

The Jones Family

Sara aged 40 years was "in recovery" from 20 years of drug abuse. Sara was taking prescribed methadone for 1 year and was now a committed member of NA, she suffered from anxiety and diabetes.

She had a 14 year old daughter, Skye, who was referred to M-PACT by the YOT following the imposition and subsequent breach of an ASBO, she was very anxious about breaching this again and also frightened about the possibility of her mother relapsing.

Skye had grown up taking a lot of age inappropriate responsibility for her mother and younger sister, the boundaries in their relationship were very blurred and there was a lot of shouting and door slamming in the home. Sara was finding it hard to enforce any appropriate discipline in the family following so many years of being emotionally and frequently physically unavailable to her daughter. They agreed that there was an understandable lack of respect from daughter to mother.

Following the Programme there was a noticeable improvement in their communication skills, both had appreciated the importance of listening to each other and were able to negotiate in order to set appropriate and realistic rules and boundaries. Sara was able to apologise and to acknowledge to her daughter the impact of addiction on her childhood. Sara told Skye how proud she was of her (something she had never heard before) and realised that she would have to earn her respect and that this would not happen instantly.

Skye was able to feel less responsibility for her mother and to acknowledge that her fear of Sara relapsing was very real, but that she could ask for help and support when she needed it. There were no further breaches to her ASBO

Both mother and daughter were able to celebrate the fact that life was better for them and that their strengths as a family allowed them to have a lot of fun together.

The Carter Family

Cathy, in her forties, was engaged in treatment when it was suggested to her that she attend the M-PACT Programme. Cathy's daughters Sharon (14), Charlie (13) and Liza (8) had been under a Child Protection order for a year due to Cathy's methadone and illicit substance misuse.

The family agreed to attend the M-PACT programme with the exception of Sharon, who was in residential care due to severe emotional problems.

The family engaged well on the programme and through the Family Tree session were able to ask Cathy questions about their father who had committed suicide. Cathy was not able to talk to the children about this previously as it was painful to explain and she felt guilty.

The family made exceptional progress and it was apparent that they were a very close knit loving family with a lot of respect for one another. This did not come across when Social Care made visits or when the family members were spoken to individually by Social Workers.

The family attended all of the eight sessions, the review and reunion. Cathy suggested that M-PACT had helped her as it was the first intervention that she had had that did not patronise her or treat her unintelligently.

Cathy reduced her Methadone and worked hard on her relationship with Sharon (14), who was making weekend visits home. Three months after finishing the M-PACT Programme Sharon returned to the family home and it was decided at Conference that all three children/young people should be removed from the Child Protection Register.

Cathy keeps in contact and is doing well. There have been no problems at the family home and all of the children/young people are doing well. Cathy is continuing with the reduction programme and hopes to be Methadone free in 2011.

The Brown Family

Sophia who is in her early thirties came under investigation of Social Care as there had been reports of her excessive misuse of alcohol and previous misuse of cocaine. The children Lara, (13) Brian (12) and Nancy (10) were placed under a Child Protection order. Sophia was asked to address her alcohol misuse and her key worker recommended to her that she and the children would benefit from attending the M-PACT programme.

The M-PACT assessment was carried out at the family home and the family decided that they would join the M-PACT programme. The children/young people were very reticent at first as they did not have a good relationship with their Social Worker and felt that she twisted anything that they spoke to her about.

The family began to open up and enjoy the M-PACT programme and Sophia stated in the review that reading the Letter to Addiction had turned things around for her. Sophia had implemented that the children write diaries and then give these to the Social Worker which worked well as there was no room for misinterpretation.

A letter to Social Care detailing the attendance and progress that the family had made on the M-PACT programme was sent along with the review recommendations. Social Care agreed that Sophia had taken responsibility and made changes to the way she acted around the children and that she had implemented boundaries with the children/young people, they were attending school and their behaviour had improved.

It was decided at Conference that the family had all made significant changes to their lives and that Sophia had taken responsibility and was not misusing alcohol in the family home. The decision was made to remove the children from the Child Protection Register.

Sophia attended the January 2010 M-PACT Programme and since then she has become engaged and completed courses in Administration and Secretarial work and is looking for employment. Sophia has not returned to alcohol misuse and reports that she has found her confidence and life is good.

The Walker Family

Karen had a history of drinking alcoholically for many years and had recently stopped.

Shirlee (11) and her younger brother, (aged 5) were placed on the Child Protection Register because they had been neglected due to Karen's drinking. The 5 year old was believed to be suffering from foetal alcohol syndrome. Karen and Shirlee were referred to M-PACT by their key worker, in order to support the work being done as part of a parenting order.

The assessment was carried out at the family home (which was in immaculate condition). There was a lot of denial from Karen about the impact of her drinking on the children. Shirlee was quiet and avoided eye contact with everyone except her mother. Karen described herself and Shirlee as "best friends, more like sisters than mother and daughter". Karen described some serious physical health problems and told us that she would not be alive if Shirlee had not been there to look after her.

At the beginning of the programme Shirlee seemed unable to leave Karen's side and showed great concern for her, mother and daughter had a tendency to dress in identical clothes and seemed to be covering up their problems with make up, new clothes and neat appearance.

It was helpful to be able to impress upon both Karen and Shirlee that M-PACT was not a social services programme, after a couple of sessions both began to relax a little and Shirlee was seen to be making connection with the other children. As the weeks went by Karen and Shirlee were both able to appreciate the non-judgemental attitude of the M-PACT facilitators and the supportive atmosphere in the group. They began to feel safe enough in the group to let down their guard and talk more honestly about the problems that Karen's drinking had caused.

By the time their Case Conference Review was held, Karen and Shirlee had both made significant changes, particularly in their relationship with each other. Karen was able to take more parental responsibility and set appropriate boundaries with her children. Shirlee was able to voice her worry and fear that her mother might relapse. Karen was receptive and able to understand Shirlee's fears. Both acknowledged that they felt less anxious than previously and this led to better communication between mother and daughter.

Social Care agreed that these changes were significant enough for the children to be removed from the Child Protection Register.