

External Evaluation of the Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution

April 2015



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1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 The Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution (SCCR) was launched by Edinburgh Cyrenians in 2014. It has a team of five staff; Network Development Manager, Events Organiser, Mediation and Conflict Resolution Advisor, Trainer and Administrator, with the Centre's work being overseen by the Cyrenians' Head of Early Intervention.
- 1.2 Edinburgh Cyrenians is an independent Scottish Charity with a track record in pioneering creative solutions to the contemporary problems faced by people on the margins of society, such as: homelessness, poverty, deep unemployment, recovery from addiction and recidivism. In the past nine years, through the work of the Amber mediation service, the organisation has developed a strong foundation of knowledge and experience of mediation and conflict resolution.
- 1.3 The SCCR aims to reduce family conflict and act as a national resource centre for best practice in conflict resolution, mediation and early intervention work. This work is built on Cyrenians' experience and recognition that if conflict in relationships and communities is not addressed, then it can have a significant negative impact which dominates the lives of those involved, and can make any future outlook appear negative and difficult to change.
- 1.4 The SCCR based the development of its resources and topics on their 2013 national survey of professionals/practitioners (216), young people (185) and parents/carers (48). This exercise helped to establish some of the needs of these different groups and the content of online resources and events which would be the best response. Since its launch in April 2014, the SCCR has run a programme of conference, training and seminar events for professionals/practitioners, young people and parents/carers focusing on conflict resolution, developed an interactive website and linked all of these activities to a social media and media campaign.

Policy context

- 1.5 The policy context for the work of the SCCR covers many areas. The organisation's origins are in a desire to reduce youth homelessness and there is therefore a strong link between its work and the Scottish Government's Prevention of Homelessness Guidance (2009) along with other strategic documentation from which that document evolved.
- 1.6 There are also strong links between the SCCR's work and the National Parenting Strategy (2012) which aims to highlight to parents/carers the positive difference they can make to their children's development, health and wellbeing; and to strengthen the practical help and support available to them. Two of the five issues highlighted at the start of this strategy have a strong connection with the SCCR's work:

- ① Ensure all parents/carers have easy access to clear, concise information on everything from pregnancy to the teenage years and beyond; and
 - ① Offer informed, coordinated support to enable parents/carers to develop their parenting skills, whatever their need, wherever they live, whether they live together or apart
- 1.7 In addition, the National Parenting Strategy describes “the very real need to move away from the stigma associated with asking for help towards a culture where parents/carers feel encouraged to seek support, reassured that by doing so they will be treated fairly and their parenting responsibilities and rights will be respected.” This is again a strong fit with the SCCR’s desire for parents/carers and young people to feel comfortable in seeking for and asking for support.
- 1.8 Whilst the SCCR may have a focus on parenting teenagers and reducing the risk of them becoming homeless by resolving family conflict, there is also a link between the SCCR’s work and younger children. The Curriculum for Excellence in schools aims to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes children and young people will need if they are to flourish in life. It is now widely accepted that the early years of a child’s life are of crucial importance and that “strong bonds between parents and their children, forged from the outset, are critical for the development of wellbeing” (The Early Years: Foundations for Life, Health and Learning, Dame Clare Tickell).

Funding and outcomes

- 1.9 In April 2013, the Cyrenians received two year funding from the Big Lottery Fund’s Third Sector Early Intervention Fund (TSEIF) for the development of its services. The TSEIF is a new £20 million programme being run by Big Fund (the non-Lottery arm of the Big Lottery Fund), for the Scottish Government. This funding supports third sector organisations to deliver national outcomes relating to children and young people, and the families and communities that support them. The Fund represents part of the Scottish Government’s commitment to changing the way services in Scotland are delivered, recognising that a key way to improve outcomes for children and young people, and the families and communities that support them, is to shift from acute or crisis work to early intervention and prevention.

1.10 The SCCR is working to two outcomes as part of its TSEIF support. These are:

OUTCOME 1: Parents, carers and young people across the country are using the moderated online peer and mentor support to access support and information on how to deal with conflict at home

· INDICATOR 1

As a result of using the on-line peer mentor support, parents/carers and teenagers feel less isolated and more confident in their relationships with each other

· INDICATOR 2

Families, young people and communities have increased their understanding of how to manage conflict and feel supported in managing relationships at home

· INDICATOR 3

Through national awareness raising, families, young people and communities see an overall reduction in family breakdown between parent and teenagers

OUTCOME 2: Organisations working with parents/carers and young people will have increased their capacity to support families to reduce conflict, improve relationships and have better skills in relation to communication

· INDICATOR 1

As a result of using the online resource, organisations report greater understanding of policy and practice with relation to working with families experiencing high levels of conflict

· INDICATOR 2

More services working with families are applying conflict resolution tools and/or professional mediation to help reduce the risk of homelessness for young people

· INDICATOR 3

Professionals/practitioners working with young people and parents/carers report increased confidence and ability to support families in conflict as a result of receiving training provided by the resource centre

1.11 In March 2015, the SCCR commissioned Blake Stevenson to undertake an external evaluation of its work in the preceding year. According to the brief, the SCCR evaluation was expected to involve the following main elements:

- ① Analysis of the operation and impact of the SCCR to include the newly developed website and its events (training, seminars & conferences);
- ① Using data from the SCCR evaluation processes to inform the evaluation about the impact and reach of SCCR and its outcomes on beneficiaries;
- ① Assessing the views and opinions of key stakeholders on the effectiveness and efficiency of SCCR's work; and
- ① Considering the strategic development and placement of the SCCR within a national context.

2. Methodology

- 2.1 The methodology approved and agreed with the SCCR at the outset of the evaluation incorporated:
- ① utilising the SCCR's data, such as events feedback and media profile statistics which had been gathered during their first year of operation;
 - ① gathering opinion through surveys and interviews from a range of SCCR event participants (professionals/practitioners and parents/carers) and stakeholder organisations, using questions linked to the TSEIF funded outcomes and aiming to establish the perception of the SCCR's current and potential future role in Scotland.
- 2.2 Emails with a link to online surveys for professionals/practitioners and parents/carers were distributed to all participants from the events which SCCR had run since it began in April 2014. We received 53 responses to the professionals/practitioners' survey and eight responses to the parents/carers' survey. This represents a return rate of around 7% and 8% respectively on the distribution lists used. The professionals/practitioners represented all but five of Scottish local authority areas and a range of work sectors and work themes, with third sector staff and those working with young people, in homelessness and in mediation being most highly represented (see Appendix 1). The sample of parents/carers who responded to the survey is very small, although does represent parents/carers from six different local authority areas. We looked at this alongside other data from parents/carers to gain a better representation of impact.
- 2.3 The SCCR provided a diverse list of stakeholders representing areas including local authority, third sector, education and Scottish Government contacts. These contacts had either had some practical involvement with SCCR e.g. as Advisory Group members or through involvement at SCCR events, or they shared a connection in relation to mediation, young people or homelessness. We identified a sample incorporating each of the areas and undertook 17 telephone interviews. Additional conversations took place with staff from the SCCR and with the company which has assisted them in developing their online presence.
- 2.4 There were some challenges with the methodology. There was a tight timescale for turnaround of the evaluation in general, and the Easter holiday weekend fell within the evaluation period which may have impacted on the survey response rate. This deadline and holiday period also slightly reduced the number of stakeholder interviews it had been hoped to arrange.
- 2.5 Another key challenge was that the SCCR data is predominantly output-focused (e.g. number of people attending activities), with some reference to changes to people's knowledge, skills and confidence, but with little specific reference to the funding outcomes and indicators that SCCR has agreed with TSEIF regarding the impact of its work on professionals/practitioners and parents/carers and on reducing homelessness.

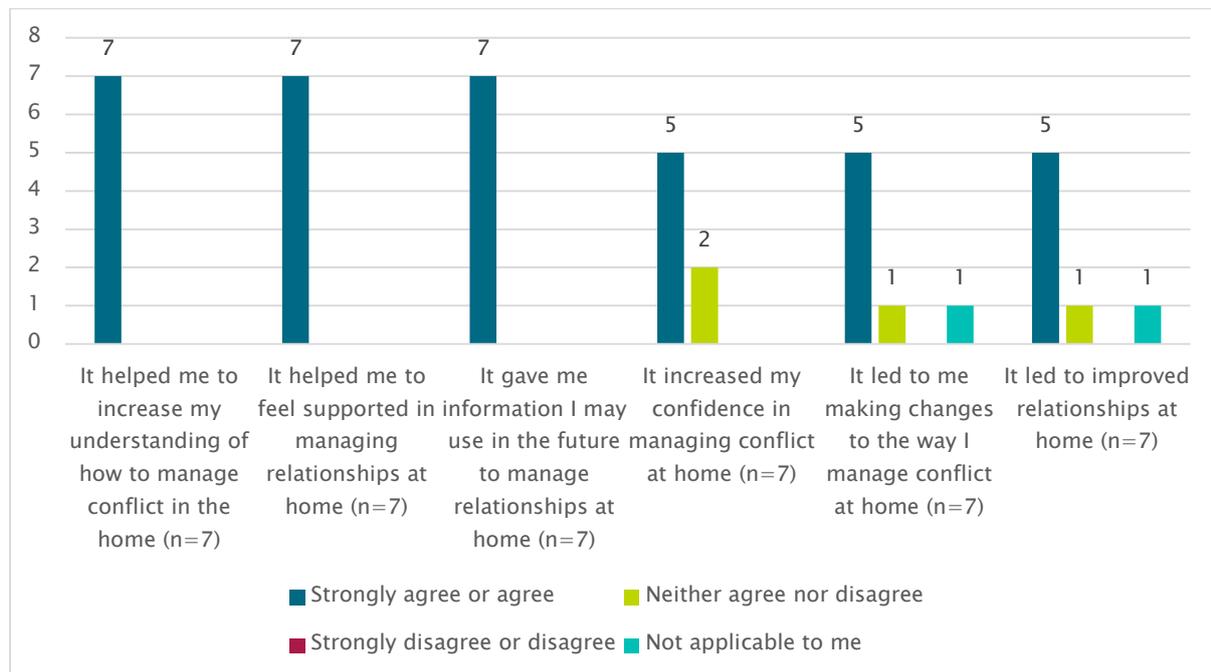
2.6 There were also some challenges in evidencing the TSEIF outcomes which the SCCR is working to as some of the indicators:

- ④ state potential impacts from specific web-related tools which have since been changed or prioritised differently;
- ④ are difficult to attribute in the short period of time the SCCR has been running e.g. a link between the SCCR's national awareness raising and a reduction in family breakdown between parents/carers and teenagers.

3. Results

- 3.1 In this section we consider the results from the evaluation field work and from data held by the SCCR. The three sub-sections reflect the evaluation aims and the TSEIF funded outcomes:
- ① Impact on parents/carers and young people in dealing with conflict in the home
 - ① Impact on professionals/practitioners and organisations
 - ① National fit of the SCCR
- 3.2 The SCCR has delivered conferences, seminars and training events for professionals/practitioners, parents/carers and young people, along with a website and social media activity. A brief summary of these activities is shown at Appendix 2.
- 3.3 A key element of the SCCR's work is the website and the original intention, set out within its funding outcomes of creating moderated online support for parents/carers and young people changed significantly once planning got underway. A summary of the subsequent change and of the development of the website is at Appendix 3.
- Impact on parents/carers, carers and young people in dealing with conflict in the home**
- 3.4 This information was drawn from the parents/carers' survey, the professionals/practitioners' survey and interviews with stakeholders.
- 3.5 All of the parents/carers who had attended events had experienced some positive impacts on their understanding or their management of conflict in the home. All seven parents/carers said that the SCCR event had been very helpful (5) or moderately helpful (2) in their parenting role.
- 3.6 Figure 1 outlines parents/carers' responses when asked about the impact of SCCR events on their parenting role.

Figure 1: Impact of SCCR events on parents/carers



“It’s changing the way we deal with silly tantrums – increasing the time between the conflict and the reaction so we actually think about what is going on and why it happened and trying to sit our daughter down and ask what the problem is.”

“Too much to list [answering about what information had been passed to other adults in the family] but the most important skill was actually listening to each other, then giving yourself some thinking time before reacting.”

“I found the session I attended one of the most useful I have ever attended and it gave me a lot of strategies and ideas to use in my work and home life. Very impressed.”

3.7 We also found that the SCCR events which parents/carers had attended had led to people passing on information to adults and young people in their family and to other parents/carers outside of the immediate family:

- 🕒 Five of the seven had passed on information from the events to other adults in the family
- 🕒 Five of the seven had passed on information from the events to other parents/carers
- 🕒 Two of the seven had passed on information from the events to young people in the family.

3.8 The evaluation found that only two of the parents/carers had used the SCCR website and were just occasional or one-off users of it. We therefore have little data on parents/carers’ opinion of the site. These users were positive about the appearance and navigability of the site but generally had not used information contained on the website to assist in the management of conflict in the home. One respondent noted the contrast between

attending an event and using the website: *"Attending the training was more effective than reading the web pages. We read so much on the internet that I think our brains recognise the words but not much gets absorbed. On the training course we got into groups and figured out the answers between us. All the skills are so obvious but have been somehow forgotten through patterns of behaviour. I am really thankful for being given the opportunity to attend the course."*

3.9 The evaluation looked at the recent feedback from 28 parents/carers who attended two SCCR events in March.

3.10 The events had a positive impact on parents:

- ① 100% said they would apply the learning from the event to their role as a parent;
- ① 89% reported that the events improved their knowledge base regarding family conflict;
- ① 89% reported that the events improved their skills regarding family conflict; and
- ① 89% reported improved confidence in their ability to support families in conflict.

3.11 Comments from parents illustrate that they learned more about family conflict and how to prevent and resolve it. For example:

"The session was very informative and gave me an insight into how I can cope and deal with conflict in the home."

"I have learned that although my son is screaming in my face with anger he needs to get his point across. Also the use of I instead of you."

"I have learnt strategies on how to avoid conflict and deal with situations before they escalate."

"A different, more sympathetic way to view the conflict at home with my kids."

"[I learned about] the stages of anger to resolution. The stages of child development and my need to change my behaviour."

"[I learned about] a different approach in dealing with conflict, angers and avoiding escalating arguments. To allow anger to sizzle out."

"[I learned] more ideas of ways to diffuse situations and realise how best to help my children develop."

Professionals/practitioners' views on SCCR's impact on parents/carers

- 3.12 We asked professionals/practitioners to comment on the impact of SCCR events and the website on parents/carers and families and any effect they perceived these resources had on reducing the risk of homelessness. Both resources were seen to play a positive role.
- 3.13 From 43 responses, just over half (23, 53%) agreed (16, 37%) or strongly agreed (7, 16%) that SCCR events contribute towards reducing the risk of homelessness for young people. The evaluation found a relatively low link between professionals/practitioners passing on information from events to parents/carers. 18% (8) of those who had attended an SCCR event (n=44) had passed on information from SCCR events to parents/carers or young people.
- 3.14 Nearly two-thirds (14, 64%)¹ agreed (9, 41%) or strongly agreed (5, 23%) that the SCCR website contributes towards reducing the risk of homelessness for young people, but 15% (4) of those who have used the SCCR website² are aware of parents/carers/young people benefitting from using the website.

Professionals/practitioners as parents/carers

- 3.15 In our survey to professionals/practitioners we also asked them if they were parents/carers, as there is potential for the SCCR's activities to impact on the same person in their separate roles at work and in family life.
- 3.16 The evaluation found that 66% (29) of the 44 professionals/practitioners who had attended events were also parents/carers. Just over half of these (15, 52%) reported that SCCR events had been helpful for them in their parenting role. Comments include:
- "Have gained more insight into the behaviour my teenage son can sometimes display. Have been more mindful of the need to respond calmly and sometimes not immediately. Better understanding of the physiological aspects of challenging behaviour."*
- "My relationship with my grown up son has improved."*
- "As a parent of two teenagers the conflict resolution information has been very useful in managing my behaviour during conflicts – or even trying to avoid unnecessary conflicts. Definitely trying to pick my battles!"*
- "I listen more instead of dishing out advice too quickly."*
- 3.17 Around a fifth (4, 21%) of professionals/practitioners who are also parents/carers and who have used the SCCR website (n=19) said that it had been helpful for them in their parenting role. Comments include:

¹ n=22

² n=26

"Helps me to listen rather than shout to family members."

"Useful materials."

Stakeholders' views on impact on parents/carers

- 3.18 Our stakeholder interviews asked for their perceptions of the SCCR's impact on increasing support and information for parents/carers, carers and young people to deal with conflict, and on families' ability to manage relationships and conflict (linking to Outcome 1).
- 3.19 Not all stakeholders felt able to comment on this if they had not been directly involved in SCCR's activities, or if they did not have staff who had used SCCR events and resources and who worked with families. However, those stakeholders who had attended SCCR events, had staff who had done so or who knew parents/carers who had attended events, were very positive. They identified that the events had equipped staff with, for example, skills to introduce conflict resolution in family settings, and that SCCR offered materials which staff could use in their work with parents/carers or which they could signpost them to use.
- 3.20 There was general agreement that the provision of the resources to support parents/carers and young people was a good thing, but it was also acknowledged that positive outcomes for families resulting from it were difficult to show, partly because of the early stage of the SCCR's work.

"It's a long haul [to see impacts on families] and you probably want to see evidence of relationships with key professional training bodies; Scottish Parent Teaching Council, Parentline. You can't achieve that in a year – all you can be is be on the pathway."

"I think they are obviously good clear resources – the fact that they use stories to tell of other people's experiences so young people get the idea of mediation is good."

"I do think that parents who attended the workshop really got a lot out of it and are aware of the website and able to use that – they still speak about it and attending the workshop – they recall things from it."

- 3.21 The most common comment from stakeholders when asked about the SCCR's impact on families' ability to manage relationships and conflict was to note that the organisation was doing the right sort of work by producing user-friendly resources, but people were unable to provide direct evidence of impact so far. The value of new approaches for families to use and the fact that simple conflict resolution solutions can have significant impacts with families was described by one stakeholder; *"Some very very simple things can get fixed very very quickly – you can come away thinking how could they [family] not have done that themselves? It can be emotional for families as they start to talk about things and they get away from the whirlwind of the last three weeks where it's just been about banging doors."*

Impact on organisations and professionals/practitioners

- 3.22 The SCCR has delivered conferences, seminars and training events for professionals/practitioners, along with a website and social media activity. See Appendix 2. The SCCR's own data from event feedback showed that 182 people (92%) reported that their confidence had increased as a result of conferences, and that the training events led to a range of positive impacts on attendees:
- 🌐 88% of attendees increased their knowledge of family conflict;
 - 🌐 87% increased their skills in family conflict;
 - 🌐 83% increased their confidence in their ability to support families in conflict.
- 3.23 The evaluation explored the impact of the SCCR's activities as felt by the professionals/practitioners themselves and as seen by stakeholders, seeking to understand the progress made towards the funded outcomes.

Professionals/practitioners' views on impact on policy understanding and practice

- 3.24 The evaluation found that 70% (30) of professionals/practitioners either agreed (27, 63%) or strongly agreed (3, 7%) that SCCR events helped them to understand policy in relation to working with families experiencing conflict³. The website also played a role in this way with 64% (14) either agreeing (11, 50%) or strongly agreeing (3, 14%)⁴.
- 3.25 There was a clear link between SCCR's activities and changes to people's practice. Just over three-quarters of those who had attended SCCR events (34, 77%) said the events had influenced their practice⁵.
- 3.26 Figure 2 shows that, most notably, events have helped professionals/practitioners to understand practice in relation to working with families experiencing conflict with 34 (79%) agreeing or strongly agreeing with this⁶. The events also played a role in equipping professionals/practitioners, supporting them with conflict resolution tools for families they work with (24, 56%)⁷. The impact on professionals/practitioners using conflict resolution tools with families or accessing professional mediation for families as a result of the events was lower (Figure 2).

³ n=43

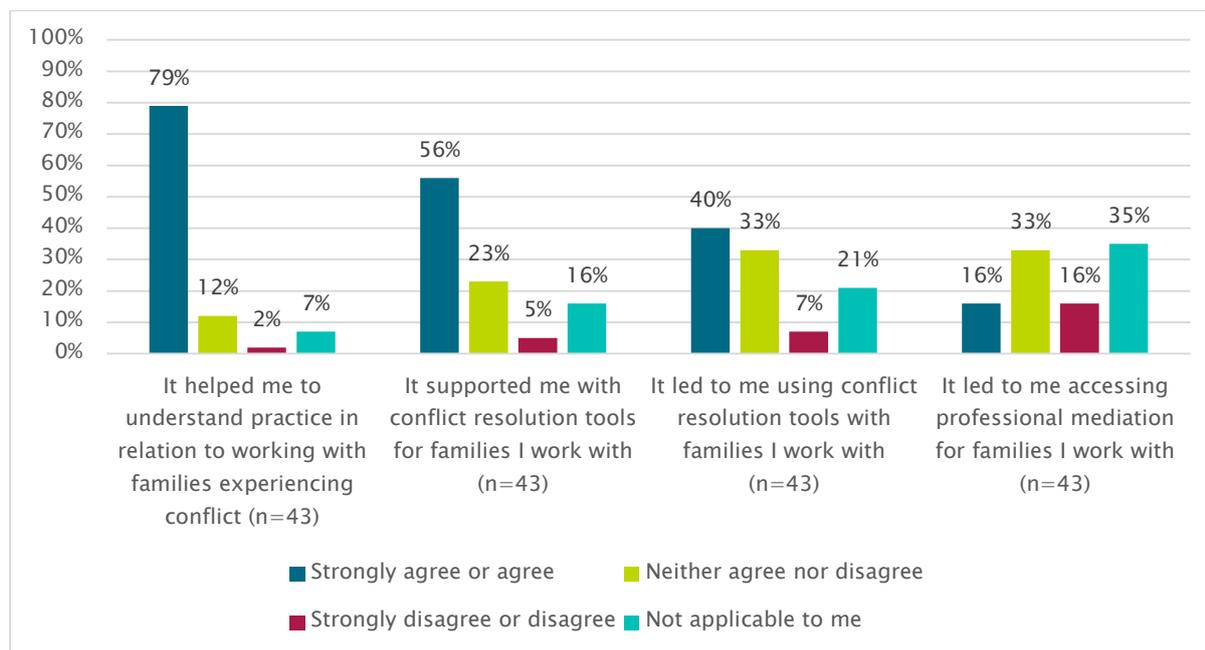
⁴ n=22

⁵ n=44

⁶ n=43

⁷ n=43

Figure 2: Impact of SCCR events on professionals/practitioners' practice



"I used some mediation techniques with a young person and their family."

"The majority of the mediations we conduct are community/neighbourhood disputes, this helped with our homelessness mediation – seeing things from a family perspective."

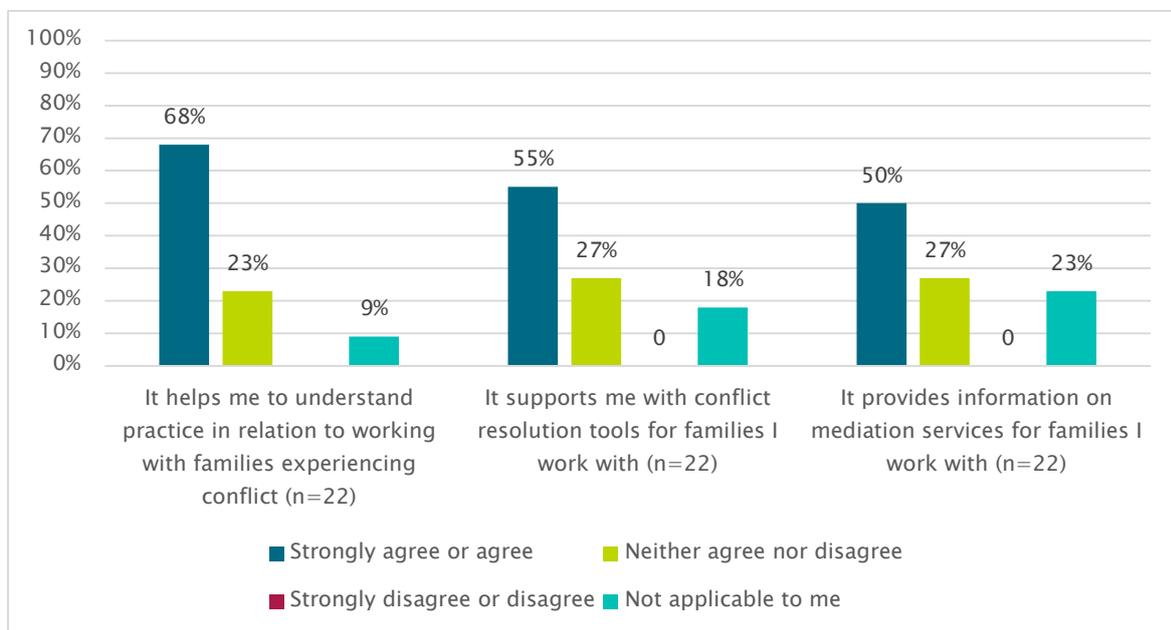
"Although I am mostly dealing with individuals rather than families, I was able to take some of the approaches that were delivered in the training session and apply them to my work with individuals and in reducing conflict."

"Helps me to feel able/equipped to help individuals I work with when they present with family 'stuff'."

- 3.27 The impact of events goes beyond the professionals/practitioners who attend them, as the evaluation found that just over two-thirds (30, 68%) of respondents who attended an SCCR event (n=44) said they passed on information received at events to colleagues. Some did this in order to support internal training programmes: for example, *"I incorporated some of the ideas put forward into a training session on handling challenging behaviour which I delivered to staff"*.
- 3.28 Other respondents described sharing materials from the events with colleagues, or promoting SCCR events among colleagues: *"I have tried to encourage other people to attend training events by explaining how valuable I found the course I attended"*.
- 3.29 The evaluation found an example of service users (young people) benefitting from a professional/practitioner sharing information with colleagues: *"I passed on the workshop information to my line manager and as such Cyrenians have worked with a group of young people being supported by my fellow workers"*.

- 3.30 The evaluation also found some evidence that professionals/practitioners use tools they have learned about in SCCR training for their own personal awareness or within a wider context in their work, as evidenced by these comments: *“I have found myself using some of the tools in meetings I attend with groups when small disagreements arise,”* and *“It makes me think more about how I respond in a conflict situation.”*
- 3.31 The evaluation also found that the SCCR website has an impact on practice. The majority of professionals/practitioners said that the website had helped them to understand practice in relation to working with families experiencing conflict and it had supported them with conflict resolution tools for families, as displayed in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Impact of SCCR website on professionals/practitioners’ practice

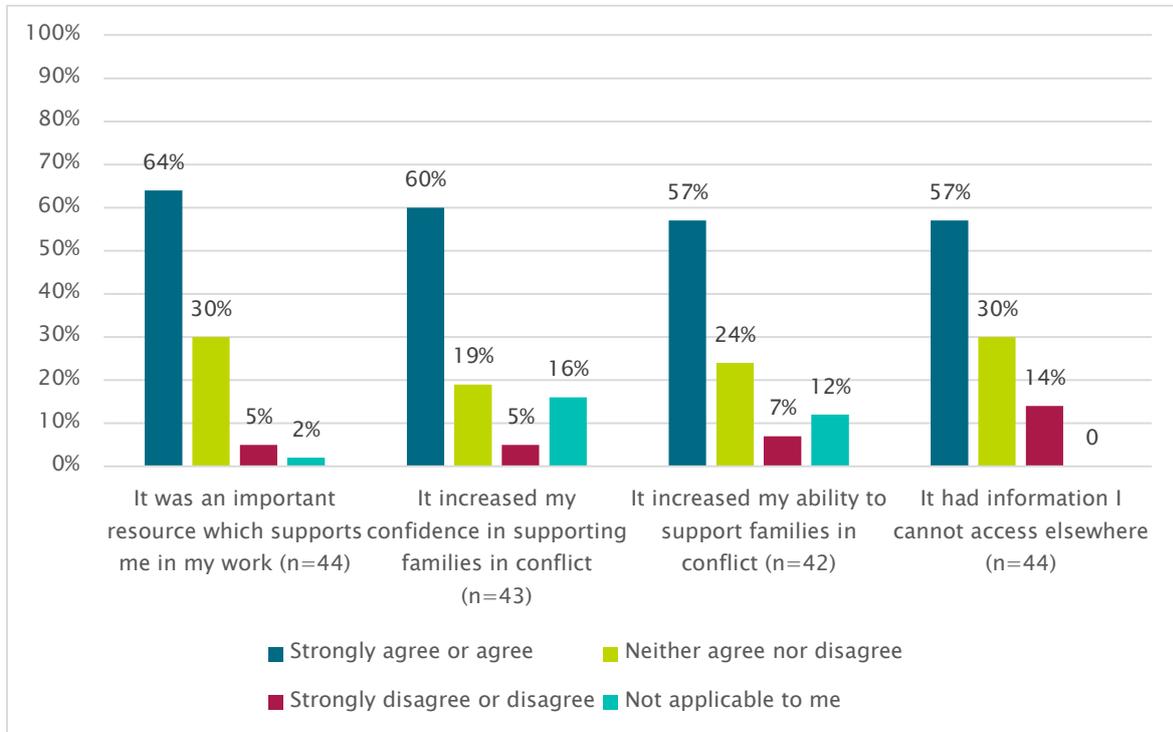


- 3.32 However only five (19%) of the 26 respondents who had used the website could give an example of how the website has supported their work in practice. One said that the website helped by offering a resource that families could be referred to *“for conflict management ideas”*; and another said that the website provided information about a mediation service which they referred a young person experiencing homelessness to.
- 3.33 The evaluation looked for evidence that the SCCR’s activities support professionals/practitioners by impacting on their ability to support families in conflict. 64% (28) of professionals/practitioners said that the events are an important resource which support them in their work⁸. There were similar numbers of professionals/practitioners who said that the events increased their ability to support

⁸ n=44

families in conflict and their confidence in supporting families in conflict, as displayed in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Impact of SCCR events on professionals/practitioners’ ability to support families in conflict



3.34 The evaluation asked about the importance and the uniqueness of SCCR’s events. 61% (21) of professionals/practitioners felt that SCCR events were a moderately (20, 45%) or very (7, 16%) important resource in their work⁹. Similarly, 57% (35) felt that SCCR events provided information that they cannot access elsewhere¹⁰.

“[I] feel more confident in my ability to deal with conflict.”

“I am more confident when I talk to young people about issues they may be facing at home.”

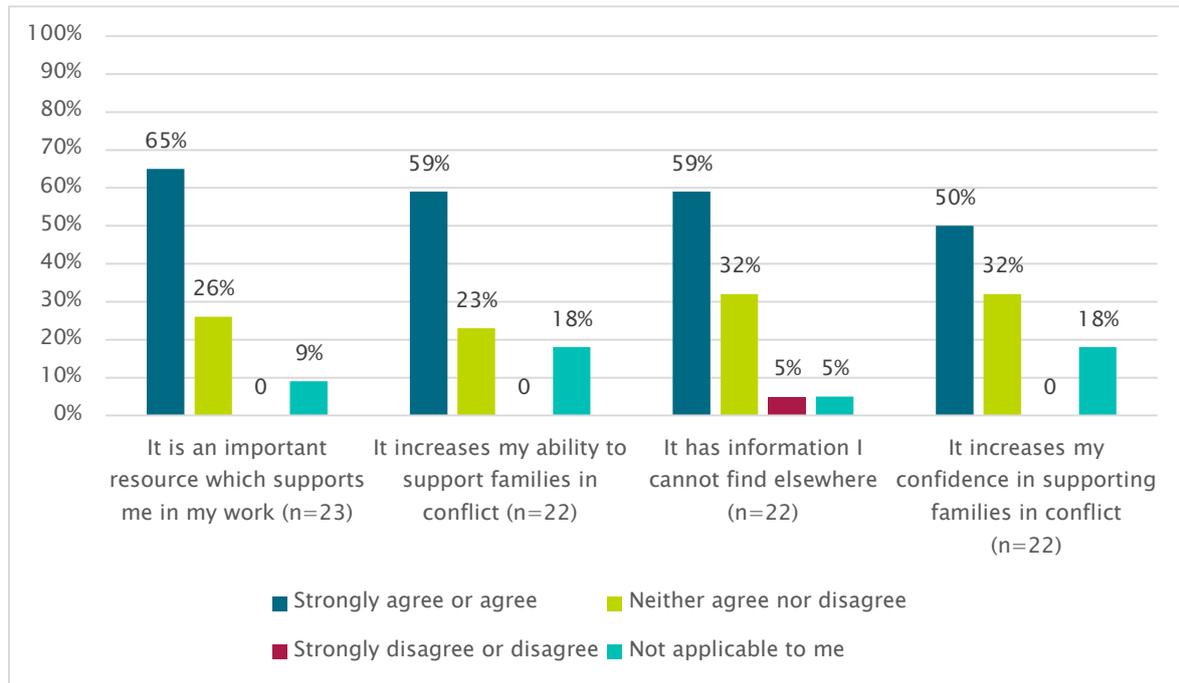
3.35 The evaluation found that the SCCR website plays a similar but lesser role with 59% (13) saying that it increases their ability to support families¹¹ and 50% (11) saying that it increases their confidence to support families. See Figure 5.

⁹ n=44

¹⁰ n=44

¹¹ n=22

Figure 5: Impact of the SCCR website on professionals/practitioners' ability to support families in conflict



3.36 We asked about the importance and uniqueness of the website for professionals/practitioners. 65% (15) described the SCCR website as an important resource which supports them in their work (n=23). However, most (13, 52%) described the website as a slightly important resource in their work (n=25). Two (8%) described it as very important, 7 (28%) as moderately important and three (12%) as not at all important. 59% (13) said it contains information they cannot find elsewhere (n=22).

3.37 There were a handful of negative comments from professionals/practitioners in relation to SCCR's work. These were limited to responses from no more than two people and included:

- 🌀 that the internet was a "luxury" and was not used by parents/carers they were working with;
- 🌀 that event content was not relevant to families they worked with; and
- 🌀 disappointment at a perceived lack of joint working with other agencies.

Stakeholders' views on impact on professionals/practitioners

3.38 The stakeholder interviews asked for interviewees' perceptions of the SCCR's impact on organisations' capacity to support families to reduce conflict (linking to Outcome 2).

3.39 Not all stakeholders felt able to comment on this if they had not been directly involved in SCCR's activities, or if they did not have staff who had used SCCR events and resources and who worked with families. However, those stakeholders who had attended SCCR

events or had staff who had done so, were very positive noting the increase in skills and knowledge or the new resources which could be used to support families.

“From observing people who are in the front line and coming to conference events SCCR are undoubtedly providing support and mechanisms for people involved in frontline work.”

“It’s hard to say [if organisations’ have increased capacity to support families] but when I see people at training events I know they are taking things away and that they can leave after a day and have skills in their back pocket to put into practice. You couldn’t have attended these events without them making you feel more confident.”

“Significant [impact on increasing capacity] – based on my own experience and from what I see at conferences. Staff are definitely taking things from training, for example being comfortable in discussing conflict resolution with young people as a direct result of training.”

“It’s increased my team’s capacity as we know that we can pass on the resources and contacts to parents. I am personally more aware of conflict resolution skills and use them in work with parents. Definitely. I had some knowledge but it’s built on that and strengthened it. I now encourage parents to use other strategies.”

- 3.40 Some stakeholders identified the fact that events were free as being important because it has enabled organisations to attend easily, and it has ensured that a topic which might not have been prioritised by some organisations as a training subject has been accessed.

“Training and conferences are free so staff are more freed up to attend – this has a huge impact – if staff can attend, mediation becomes part of practice.”

“Conferences being free have been very important for something which might have seemed peripheral when it could be core.”

- 3.41 One stakeholder noted the rise in the use of mediation services, the potential link to SCCR, and its position at the very least as being part of a developing area; *“Part of my work is an annual youth homelessness survey – mediation is an increasing area of growth though it’s hard to know if that’s down to SCCR influence – but it is part of a broader movement.”*

National fit – SCCR’s role in Scotland

- 3.42 The evaluation asked stakeholders for their perception of SCCR’s role in changing the culture of conflict resolution in Scotland. In general stakeholders were positive about SCCR’s role, one which they saw as being distinct from other organisations with a unique cross-cutting message, but which also complemented other current approaches.

- 3.43 The comments we received about SCCR’s national role largely reflected four themes;

- ⊗ The potential to change a national (Scottish) trait of approaching conflict in a negative way;
- ⊗ The fact that the SCCR could attract people from different interests and specialities around a common theme of conflict resolution;
- ⊗ The voice that the SCCR has in advocating early intervention / prevention; and
- ⊗ The approach advocated by SCCR as a means of affecting people deeply and changing the way they behave.

"I think it could play a huge part – it has huge potential to change culture in Scotland around conflict. Scotland has an image of how it deals with conflict, a hard man reputation – this [conflict resolution] represents a good way of getting through the barriers. It could turn the reputation of Scotland on its head if the message is 'come to Scotland to learn about mediation.'"

"It has a unique role – I can't think of any other organisation which has that distinctive role to play – it can cut across all sort of relationships."

"There are two things [about SCCR] that make its work relevant – its direction of travel in terms of policy development to deal with matters early on – it's part of the drip feed of prevention being better than late intervention. The second thing is a really big area of social policy or concern – resolution within families – we spend a fortune dealing with family breakdown – there is great scope to be taking a more assisting approach to families in difficulty."

"It's managing to highlight an alternative to a more process-driven solution to family conflict. It's trying to change hearts and minds so that these approaches [conflict resolution] become practice."

"I think they are definitely definitely playing a big part in embedding mediation into the Scottish psyche as such – that's been something that a lot of us in this world for ages have been striving to do."

- 3.44 Even those who noted that they had been uncertain at the outset of the SCCR appeared to be positive about its position as shown by one respondent who said; *"When the starting point is about setting up new centres I am a bit sceptical – I prefer to think 'Can we take existing networks and improve their collaboration and knowledge?' But there are times when it's better to launch something new and try and mainstream it. [SCCR is] intriguing because it's a specific focus [conflict resolution] but a cross cutting issue in schools, families, workplaces, neighbourhoods. I'm taken with the potential application. I've been persuaded that because of the way they've gone about it, it is a genuinely valuable addition."*

- 3.45 Some commented that to achieve any national role the SCCR needed to attract people of position and influence. In identifying this fact they also noted that they felt that this was something which SCCR had achieved.

"They have achieved political buy-in and this is good."

"I've been blown away by the numbers of organisations and individuals who say they want a bit of this."

"When you look at the attendee list [at events] it's quite incredible. High profile, really influential policy makers are there."

- 3.46 With regard to this point a small number of stakeholders highlighted the SCCR's partnership with the Faculty of Advocates as being potentially significant in profile raising and in positioning the SCCR.

"Take the Faculty of Advocates – there's something here about having surprising friends – that tells me they've [SCCR have] understood that point – they are not just going to Social Work services or Criminal Justice – they've gone somewhere outside normal public services."

- 3.47 The only specific note of caution expressed by one stakeholder was around the need for SCCR to provide something distinct; *"Other organisations do conferences and training – we need to be careful not to duplicate what others do."*

Fit with stakeholders – SCCR's fit with other organisations in Scotland

- 3.48 The evaluation asked stakeholders for their perception of the SCCR's fit with and support for their organisation to get an understanding of how it might complement other work being undertaken with families and young people. Stakeholders were very positive about a strong fit between theirs and SCCR's work particularly in terms of raising the subject of young people and conflict and how to deal with it, and because of the aim of preventing homelessness.

"Our job is to make people's problems go away, and mediation and conflict resolution is a way to do this."

"For those working with homelessness, a significant part of prevention is conflict resolution, especially in youth homelessness."

"We are all trying to mend family relationships."

"It fits very easily and fits well – young people will come to a youth work setting and many will come with conflict in their lives."

- 3.49 Stakeholders also commented on the support which their organisation had gained from SCCR. Their comments were mainly on the themes of a new recognition and an increased profile for the work of mediators, as well as further comment on increasing organisation's

capacity by offering valuable resources for professionals/practitioners, and for parents/carers dealing with young people and conflict.

“Mediation used to not be recognised – our mediator now has a platform and events to go to. SCCR provides a platform for mediators to get together – to understand the power of it.”

“The website is something we can share and which gives lots of people access – it’s a resource we can signpost to. The conferences provide support for family therapists who have little other direct support/events in Scotland.”

“It has provided a way of staff consolidating their skill.”

“It’s a new layer of opportunity...help is more visible – one stop shop idea – people don’t want to be phoning a dozen people to find where the service is that’s appropriate to them – people are emotional at the time they are coming to our service they need to have quick and clear information to decide what they want to do next – that’s a fantastic part of SCCR – the way they market, very clear accessible information.”

SCCR’s effectiveness and efficiency

3.50 The evaluation sought to establish SCCR’s effectiveness and efficiency in its first year of operation. Common themes emerged about the SCCR’s work from our interviews with stakeholders:

- 🌀 The significant amount of work achieved in a year with a small staff team;
- 🌀 The patient, exploratory approach employed by SCCR which has enabled different kinds of work and partnerships to develop;
- 🌀 The national profile raising of conflict resolution and mediation through events but also through backing of high profile people;
- 🌀 A programme of well-thought out events, accessible to range of people;
- 🌀 Social media campaigning which has spread the SCCR’s reach and significantly raised the profile of key messages.

“I’m impressed by their social media – they’ve gone from zero to hero in terms of social media presence – whoever is doing that needs a pat on the back.”

3.51 Stakeholders identified very few weaknesses in the SCCR’s approach or its activities, or if they did so they noted that these had been addressed or were understandable within the context of the organisation’s early days. These were:

- 🌀 Initial lack of clarity about what the organisation would do and what it could offer (although this was also seen as willingness of the SCCR to be adaptable and willing to work in ways which benefited different stakeholders);

- ⦿ Initial lack of connection between training and CPD (which has recently been addressed);
- ⦿ Conference, training and website material being at too basic a level for those who are experienced or are specialist professionals/practitioners in conflict resolution (although this was seen as being an inclusive approach to engage more people for whom the topic was new).

SCCR's future priorities

- 3.52 We asked stakeholders to comment on what they saw as priorities in the coming year for the SCCR. The most common response was to 'keep on doing what they are doing' which when elaborated on involved more events for professionals/practitioners, resources for parents/carers and young people and continued profile raising work on the need for conflict resolution in society and the need for top-down backing for this.

"Keep going with national campaign – things that people can see in all sorts of places – positive skills for people knowing what to do in conflict as too often they stop talking and get alienated."

- 3.53 Some stakeholders made specific suggestions in relation to priorities for the SCCR:

- ⦿ Taking the lead on provision of CPD based on the perception that there is an appetite in many workplaces (e.g. third sector, law firms) for a package of mediation training;
- ⦿ Broaden the reach of young people and parents/carers worked with, in order to bring conflict resolution to harder to reach groups (this interviewee felt that young people engaged with and involved so far were relatively 'conservative');
- ⦿ Resources (fun, practical and interactive tools) developed for children (birth to teens), parents/carers of younger children and schools and help for parents/carers of younger children;
- ⦿ More advanced content in events making them more appropriate for specialist or experienced professionals/practitioners.

- 3.54 There was recognition that SCCR faced a huge potential challenge e.g. in terms of the number of local authority areas, and in terms of the different contexts they could work in or policies they could link with. Clearly thinking through a strategic approach about where they wanted to be positioned, and linking with key partners were recognised as routes to the most effective way of working for SCCR.

"You can't do 32 local authorities at the same time – where are the places in Scotland which are most receptive and best equipped? Go with that energy and see how much depth you can build into those relationships – not spread themselves too thinly."

"Establishing themselves on the landscape – not the conflict resolution or mediation landscape – but where they want to be, for example, inequalities and social justice. They

need to tune into the current policy narrative – for example there's just been the Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Commission report – there's great stuff there about housing, secure housing, income maximisation – SCCR could contribute here but that's just one local authority.”

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- 4.1 SCCR has achieved a significant amount in 12 months. It has become established as a national centre for good practice, it has raised the profile of conflict resolution through campaigning and lobbying, and engaged with significant numbers of professionals/practitioners and to a lesser extent parents/carers.
- 4.2 Our conclusions in relation to the evaluation aims are:
- ④ the SCCR events are seen as positive and well run and have engaged with a diverse range of organisations. There is evidence of them both affirming professionals/practitioners' work, increasing knowledge and skills, and leading some professionals/practitioners to introduce new ways of working with families with new levels of confidence in doing so.
 - ④ The website is well-regarded as offering helpful signposting and resources which some professionals/practitioners use and which they refer parents/carers to. Its development has been carefully considered in terms of the most appropriate resources for its different audiences.
 - ④ The SCCR's other activities including its profile raising and campaigning are well-known and well thought of, with the level of activity they have achieved in a year being singled out for some praise by stakeholders as they recognise the scale of the achievements by a relatively small team.
 - ④ Stakeholders are also positive about the SCCR having a unique role in Scotland, which brings together diverse interests and sectors, from legal to education to social care and housing. The SCCR's work appears to link to national policy areas beyond youth homelessness, as identified by some stakeholders highlighting agendas such as social justice. Its values and its activities also clearly link to the National Parenting Strategy and to the development of children's full potential through the Curriculum for Excellence. The SCCR's interest in developing good relationships within families and in preventative work are part of the continuum which begins with the movement to encourage positive parent-child interaction from birth onwards.
- 4.3 In terms of the outcomes which SCCR is funded to achieve we conclude that:
- ④ There are encouraging signs that parents/carers who attend SCCR events do find that the material is relevant to their family situations and they are able to understand and manage conflict better as a result;
 - ④ There are positive signs that professionals/practitioners who attend SCCR events and use the website are gaining and applying conflict resolution tools in their work with families and have increased confidence to do so. They also have increased resources available which can be used to signpost families to mediation services;

- 4.4 However because of the challenging nature of some of the indicators SCCR are working to, there is no evidence of the website being significant in reducing isolation of parents/carers and young people or of this impacting on their confidence in relationships with each other. In the same way, we do not have evidence of an impact of SCCR's national awareness raising campaign on a reduction in family breakdown, only that it is regarded as having a role to play in this area. Until there is significant follow up work done with families who have engaged with SCCR activities, this will be difficult to establish.

Recommendations

- 4.5 In order to continue the progress of the SCCR, the organisation needs to:

Recommendation 1: Event development – the provision of free events, introducing people to conflict resolution principles and tools and bringing together people with shared interests from different professions are all elements which have worked well. Whilst continuation of these appears to make sense, there will be a need to keep events fresh to engage further with established audiences whilst extending the SCCR's reach to new ones.

Recommendation 2: Website development – continued reflection on the use of the website and developing ways in which different audiences can engage with it. Involving young people in the planning of this and in advising on the best use of other social media will help to shape resources for that audience.

Recommendation 3: Strategic consideration – the evaluation has identified that there is a diverse range of policy contexts which the SCCR links with. Mapping these policy areas and identifying which have the strongest connections would assist the organisation in clarifying the most appropriate next steps to fulfil its aims.

Recommendation 4: Themed development – considering the areas raised by stakeholders such as CPD provision and the development of materials for younger people should be done within the context of SCCR's aims and discussion on its future strategy.

Recommendation 5: Evaluation – linking feedback gathered at SCCR events more strongly to funding outcomes will assist the organisation in moving beyond 'feelgood' feedback to establishing more clearly the impact of their work on professionals/practitioners, parents/carers and young people. This will involve altering and adding questions in evaluation forms to make sure that participants are asked questions which are focused on the project's funded outcomes and indicators.

APPENDIX 1: PROFILE OF PROFESSIONAL/PRACTITIONER SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Professionals/practitioners' Local Authority (n=53)

Local Authority area	Number of survey respondents	% of survey respondents
Aberdeen City	4	8%
Aberdeenshire	3	6%
Angus	2	4%
Argyll and Bute	1	2%
City of Edinburgh	13	25%
Clackmannanshire	1	2%
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles)	–	–
Dumfries and Galloway	2	4%
Dundee City	4	8%
East Ayrshire	2	4%
East Dunbartonshire	2	4%
East Lothian	5	9%
East Renfrewshire	–	–
Falkirk	3	6%
Fife	5	9%
Glasgow City	4	8%
Highland	5	9%
Inverclyde	1	2%
Midlothian	3	6%
Moray	1	2%
North Ayrshire	–	–
North Lanarkshire	2	4%
Orkney Islands	1	2%
Perth and Kinross	6	11%
Renfrewshire	5	9%
Scottish Borders	4	8%
Shetland Islands	–	–
South Ayrshire	–	–
South Lanarkshire	1	2%
Stirling	2	4%
West Dunbartonshire	1	2%
West Lothian	2	4%
Scotland-wide	5	9%
UK-wide	–	–

Professionals/practitioners' sector (n=53)

Sector	Number of survey respondents	% of survey respondents
Voluntary/third sector	34	64%
Local authority – housing/homelessness	7	13%
Local authority– education	5	9%
Local authority – social work/health	3	6%
Private sector	2	4%
Other	2	4%

Professionals/practitioners' focus of work (n=53)

Focus of work	Number of survey respondents	% of survey respondents
Young people	10	19%
Homelessness	8	15%
Mediation and conflict resolution	7	13%
Families	5	9%
Other	5	9%
Education	4	8%
Community development	3	6%
Training	3	6%
Advice and information	2	4%
Criminal justice/offenders	2	4%
Housing	2	4%
Mental health and well-being	2	4%

APPENDIX 2: SCCR ACTIVITIES

Activity	Comments
Conferences	<p>SCCR has delivered five national conferences for professionals/practitioners, parents/carers and young people up to and including 18 February 2015. The venues were Glasgow, Inverness, Kilmarnock, Perth and Edinburgh.</p> <p>The conferences have been attended by 397 people. 197 attendees answered a question about the impact of the conference on their confidence in discussing family relationships with young people and families who use their service. 182 (92%) reported that their confidence had increased as a result of the conference (SCCR Monitoring Data).</p>
Seminars	<p>SCCR has delivered 20 seminars for 235 professionals/practitioners, families and young people (SCCR Winter Impact Report). These seminars have included a Parliamentary event and contributions from organisations including the Association of Family Therapists, Relationships Scotland and Community Safety Glasgow.</p>
Training	<p>SCCR has delivered 60 training sessions with 875 participants, including 578 professionals/practitioners from 190 organisations, 215 young people and 82 parents/carers. These events have had a positive impact on attendees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 88% of attendees increased their knowledge of family conflict; • 87% increased their skills in family conflict; • 83% increased their confidence in their ability to support families in conflict; • 80% of young people reported an increased confidence regarding family conflict.

Activity	Comments
Web and social media activity	<p>SCCR has received coverage in 132 pieces of media including national print, broadcast and online, as well as coverage in local newspapers, reaching 47,589,633 readers and listeners (as at March 2015). The launch of the SCCR, its role in helping to heal post-independence referendum conflicts within families, and the launch of the #stoptalklisten campaign have been three events that have prompted particularly high levels of media coverage.</p> <p>The SCCR website has received 5,547 users with 35,043 page views (as at 31 March 2015).</p> <p>The SCCR has 1,018 followers on Twitter (as at 16 April 2015)</p>

APPENDIX 3: DEVELOPMENT OF SCCR WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

One of the original intentions of the SCCR was to create a website with the intention of offering ‘moderated online support’ whereby young people and parents/carers dealing with conflict were able to access online support. This was linked into one of the TSEIF funding outcomes.

When the SCCR began thinking through the best approach to using online options for supporting young people, parents/carers and professionals/practitioners, a different strategy emerged. They reflected that it was unlikely to expect individuals to engage with a new organisation with no profile, or to take part in any online support or discussion forum where there was no pre-existing community.

The SCCR therefore considered a more staged approach to developing an interactive online presence which involved different ways of appealing to and attracting different audiences. This was done in parallel with considering what the SCCR’s aims were as a national organisation.

Two of its key audiences were seen as being young people and parents/carers and the priorities which emerged for these were:

- the need to have a clearly labelled directory of mediation services. This enabled SCCR to maintain its profile as a national organisation with a role in pulling together information on local services and providing a signposting service people to those.
- creating resources and information from real life examples, communicating that difficulties in relationships and in family life are quite normal and normalising the idea of asking for help and accessing mediation.

In addition, recognising the needs of the SCCR’s audience of professionals/practitioners led to the development of information and reports around conflict resolution (both SCCR’s own reports and other related strategic documents), and for tools which they could use in their work with parents/carers and young people.

Developing the site in this way enabled it to be linked with the increased profile raising taking place at events, which in turn began to build an audience and a community of interest.

From these stages the Stop Talk Listen Campaign was also developed to raise awareness and to further build profile and community, and a targeted approach was developed to involve key influencers to support the campaign through social media.

As the evaluation was being undertaken, SCCR and Primate (web design company) were shortlisted for ‘Conquering Conflict’ in the Communication: Direct Marketing category of the Marketing Society Star Awards.

Further indication of SCCR’s efforts and reach in relation to their web presence also came as the evaluation was being undertaken. Their new website feature ‘Monkey vs Lizard’ Quiz was launched enabling participants to discover how they would react to different conflict situations and offering analysis of which part of their brain they instinctively used. This feature led to a

significant spike in website hits (over 1600 sessions in one week since the launch of Monkey vs Lizard) and to international interest.

At the end of its first year, the SCCR are now looking at other website developments including the discussion forum as originally intended and to content planning for this. They are also considering in which way parents/carers and young people might now engage with the developed site on an individual level or in building on their involvement at SCCR events. They have developed awareness through the year of how to engage with different audiences and for the fact that the website needs to be staffed by someone with sufficient expertise in the subject of conflict resolution.

The Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution (SCCR) offers a range of resources to better support young people, families and the people who work with them to deal with any family conflict.



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