Project: Early Help Data Discovery

Date: December 2019

**Interview discussion guide for Early Help service Lead(s)**

*The following script has been developed by Social Finance, as the partner organisation responsible for user research.*

**Research questions** that we’re aiming to answer through these interviews:

* What are the common decisions taken by EH Service Leads across the various Councils? What decisions do EH leadership take in each Council? What is unique to each council and what is common?
* How do they currently make decisions? Do they use data?
* What data (would) help EH leadership take better decisions and improve services?  Are these data needs similar across Councils?
* What data (would) help evidence that EH works and would be enough to convince commissioners to keep funding EH services?  Are these data needs similar across Councils?
* Are there unmet data needs for EH leadership? In other words, do EH Leads and Data analysts consider that the data they currently get is insufficient to take good decisions and/or evidence EH’s impact?
* If there are unmet data needs/data gaps, why*?*

**Moderator introduction**

Hello, I’m (Name) and this is (Name). We both work for Social Finance, on this Early Help data discovery project in 3 Councils (Wandsworth, West Berkshire, Croydon). How much do you know about Social Finance, and about this project?

About Social Finance: We are a non-profit organisation based in London, and we work with many local governments across the country to support them find innovative ways to fund and deliver social programmes. We are in the Data & Digital team that works mainly on data analysis for Children’s Services.

About this project: This project is in line with previous projects we’ve been doing with Newcastle, Leeds and Wandsworth to support them collecting the right data on Early Help services. This project is a five-month discovery project funded by Local Digital at MHCLG. It aims at understanding what are the data needs for Early Help Service Leads within the 3 Councils, that would enable them to assess service performance and to build the evidenced case to protect their budgets from cuts. The long-term objective is to see whether a common approach can be taken at national level.

As part of that, we have a series of interviews planned with Early Help Leadership, Data analysts, and Commissioners.

This interview will take between 45 minutes and 1 hour and will mostly be me asking you questions about your role.

Please be as open and honest with us as possible, you can’t offend us. We’re not waiting for any specific answer, and obviously, there are no right or wrong answers. The idea is really for us to better understand your data needs.

We’d like to make notes of our conversation, these notes will be available to our team to look at later. Is that OK?

You should have received the research information form. I have a copy here for you to keep, it has my details on it. This is a consent form we’d like you to read and sign. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Do you have any questions for us before we start?

## **Introductory questions**

* Let’s start with you telling me a bit about your role and what you do? *(If not asked in a previous interview)*

**Measuring performance against the strategy**

* Overall, how do you learn about the performance of your EH services?
* What are the 3 main outcomes that you want to achieve with Early Help?
  + Do you have any strategy document that you could share with us?
* Do you measure how you're doing against these outcomes?
* Do you use KPIs?
  + If so: which ones?
  + Can you share them with us?
  + Can you get the data you need on these KPIs?
  + How often do you look at your performance against these KPIs?

**Reports**

* How often do you look at reports?
* Who produces this (these) report(s)?
* What is the data that you first look at when receiving a report? (or analysing service's performance?)
* What additional data would you like to see in a report?

(Additional question for project team only: Within your Council, who takes decisions regarding budget priorisation? What about decisions regarding what services we deliver and how do we deliver them?)

**Case study – data for decision making**

* Can you remember the last time you took a strategic decision for EH services? What was this decision about? *Prompt: eg decide to deliver a new service, to stop funding/delivering a service, to make a significant practice change for one or several services, etc.*
* Who was involved in this decision-making process?
* What triggered that decision?
* Did you use any data, or report to help you take that decision?
* Is there any information or data that would have helped you taking that decision?
* How would you describe the quality of the data you had to take that decision?
* How did you feel about it?
* What data was missing?

**General questions on data for decision-making**

*To skip if less than 15 minutes left*

* What are the most strategic decisions that you have to take for EH services?
* How often do you take such decisions?
* What information do you generally need to take these decisions?
* What information is missing?
* Why don't you get the data you need? What are the biggest obstacles? What are your biggest frustrations? *(If unmet needs)*

**Evidencing**

* Do you need to evidence that EH works?
  + If so, who do you need to evidence to?
  + How do you currently evidence that EH works?
  + How do you feel about this evidence?
  + Do you get some pushbacks? If so, from whom?
* Do you have an idea on how you would evidence it in an ideal world where you could get all the data you want?

## **Wrap up interview**

Thank you so much for your time today. We will share with you the findings of this research in March next year. Before that, we might have some additional questions for you. Are you ok with us contacting you again to ask you further questions either by email, phone or in person? On your side, please feel free to share with us any relevant document, and any additional comment or idea.

Do you have any last question?

Is there anyone else in the Council that we could interview? Could you mention 3 people?