

**Adult and Community Learning Fund**

**Forecast of Social Return on Investment of  
INSIDERS' GUIDE 'JOURNEYS FOR LIVING AND LEARNING'**

**(September 2011 to March 2012)**

**Executive Summary**

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## Executive Summary

The analysis estimates that for every £1 invested in Adult and Community Learning Fund activities (in this case through delivering the Insiders Guide Parent Carer Support course) there is a social value created in the range of £24.99 to £38.06.

The Insiders Guide approach arises from a union between parent lead research and practitioner expertise. The purpose of embarking on the SROI process was to develop an evidence base about the delivery of the course in three different communities with parents of children with additional needs.

The project set about to evidence the changes and impacts for stakeholders when different organisations delivered a six session parent carer support course called Insiders Guide, for parents carers of children and young adults with additional needs. Over the eight month period, seven courses were delivered involving sixty nine parent carers. We collected evidence from these learners about themselves and their families, and from parent carer and worker co-facilitators, managers and commissioners. A longer timescale would be needed to track these changes further.

The different parent support organisations were: Amaze (Brighton and Hove), Calderdale Parent and Carers Council (Yorkshire), and East Sussex Parent Link (working with the East Sussex Parent and Carers Council). The project was supported by Gill Meyne in the Family Learning Team at Brighton and Hove City Council.

We found that parent carer learners reported significant changes for themselves and their families as they became, equipped, informed, confident and connected. The key element was helping parent carers build their own resilience and skills. The starting point to building resilience was parent carers realising the imperative of attending to their own health and wellbeing in order to continue caring for their children with additional needs in the long term.

*“Meeting other parents in the same situation was very supportive. I felt it was a safe place where I could express my concerns and get real practical advice. I learnt more in a few weeks than in the last 3 years of trying to get help for my child.”*

*“That there is a ‘bigger picture’ and other ways of thinking. The strengths you gain from having a child with special needs should be recognised as a positive outcome.”*

*“A lot about stress, looking after yourself, asking for help: I found it a very good and helpful course.”*

*“Lots of practical skills such as how to prepare for meetings, how to get help. Also lots of support from the other parents who had had similar experiences.”*

Learning to build resilience was a highly valued achievement within the context of managing the unpredictable challenges, pressures and delights of a caring for a child with disabilities or additional needs,. As well as proving the great value of further learning to individuals and their families, the project also showed that in a wider sense, for our communities, the social value of such learning is hugely significant: or at several parent carers said “it’s priceless”.

Managers described how they witnessed positive and visible changes for parent carer and practitioner facilitators, and other team members. Many practitioners had been involved with different parent support courses before and with Insiders' Guide course they witnessed far wider and more tangible changes. One practitioner said:

*"At last! after twenty years working with different parent support courses where little change happens, in Insiders' Guide we have a course that makes a visible and real difference for parent carers. It's the best thing I've done and it's been a privilege to take part in."*

A key outcome was improved mutual trust between parent carers and service providers and a positive model of partnership working. A manager reported that Insiders' Guide had been, *"Good for overall team morale as we are offering an effective course to parents that we regard highly, which is a counterbalance to current climate of retrenchment."*

The duo parent carer/worker co-facilitation approach models partnership working and build a more holistic approaches across service boundaries. A manager observed *'The Insiders' Guide builds trust between professionals and parents and carers. It facilitates a culture of respect. The combination of professionals and parents and carers working together reduces the tendency towards a polarised view of families and services'.*

And

*'We are working hard to support teams to work together across organisational boundaries. The Insiders' Guide approach has brought together professionals from a number of services and has helped to develop these relationships. We have also seen a positive impact in terms of services becoming more involved in Calderdale's Pathfinder work'.*

The main limitation of the project was its short life of eight months which curtailed an exploration of longer term impacts and discoveries. Despite this, the intensity of activity meant that we have gained evidence of a considerable range of impacts and the wider social return on investment.

## **Recommendations**

There are three dimensions to the recommendations, each utilising Insiders Guide as an evidence based, low cost/high impact intervention tool.

### **1. Strengthening parent carers and their families**

Increased investment in Insiders Guide as one part of a strategy of strengthening families by building carers' health, wellbeing and resilience, reducing isolation, and increasing social connectedness, reducing depressions, anxiety and stress and the long term consequences of these, facilitating a willingness and confidence to ask for and secure support and appropriate services.

### **2. Building positive and problem-solving communities**

In each locality, commissioners should consider increasing investment into this preventative approach as an evidence-based mechanism to build positive relationships with families. The SROI process has evidenced the way that learners become more connected and linked together, and active members of local support groups. After Insiders Guide parent carers more likely to be able to negotiate with providers rather than default to an adversarial and conflict driven relationship with providers. Practitioners involved with IG reported how the experience had changed their approach from being providing services for families, to one that was a joint solutions focussed approach WITH families. This practical approach could become part of the

universal services offer within 'Local Offer' because it is accessible to a wide range of parent carers and addresses the key themes of raising children with additional needs.

### **3. Inducing cultural changes that build relationships and trust**

The project demonstrated that the visible and dynamic modelling of partnership working through the use of parent carer and worker co-facilitator duos helped parent carers understand how to problem solve with practitioners. There were substantial related benefits not only for the parent carer learners and their families, but also the parent carer support workforce and organisations, and wider members of our communities.

Insiders guide is an early support mechanism, and there is significant potential for the delay in use of high cost later interventions, which would enable NHS and social care resources to be re-allocated to enable more families to access service, and more effective targeted support.

SROI has been an steep learning curve within a tight timeframe. We would not expect other small organisations to not have the capacity to undertake such a thorough evaluation without the close support of SROI advisers, as offered during this project. The project has enabled us hone our delivery of the course locally in the three areas, and hopefully access further funding in the future.

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