

## Report on the NHS HIF

### AIM HI Project 2018 to 2023

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The **Access to Improved opportunities in Midlothian for long term Health Improvement Project (AIM HI Project)** is an NHS HIF funded partnership project between Penicuik Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Changeworks, and Sure Start Midlothian. Partners hold complementary expertise/experience in tackling child, fuel and food poverty. Based in Midlothian, and well networked with local organisations, the project's activities contribute to improve health and well-being for parents-to-be, families with children under 18 and young people in transition, who are most in need.

The Project is delivered by specialist advisers from the Penicuik CAB (.6 FTE) and Change Works (.2FTE). The CAB project worker is a single point of contact, able to deal with enquiries relating to any issue and take on any follow-up work, including complex casework. This approach to the provision of a holistic advice service means vulnerable and hard to reach clients can get all the help they need from one location, in the heart of their community, without having to be signposted to another agency.

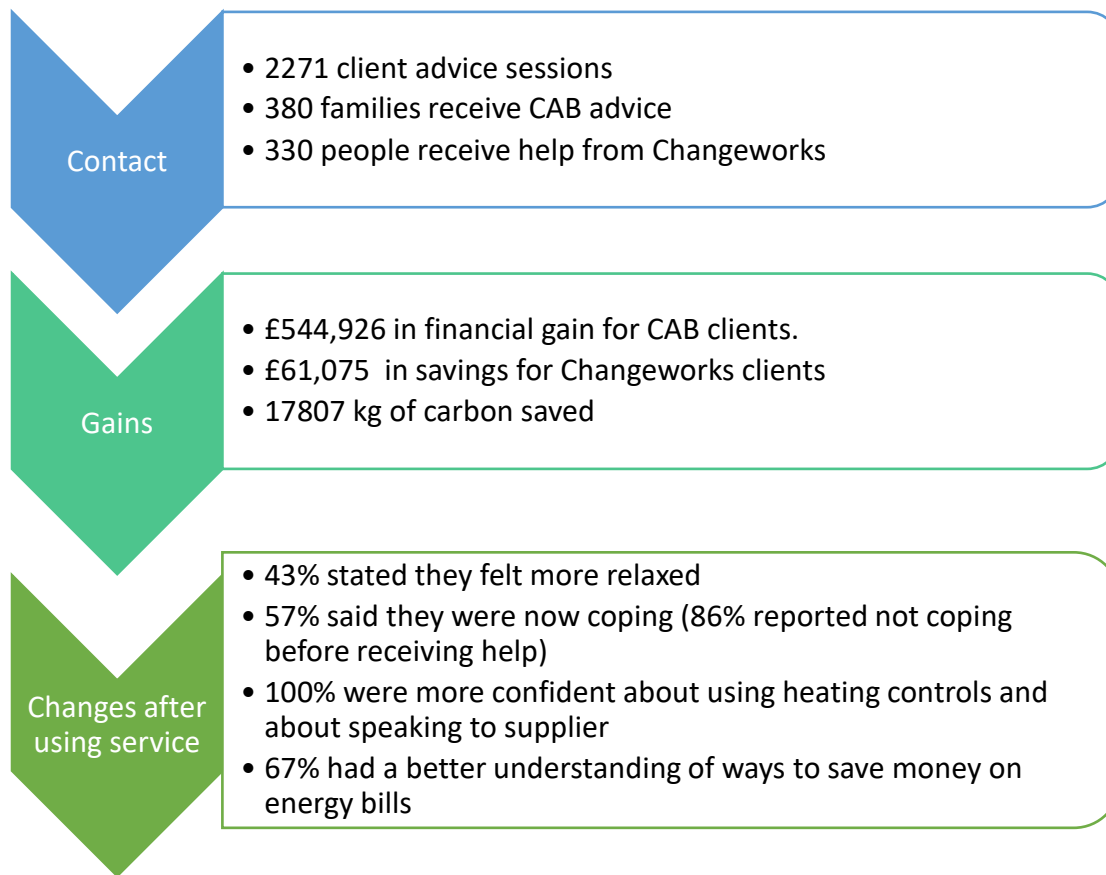
#### **OBJECTIVES**

- Reduction in child poverty and increased income/ decreased expenditure for parents, families and young people.
- Reduction in child poverty, fuel poverty and food poverty
- Social capital and community capacity building resulting in increased ability of parents and families to engage in community activities and civic life due to increased income

#### **ACTIVITIES**

Face to face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• holistic advice sessions at 6 Midlothian Sure Start Centres (until covid restrictions)</li></ul>
Group sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Group awareness raising sessions to clients and also to different professionals</li></ul>
Telephone advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• used during covid restrictions but effective for clients who have difficulty engaging</li></ul>
Referrals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supported referrals from professionals</li><li>• Creation of e mail referral route and trial of quick NHS referral system for midwives</li></ul>
Community drop in sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Working in partnership with other agencies to provide sessions at a variety of targeted community locations</li></ul>
Home visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In partnership with support workers</li><li>• Visits by home energy adviser to instruct client on use of heating controls</li></ul>

## OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES



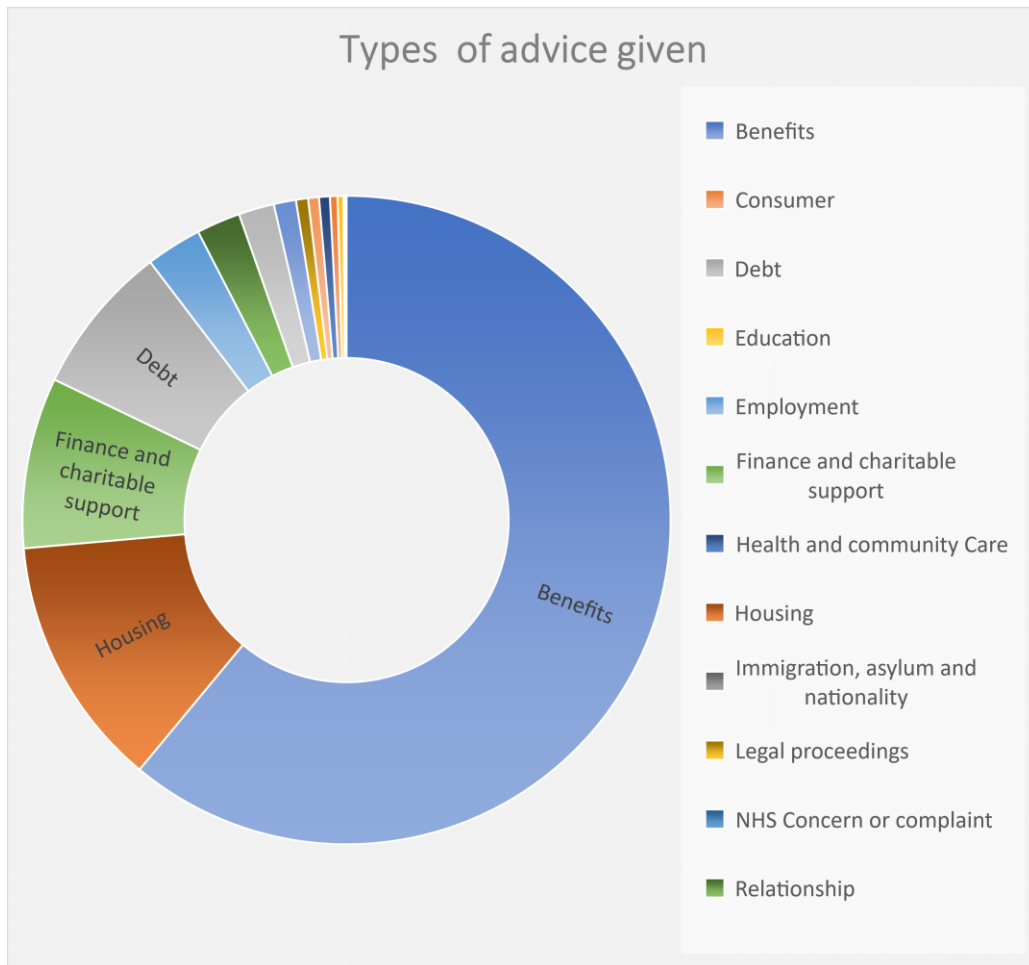
- **Over four thousand seven hundred issues dealt with for 380 families**

Clients are frequently in crisis when they are referred. The project adviser deals with the urgent presenting issue and works with the client to explore all the issues that had led to the crisis and supports the client in dealing with all their other issues e.g. applying for benefits, contacting housing department or the utility company, obtaining furnishings for their child's room etc.

**An example:** Client was a recovering alcoholic who couldn't face the world and found it difficult to ask for help. She had a young son in the house and she struggled with managing money. The project worker helped the client to review her financial situation, helped her apply for benefits and provide an ear when needed. The adviser suggested she attend the prescribing for nature course at Newbattle Abbey College. She then went on to take a web design course.

With support from the CAB adviser she worked with all agencies who offered help and turned things around to the degree that she is now working with 5 other service users to deliver a tailored training programme which they believe covers all the areas they struggled to find support with through their journey.

From not wanting to get out of bed to face the day, she has now set up two small online businesses and is in a much better place than she was when she was referred in 2020.



- **The project works in partnership with Change Works.**

**For example:**

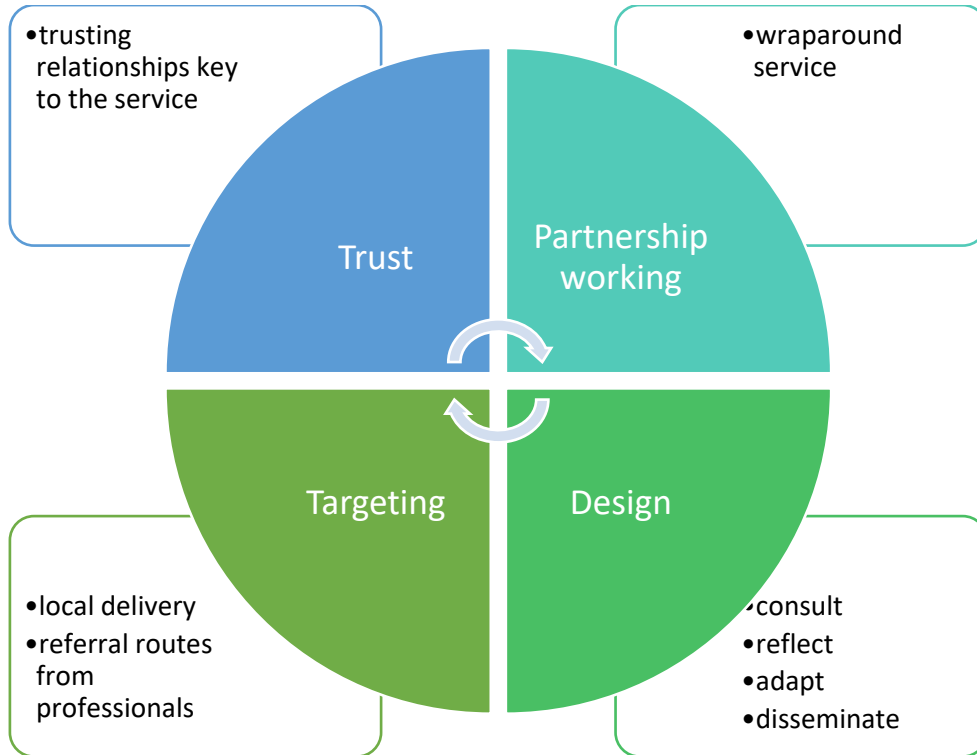
Client suffered from anxiety and depression and has a young child with additional support needs. Despite topping up her electricity prepayment meter regularly, she found her credit was running out at an alarming rate. She tried to contact her supplier to query this but was told her meter was correct and she should use less electricity.

The AIM HI Change Works' advisor contacted the supplier and insisted on a thorough investigation. It was discovered that the unit rate was incorrect. She was being charged £2.00 for each unit of instead of £0.20. This was rectified and a refund of **£160** given. Client also had a debt of £1,266.63 being repaid at £10 per week. The advisor arranged for this to be paid back at £3 per week instead.

Also, client's direct debit to her gas supplier had been cancelled resulting in arrears. The advisor contacted the supplier and negotiated a reduction in the weekly debt repayment amount from £9.62 per week to £5 per week. The advisor also negotiated a compensation payment of **£75** to make up for the stress caused to the client over misinformation by supplier.

A successful application was made to the Home Heating Support Fund, resulting in an award of **£1,000**. £692.46 was paid towards the electricity debt and £307.54 cleared the gas debt. Freeing up £16.62 a week of household expenditure.

## OUR APPROACH TO PROJECT DELIVERY



### Trust

Building trusting relationships was seen as key to the service. Vulnerable clients cannot cope with being referred from agency to agency. Experience shows that although clients may initially engage when in crisis they do not sustain contact. Having the right worker was key to maintaining a relationship with even the hardest to reach clients and to ensure professionals referred clients to the service.

- *“The work both Viv and Gillian have done with service users we have referred has been invaluable to them!! They have continually come back grateful and full of praise regarding the help and just general info provided from them both!! Personally, feel this service would be a massive loss to the people that use our service!!”*

### Partnership working

Building relationships with other agencies and professionals meant that the project could develop a wraparound service. Vulnerable clients require considerable support and one of the key learnings from the project was the need for close working with support workers who could remind clients of appointments, get them to sign paperwork etc.

- A Health Visitor referred a client who was very hard to engage with. During the conversation the Health Visitor mentioned a hospital appointment that had been

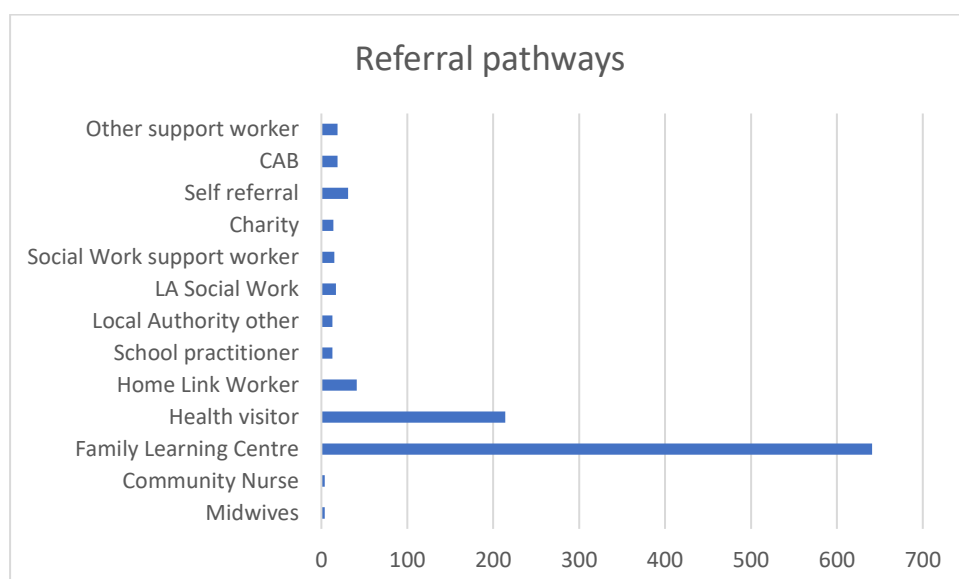
cancelled as they didn't have money for the bus fare. The adviser sent day bus tickets and spoke to the family on the phone and advised them of her role and how she might be able to help, if they wanted.

Since then she has undertaken a benefit review, made an application for charitable funding for winter clothes for children and completed two PIP forms for family members and a Child Disability Payment application for their son. The family's financial situation has improved significantly, they engage with services and they remain in contact sending texts to keep the adviser updated.

## Targeting

Economic disadvantage is the most significant determinant in health inequalities. Key SIMD data zones in Midlothian are: Woodburn, Mayfield/Easthouses, Gorebridge, Penicuik, Loanhead, Bonnyrigg Advice sessions delivered throughout Midlothian via the six Sure Start family learning centres based in these disadvantaged areas enabling parents and young people in need to more easily access AIM HI support.

- *“This project offers an exceptional level of support and advice to my client group who are either pregnant or mums to under 2's, all of whom who are under 20 and most with a high level of vulnerability and low socio-economic status. This help enables them to improve their circumstances which in turn improves outcomes, environmental factors and maternal mental health impacting the lives of a high number of children during their most important developmental period. Please continue to fund this project”*
- The project workers delivered training and workshops to client groups, support workers, midwives and health visitors to upskill and raise awareness of the service.
- Good referral routes established to allow professionals such as midwives, health visitors, other health professionals, support workers, social work and education professionals to easily refer to the service



## Design

To be effective the service had to be holistic and involve stakeholders, be responsive and regularly reflect on what was and what wasn't working and the difference the service had made.

This is a very useful service for all our service users, the support is fantastic to our families to resolve all their issues in regards to housing, financial gain and daily living.

their parenting courses, support groups, dynamic dads' drop-ins, and grandparents' services.

- The service is agile and can adapt to meet client need.
- A new NHS direct referral route is being trialled for Midwives

- Feed back is obtained from Midlothian Sure Start staff and other professionals
- Sure Start families are directly involved in planning services and helped shape AIM HI through input at Sure Start's 'Project User Meetings'.
- AIM HI workshops and surgeries are embedded into Sure Start's programme of activity e.g. alongside

"The project has supported so many families in the community, the project should be funded to continues the great work!"

"I think this service is beneficial to the families of Midlothian. There is a clear need for it. The families I support would not be able to move forward, breaking down barriers that Viv has helped them do. Feedback is always really positive. The service is a lifeline. If it wasn't there this would have a detrimental effect on families supported."

## LEARNINGS

### People

- Approachable and empathetic worker is essential
- Project staff have to develop good inter-agency relationships
- Keep the number of individuals directly involved with the client to the minimum otherwise vulnerable families cannot cope.

### Communication

- Good communication through a variety of mediums (text, e mail, letter, phone, face to face or a greeting card.)
- Different clients respond best to different communication methods. For some the telephone made them less anxious and more likely to engage. Others needed a face to face appointment or to be seen at a familiar/"safe" location such as the Family Learning Centre.

### Referrals

- "Warm" referral routes from professionals to ensure client feels supported  
Referral routes must be simple to encourage busy professionals to use them.  
Effective referral routes facilitate early intervention.

### Engagement

- There is a need to have access to grant funds to use as a financial hook to get hard to reach families to initially engage while a relationship is established
- Families engage whilst in crisis, but sometimes disengage as things improve and then return when things begin to unravel. Experience shows that by taking the pressure off and providing a consistent non-judgemental service they can be supported to move forward.

### Support

- Vulnerable families required considerable support and dedicated support worker time is essential to free up time for the adviser.
- Providing a holistic advice service that dealt with every aspect of the client's problems was essential to provide the appropriate level of support.

### Impact of temporary funding

- There is difficulty in attracting and maintaining staff
- Potential reluctance for other organisations to completely commit to partnership working.
- Anxiety from professionals and service users that a service they have come to rely on will be withdrawn.
- Inability to develop the service further.

"I feel that this project has been a massive success and should be available all the time. I do hope that further funding streams are sourced to continue the project as it has been invaluable to the families that we support, especially during the covid period"

## Appendices

### 1. Case Study

1.1. Client has two sons aged 3 and 6 who both have challenging behaviour. Client is in receipt of child tax credits and child benefit but was struggling financially.

Adviser discussed the needs of her children and advised applying for Child Disability Allowance (DLA) - now replaced by the Scottish Child Disability Payment for new claims. The client had heard of DLA but did not feel confident about filling out lengthy complex forms.

Child A is unable to communicate verbally and is unable to understand verbal instructions on how to behave and puts himself and those around him at risk of injury.

Child B has Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and requires extra support at school to manage his behaviours. He requires constant prompting, assistance and supervision to ensure his wellbeing and safety for his safety and those around him.

The adviser completed an application for each child.

Child A was awarded higher rate care component of DLA (£92.40 a week)

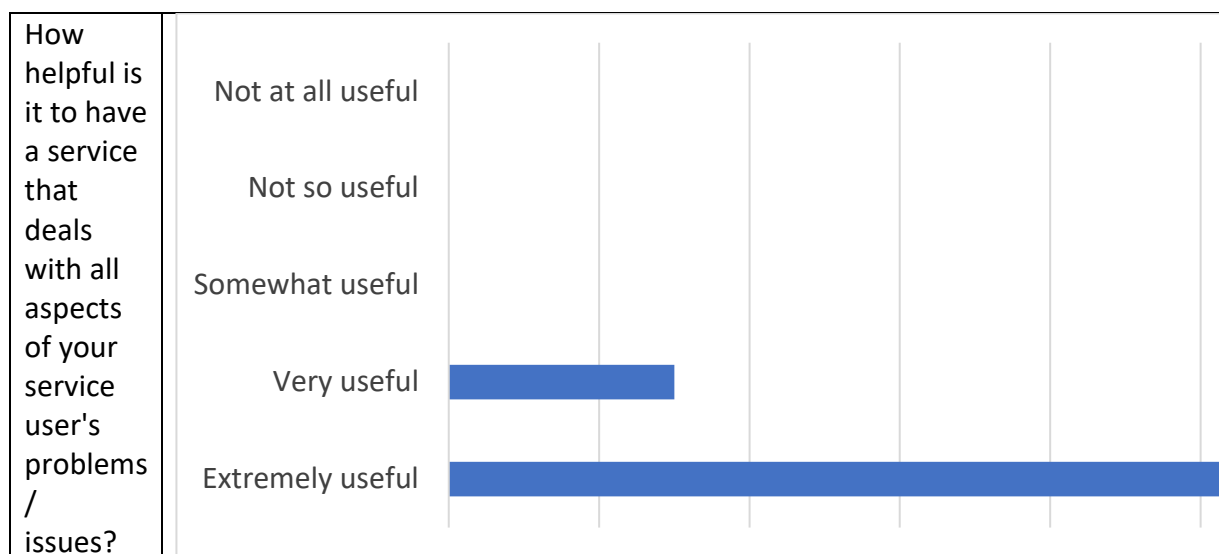
Child B was awarded middle rate care component of DLA (£61.85 a week)

The client was also assisted to claim: Carers Allowance (£69.70 a week) and Scottish Carer's Allowance Supplement (£245.70 twice a year ) and a Best Start grant (Early Learning payment £250). A total annual increase in income of £12,386.80.

The award would also passport client to other assistance.

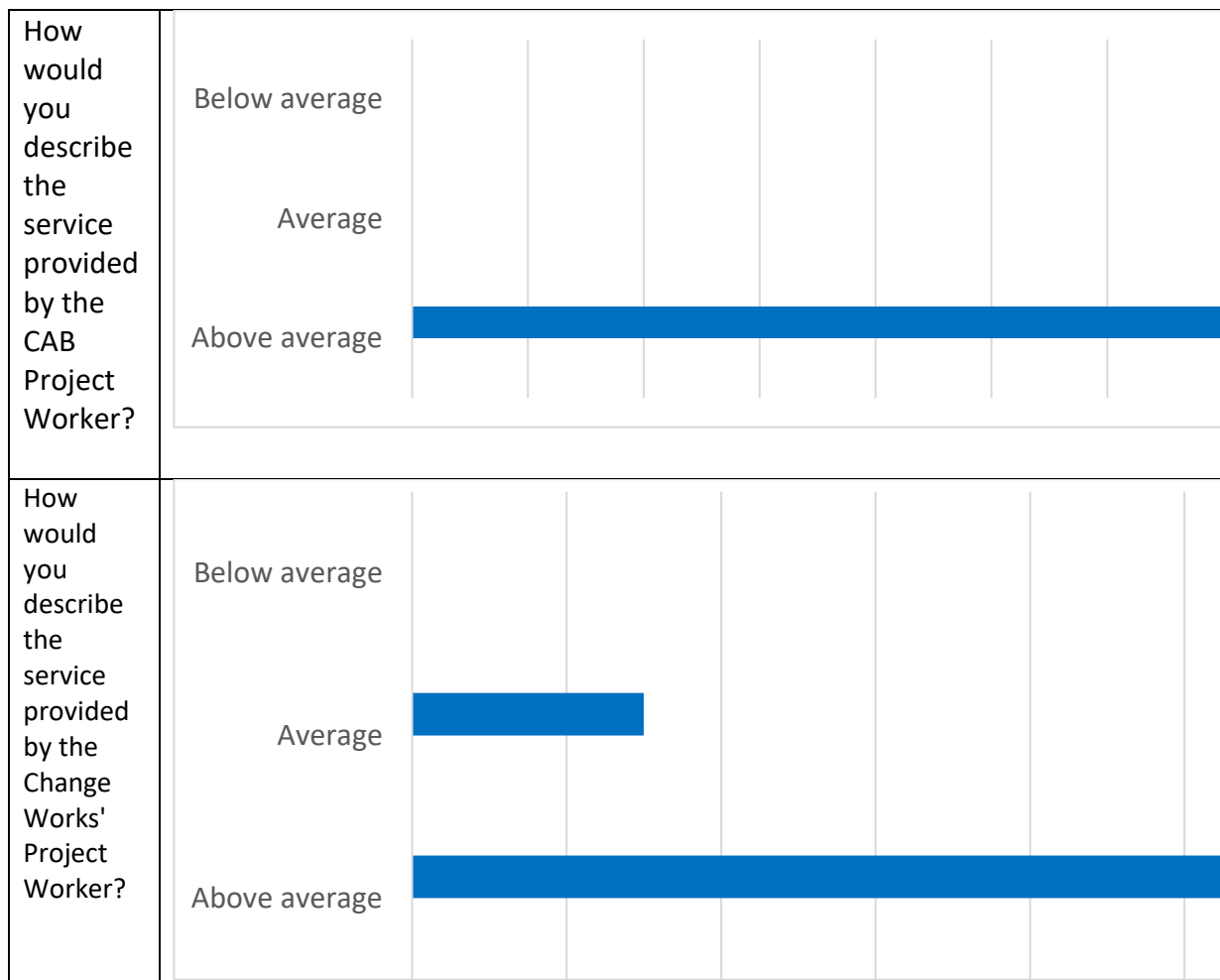
### 2. Feedback from professionals referring to the project

#### 2.1. Survey Monkey results





<p>How helpful do you think the project was/is for your service users?</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Helpfulness Level</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Extremely helpful</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very helpful</td> <td>25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Somewhat helpful</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not so helpful</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not at all helpful</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Helpfulness Level	Percentage	Extremely helpful	100%	Very helpful	25%	Somewhat helpful	0%	Not so helpful	0%	Not at all helpful	0%
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**2.2. Comments from professionals referring to the AIMHI Service**

- The work both Viv and Gillian have done with service users we have referred has been invaluable to them!! They have continually come back grateful and full of praise regarding the help and just general info provided from them both!! Personally, feel this service would be a massive loss to the people that use our service!!
- very valuable specialist knowledge, helps to navigate benefits and grants with families
- The project has supported so many families in the community, the project should be funded to continues the great work!
- This is a very useful service for all our service users, the support is fantastic to our families to resolve all their issues in regards to housing, financial gain and daily living.
- Very positive and would be a huge loss to families if it was no longer available for them.

- This project offers an exceptional level of support and advice to my client group who are either pregnant or mums to under 2's, all of whom who are under 20 and most with a high level of vulnerability and low socio-economic status. This help enables them to improve their circumstances which in turn improves outcomes, environmental factors and maternal mental health impacting the lives of a high number of children during their most important developmental period. Please continue to fund this project
- These 2 services have been very useful and I have confidence clients get the right advice in areas I am not sure about
- I think this service is beneficial to the families of Midlothian. There is a clear need for it. The families I support would not be able to move forward, breaking down barriers. That Viv has helped them do. Feedback is always really positive. The service is a lifeline. If it wasn't there this would have a detrimental effect on families supported
- It is extremely important to have a service like this that our vulnerable families can access and benefit from. I think it is a service that should be funded beyond March 2022.
- Important for service users to get current and correct information/support. This is not something I am knowledgeable in so it's important that I can seek advice or refer onto this service to get the support families need.
- I have found the service extremely useful. I have referred several families to Viv, all of whom have found Viv very helpful and she has been able to make positive changes for them. I have found Viv to be very informative and she has helped me gain more knowledge into the benefits system. Viv has also always responded timely and is extremely approachable. I think that not having AIM HI project would be a loss to both families and professionals
- Important for service users to get current and correct information/support. This is not something I am knowledgeable in so it's important that I can seek advice or refer onto this service to get the support families need.
- I feel that this project has been a massive success and should be available all the time. I do hope that further funding streams are sources to continue the project as it has been invaluable to the families that we support, especially during the covid period. On reflection I also note that being online during covid has in some respects been more beneficial to families who would have struggled perhaps to access the service had it been in one of MSS setting as it had been pre-covid.
- This project is an invaluable support to our families and I wouldn't know who else to refer them to locally. Thank you very much!