hours	Total value of volunteers
Bradford	0	28	9,912	£58,778
Knowsley	0	12	5,760	£34,157
Reading	0	60	17,280	£102,470
One Plus One	0	15	4,155	£24,639

We would need an estimate of the amount of staff time spent recruiting, training and managing volunteers to estimate a complete VIVA ratio^{civ}. But we can still estimate volunteer expenses per volunteer, although this is likely to be an underestimate of the cost of using volunteers.

Table 10: Number and value of volunteers

	Volunteer expenses per volunteer
Bradford	£291
Knowsley	£394
Reading	£493
One Plus One	£4,667

There’s not much change to the cost of space

Table 11 shows mixed findings about what is happening to the costs of space (rent, rates, heating, lighting, security, maintenance etc) between the existing and redesigned services. Bradford predicted a small absolute increase in space costs of £1,815. One of the effects of this small absolute increase is that the cost of space looks as though it forms a much larger proportion of the new services budget than it did the old. But this change is more to do with the large reduction in staff costs which form a smaller part of the budget therefore, making the cost of space disproportionately larger in the overall service costs.

The same is true in Knowsley where, although the team is predicting quite a large reduction in space costs, this category of costs is increasing as a proportion of the redesigned service's budget because of a large reduction in staff costs here too.

In Reading and One Plus One and Parents 1st. Space costs are a small proportion of the existing services and the teams are not predicting any change in these costs for the redesigned services.

Table 11: Little change in space costs

	% Of existing service	% Of redesigned service	Change	Change (%)
Bradford	13%	22%	£1,815	5%
Knowsley	31%	34%	-£8,780	-6%
Reading	3%	2%	£0	0%
One Plus One	3%	4%	£0	0%

These figures from four sites participating in the Transforming Early Years programme are a really promising indication that more families can be reached for substantially less money.

Reductions in unit cost are more due to increases in number of families reached than reductions in costs. This indicates that perhaps the primary value of a delivery model that uses volunteers is the greater reach that can be achieved, with the cost savings as a consequential benefit.

Lower cost nationally

The opportunity that Transforming Early Years offers to save money on a much bigger scale rests in the economic cost of the social problems that early years services aim to prevent. It’s an imperfect argument—identifying the costs of the problems is only the first step in a full cost-benefit analysis—but this section points to a compelling economic case for investing in transforming early years services.

In Figure 4 (pages 31 and 32) we showed how activities planned as features of the locality teams’ redesigned services connected to improved outcomes for children, families and communities, both in their intention, and in evidence from research and theory. The four key outcomes that can be given an economic value are:

- reduced child poverty;
- increased attainment at the foundation stage;
- fewer looked-after children; and
- fewer obese children.

These are outcomes which, if achieved and sustained, will have benefits over children’s lifetimes and beyond, by reducing intergenerational transmission of social and economic disadvantage. For example, fewer looked-after children will mean savings to the social care system now. But preventing children from being taken into care should also mean better outcomes later, many of which will translate into economic value.

Figure 8 sets out the relationships between the different outcomes and some headlines on the costs to the system of failure in achieving better for children in these areas.

Figure 8

Improved outcomes for children:				
	Reduced child poverty	Increased attainment in the foundation stage	Fewer looked after children	Fewer obese children
Short term benefits	Better health Better housing		Reduced cost of care	Reduced healthcare costs
Medium term benefits	Less truancy Less exclusion Higher educational attainment Less teenage pregnancy		Less offending Less substance misuse Reduced healthcare costs	Reduced healthcare costs
Long term benefits	Reduced healthcare costs			
	Better employment prospects			Less sickness and absence from work Reduced dependence on state benefits Later retirement
Costs to the system	Child poverty costs between 1.0 and 1.8% of GDP per year. ^{cv} Additional primary healthcare expenditure that is a direct result of child poverty costs approximately £500m. ^{cvi}	Cost of exclusion - £650m per year, on average £63,900 per young person. ^{cvii} Cost of truancy - £800m per year, on average £44,500 per young person. ^{cviii} Cost of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) – £12bn per year or £56,300 per young person. This rises to £22bn or £104,300 when the full cost of loss to the economy and welfare loss to the individual and family are included. ^{cx} Cost of special needs education - £3.6bn per year ^{cx} Cost of foster care for per week per child - £489 Cost of residential care (children’s home) per week per child - £2428 Total cost of care - £2.19bn per year ^{cxii}	Cost of obese and overweight people to the NHS - £4.2bn. This is expected to double by 2050 ^{cxiii} .	

However, assigning a value to the economy of improving these outcomes is not a straightforward exercise, for several reasons.

Benefits emerge over the long term

It is likely that the economic value to the Transforming Early Years programme will accrue more in the medium-to-long-term than in the short-term. Evidence from other early years programmes suggests that the payback to interventions is not necessarily immediate. For example, the Perry Pre-school programme first reached the point when benefits exceeded costs when the children reached the age of 20.^{cxiii}

This is because all of the improved outcomes for children identified by the TEY teams are linked through evidence to improved employment prospects for those children when they grow up. Improved employment prospects result in gains for the individual in the form of higher personal income, and gains for the state in the form of reduced welfare payments and increased tax revenues. Increased attainment at the foundation stage is a promising outcome in and of itself, but its economic benefit is realised for the most part in the future in the form of improved employment prospects.

Double counting

We also need to be a bit careful about double counting. Through complex logic and evidence chains, the four outcomes we highlight here are associated with essentially the same economic benefit. In particular, reduced child poverty is associated with the other outcomes. All are associated with better employment prospects. This is too knotty an issue to address here; social researchers have spent decades attempting to unravel the links between different risk factors and outcomes. But when exploring the estimates we set out for large scale, long-term savings, it is worth bearing this in mind. We can't for instance straightforwardly add up all the costs to the system to produce a grand total of the cost of failure, and claim these as potential savings for Transforming Early Years.

What would have happened otherwise?

There's one last thing to take into account. These are outcomes which, to be measured properly, need to be compared to the alternative - what would have happened without the Transforming Early Years programme. In this case what would have happened, or the counterfactual, is not nothing - but rather the old service, which TEY teams' new services are intended to replace. We might reasonably expect that the old service would make some impact on these outcomes going forward, so it's not the whole cost of, for example, young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), that the new service potentially saves, but the difference between what the old service might have saved and the new.^{cxiv}

Of course success in avoiding at least some of these longer term costs will depend on the extent to which TEY teams are able to engage the families whose children are most at risk of living in poverty, doing badly at school, growing up obese or being taken into care.

4.6 Discussion: What we learned about lower cost

It's all about scale

Projections for cost savings rely almost entirely on a combination of:

- cutting **actual** costs by reducing numbers of professional and paid staff and increasing numbers of unpaid volunteers; and
- cutting **unit** costs by increasing the number of families that the new service reaches.

So the more parents the new service can involve the greater the cost savings the teams can expect.

Similarly, to realise longer term economic benefits locally and nationally, the new services will need to engage as many families as possible in the kinds of activities identified as likely to improve outcomes for children.

So operating at scale will be key to delivering on these cost savings in both the short and long term. Targets for volunteer recruitment are quite modest and, in comparison targets for reaching new families are more ambitious. Some volunteers are predicted to be working with as many as 54 families on average while others are expected only to work with 6.

	Volunteers recruited	New Families reached	Average number of new families per volunteer
Bradford	28	550	19
Knowsley	12	649	54
Reading	60	367	6
One Plus One	15	322	21

Partly this is to do with the kinds of roles that teams envisage for volunteers. As in this example^{cxv}, ‘meeter and greeter’ volunteers are understandably expected to encounter many more families than volunteer mentors.

Volunteer type	Number of families
Meeter and Greeter	1 new family each per week
Buddy	2 new family each per month
Mentor	1 new family each per 2 months

Although its possible that they might replace a paid administrator or receptionist, relatively little of the 27% costs saving anticipated for this new service will be delivered by meeter and greeters, who are unlikely to have much of an impact on outcomes for children in and of themselves. Mentors on the other hand are far more likely to have a positive impact on families but are, understandably, likely to encounter and therefore affect, far fewer families.

The focus on staffing

There’s no question that reducing the number of professional and paid staff will save the cost of their salaries and more. But other opportunities to save money have been largely ignored so far. In particular the decision to move out of expensive buildings has the potential to save far more in the long term in rates, security, heating, lighting, maintenance etc.

Hardly any of the cost savings projected by locality teams will be achieved by reducing the amount of accommodation that the new services use. Despite early proposals for moving out into the community; into people’s homes, community centres, schools etc, plans in the end had the majority of activities taking place in the children’s centres, or have outreach activities running in addition to continuing provision in the children’s centre.

Equally, the scope for enhancing the use of technology, introduced as a possibility in the horizon scanning phase to increase productivity, has not been explored at all. Focusing wholly on staff and not at all on accommodation or other opportunities to reduce costs may have the effect of limiting the extent of savings that can be achieved by the new services over time.

Decommissioning old services

“There is a real risk that the new process is a layer over existing services and doesn’t end up with decommissioning”.^{cxvi}

As we have seen from the analysed costs of old and new services there is real potential for locality teams to make significant savings on implementation. What is also evident is a risk that teams will fail to make the important step of decommissioning existing services, which they have evaluated as not having an impact, as their new services are delivered.

“I don’t think people have got into decommissioning conversations properly. The early years is a really complicated place to apply this thinking. We are doing things that don’t work in early years – there are loads of people we aren’t touching. It’s hard to have decommissioning conversations when you know you aren’t reaching the right people anyway. People have really struggled with that.”

Locality teams are starting to think about making significant changes to the roles of professionals and community members, as well as the relationships between them. However they remain silent on the issue of decommissioning, without which the savings on staffing and space will be self limiting.

Worse, trying to maintain existing services that are well-funded and long-established could result in the ‘crowding out’ of the new approaches altogether because maintaining ‘business as usual’ prevents the teams from creating the space and capacity to make the radical new services a reality.^{cxvii}

To appeal to commissioners in their own and other local authorities, TEY teams will need at some point to confront this issue. This will be challenging - it’s very difficult to stop providing services in the public sector, even when they are failing. But in the current financial environment, investing in new approaches as supplements or improvements to existing services won’t be possible. Persuading commissioners to invest will require teams to develop clear proposals for disinvesting in an existing approach, and the success of their design will be measured, at least in part, by whether it means other services can be stopped.^{cxviii}

Section 5: Summary of findings

Our evidence and its discussion in the context of a wider research and evidence base points to eighteen findings with implications for commissioners, service providers and designers, and people supporting transformation in the public sector.

Designing different services

1. Service providers need extended time and varied opportunities to explore the challenge their new service is trying to tackle *before* they define possible solutions. This process of exploration and questioning can be difficult and feel strange for service providers, who are geared for intervention and problem solving. But it also builds their confidence over time and helps drive providers to generate focused, relevant and appropriate new service ideas.
2. Working with the community as a route to transforming services is a compelling idea. Service providers hoping to recruit and deploy volunteers need to make their expectations about how volunteers will contribute to the new service explicit, and evaluate these in the specific context of the community that the new service seeks to engage. Service designs and implementation plans need to attend to changing trends in volunteering.
3. Participation in design and decision making processes helps to mitigate any anxieties staff may have about changes to their role or career prospects arising from the new service. Participation by members of the community makes the design better and builds an appetite and expectation in the community for the new offer.

Designing better services

4. Evidence points to services which help parents develop key parenting skills and behaviours and which have a direct link to improved outcomes for children including, but not limited to, breastfeeding and home learning. These two are highlighted because they are examples of support that need not be delivered by professionals, but could instead be provided by parents trained as peer supporters. These services can also successfully be delivered in the family home.
5. Service providers are able to articulate connections between improvements for parents and families and improvements in outcomes for children in broad terms. They need support to develop detailed implementation plans which translate their logic and ideas into evidence based activities in their new services that are likely to make a difference to children's lives.
6. Parents who are peer supporters gain at least as much benefit as parents receiving peer support. Creating a range of roles and opportunities and widening access to the broadest possible group of parents from the community in delivering the new services are likely to increase both reach and impact.

Designing lower cost services

7. Short term cashable savings and longer term economic benefit will accrue if the new services are successful in:
 - reducing the number of professional and other paid staff and increasing the number of unpaid volunteers delivering the service; and

- improving outcomes for children by :
 - helping their parents to improve their parenting skills by engaging them in activities in the new service proven to make a difference to important indicators such as school readiness and positive parenting; and
 - improving their parents' self esteem, mental health, employment prospects and therefore earnings potential by creating a range of community based roles for them to take up and training and accreditation to support them to do well.

So the more parents who can take part in the new service the greater the savings. Service providers need support to develop ambitious plans for operating their new service at scale, if they are to realise the full potential for reducing costs.

8. Service providers need support to consider the full range of opportunities to reduce costs, such as scope to close buildings or exploit technology for instance, as well as shedding professional and paid staff.
9. To appeal to commissioners, service providers need to develop a case and plans for decommissioning and disinvesting in old services that are failing, as part of a business case for introducing new services.

Leading transformation

10. Transforming a service using design approaches offers a unique professional and leadership development opportunity for the individuals taking part. It requires them to change their mind set and ways of working completely, to create the conditions in which radical new ideas and plans can emerge.
11. Service providers need to be thoroughly prepared for the amount of time and energy that transforming their service will require. Expectations need to be high and made explicit.
12. The range of skills and dispositions in the service design team is at least as important as the formal roles that people hold. Teams should include people who have emotional intelligence; empathy, energy and resilience; are willing to take risks; have passion and vision; and are well networked and knowledgeable, in particular about volunteering, other services and safeguarding.
13. Including people in the service design team from other relevant services is essential to securing the active engagement needed to move from ideas generation to implementation

Supporting transformation

14. Direct engagement with services users' perspective is a powerful and affecting process for service providers. Beyond normal engagement with clients, processes like ethnography for instance, bring providers into contact with different types of service users (or non-users) to enable them to ask new and different questions. In particular, senior officers long disassociated from their client base, can rediscover their passion and commitment to the quality of their service. User perspectives help teams to locate and hold onto the moral purpose in their service design process.

15. Service providers, even quite senior officers, don't always know how much they are spending in their service and to what effect. This makes it very difficult for them to engage with discussions about cost savings and value for money.
16. Estimating the likely costs, and potential savings, of new services must start early and be revised throughout the service redesign process. In particular, asking explicit questions about costs and value for money should be a tool to challenge and refine early service ideas alongside, for example, service blueprinting.
17. When undertaking the complex and sometimes slow job of service redesign, teams can find it hard to explain what they doing and creating with others, including those to whom they are accountable. So processes for transforming public services need to include a strategy for communications. Effective communications are also key to engaging internal stakeholders and external service users, who may be critical to the success or failure of plans for implementation.
18. Service providers are able to generate ideas with very little support and encouragement. They need much more support to turn their ideas into plans for implementation, which avoid neutralising the radical impact of the new service with conventional ways of working.

Section 6: Methods and the Learning Partner role

This report and the evidence that informs it have been compiled by researchers working in parallel to the IU and NESTA programme design and support team. Described as a Learning Partner, acting as critical friends, the research team has travelled most of the programme 'journey' with the locality and project teams, documenting evidence and offering intelligence and reflections along the way.

So instead of conducting a classic evaluation, saving up privileged insights to deliver them with a flourish at the end of the programme, we have been raising issues and identifying learning thought the 11 months since being appointed as Learning Partner to the Transforming Early Years programme. This means that both locality and project teams have been involved in moderating and refining findings and inferring and testing implications for others.

Governed by an enquiry framework (see appendix a) which was agreed with the project team, we developed methods and instruments, for example interview schedules, coding and analysis frameworks for documents and so on. Our data sources were as follows:

- Internal project documentation (a full list is included at appendix b)
- Locality team documentation i.e. business cases, locally produced reports, cost calculations
- Observation of programme level (i.e. all locality teams) and locality level workshops
Observation of project team meetings
- 2 interviews each with locality team leaders
- 2 interviews each with project team members (designers, leaders and consultants)

Our thanks go to Kirsten Hill from Livewire Learning who provided invaluable support in carrying out interviews and coding and analysing project documentation. Also to Sarah Keen from New Philanthropy Capital for her brilliant encouragement and patience as well as her expert analysis of the cost implications of the new service designs.

We are grateful to the Transforming Early Years locality teams for opening up their ideas and practice to our scrutiny and for their contributions to moderating and refining early insights and their implications.

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**Caireen Goddard, Goddard Payne and Julie Temperley, Temperley Research
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 - vii TEY newsletter December 2010
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 - x (TEY_125)
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 - xxii Interview with programme team member, May '11
 - xxiii Interview with locality team leader, Jan '11
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 - xxvii Resource Audit guidance
 - xxviii Note from programme team member following resource audit session
 - xxix Interview with programme team member, May '11
 - xxx Interview with locality team leader, Jan '11
 - xxxi Interview with programme team member, May '11
 - xxxii The rationale and tool for the cost analysis was developed with the programme team by the programme Learning Partner with support from New Philanthropy Capital
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 - xxxiv Interview with programme team member, May '11
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 - xxxvi Active Idea Development, NESTA 2010, unpublished
 - xxxvii TEY newsletter December 2010
 - xxxviii Notes from Stakeholder and Learning session, 1st December 2010
 - xxxix Discussion with programme team member following Knowsley Service Design Workshop, 9 Nov 2010
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 - xlii Expressions of interest and Theory of Change for the TEY programme
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 - xlvii Interview with programme team member, May '11
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 - li Interview with locality team leader, May '11
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 - lvii Interview with locality team leader, Jan '11
 - lviii Reading case study
 - lix Interview with locality team leader, Jan '11
 - lx Interview with locality team leader, Jan '11
 - lxi Corby output from service design workshop

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- lxii Interview with locality team leader, Jan '11
- lxiii Reading output from service design workshop
- lxiv Interview with locality team leader, Jan '11
- lxv Interview with locality team leader, Jan '11
- lxvi Bradford output from service design workshop
- lxvii Interview with locality team leader, Jan '11
- lxviii Interview with locality team leader, May '11
- lxix LBBB output from service design workshop
- lxx Interview with locality team leader, May '11
- lxxi Interview with locality team leader, May '11
- lxxii Knowsley business case
- lxxiii Interview with locality team leader, May '11
- lxxiv Interview with programme team member
- lxxv Interview with programme team member
- lxxvi Interview with locality team leader, May '11
- lxxvii Helping Out: A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving Cabinet Office 2007
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- lxxx The UK Civil Society Almanac 2010 Workforce NCVO and TSRC July 2010
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- lxxxii Interview with programme team member
- lxxxiii Synthesised from locality team case studies and business cases
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<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmchilsch/130/13006.htm>
- lxxxvi In particular see Annex A Life chances indicators - recommended measures in The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults The report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances Frank Field for HM Government December 2010
- lxxxvii Synthesised from locality team case studies and business cases
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- lxxxix Recurring Challenges internal TEY project team document (undated)
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- xcii The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults The report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances Frank Field for HM Government December 2010
- xciii Gutman et al (2009) Nurturing Parenting Capability: The Early Years, The Institute of Education, London.
- xciv In a systematic review rigorous quality criteria are applied to programme evaluations to determine which programmes have been most successful in delivering improved outcomes, in this case for children. Key features of this review are that reviewers excluded any medical interventions and any programmes which did not or clearly could not operate at scale. They included only programmes which had been evaluated as high impact using random control trials or quasi-experimental evaluation methodologies. Early Intervention: the Next Steps An Independent Report to Her majesty's Government Graham Allen MP January 2011
- xcv www.incredibleyears.com/Program/incredibleyears-series-overview.pdf
- xcvi www.abramslearningtrends.com/lets_begin_with_letter_people.aspx
- xcvii www.nursefamilypartnership.org/
- xcviii Based on the Nurse Family Partnership model developed by Dr David Old in the US
- xcix www.parent-child.org/
- c Knowsley business case
- ci Interview with locality team leader, Jan '11
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