



Report on the Active Inclusion Learning Network: Troubled Families Transnational Event

London, 9 -10 April 2014



Overview

- The event focused on the sub-themes of:
 - “Offenders’ Families”
 - “Long term unemployment”
 - “Anti-Social Behaviour”
 - “Educational Problems”
- 44 experts, from 11 different nationalities, participated in the event.
- 8 project partners attended to facilitate and scribe the 4 sub-theme groups (Kirsty Jacobs, Heather Law, Giovanna Mangano, John Noble, Craig Georgiou, Dries Van Gool, Meropi Mareta and Daiva Kaziūnienė). Dr Ioan Durnescu attended the event in the capacity of the researcher and moved between the workshops to observe.
- Presentations were given from representatives from Department for Communities and Local Government and Birmingham City Council on the Troubled Families agenda from a national government, and a local government perspective. The partners of the project, and The Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion – the organisation who is evaluating the Network – also gave presentations.
- 98 surveys on ‘troubled families’ were reviewed - the anti-social behaviour group assessed 21 surveys; the educational problems group assessed 30 surveys; the long term unemployment group assessed 35 surveys and the offenders’ families group assessed 12 surveys.

- Each sub-theme group then identified 8 collective practices (top 5 and 3 reserves) that should be invited to the Platform 2 Peer review events later which will be held later this year.

What worked well

- The **pre-event information and organisation** worked very well as it meant that the delegates came to the event with a clear expectation about what was expected of them, and how the event would run. The pre-event information included: an accommodation pack; a delegates pack which included information about the Active Inclusion project and how the event would run; the surveys they would be marking; the evaluation grid; and a draft copy of the systematic review.
- **Format of the event** – the interactive nature of the event, whereby the delegates worked in small groups to mark the surveys, and then discussed in a group the interesting points that arose from the surveys in order to identify the best practices, worked very well. Delegates commented on how much they enjoyed this element of the event and they particularly enjoyed the way in which their expertise and knowledge was utilised throughout the event to identify the most innovative and effective practices. They said that this made a refreshing change from being ‘talked at’, which is a common occurrence at other ESF event.
- **Information for partners** – the pre-event information for partners, which included a partner’s pack which contained instructions on how to run the workshops etc, as well as the surveys that would be marked in their workshops and the evaluation grids that would be used, ensured that the event ran smoothly on the day. In addition, the pre-meet with the partners which took place the afternoon before the event helped to ensure that everyone was clear on their role and duties at the event.
- **Plenary session** – the interesting mix of presentations at the plenary session worked well and the delegates commented on how interesting they found it and helped to put the ‘Troubled Families’ agenda in context. The presentations included a presentation from the Active Inclusion Network, a presentation from Ioan about the systematic review, and two presentations from the national and local government on the UK’s troubled families’ agenda.
- **Networking** – the half an hour coffee breaks that took place throughout the event was very popular with delegates as it provided them with sufficient time to network with each – including with those delegates who were not in their sub-theme group.

Feedback

- Very positive feedback was received from the delegates who attended the event. The feedback focused on the good organisation of the event and the ability to network with a variety of experts. Examples of the feedback received are:

Congratulations once again for organizing an excellent event. I really enjoyed the experience and I was happy to meet wonderful and professionally involved colleagues like you.

Romanian delegate

“Thanks again for the good organization of the London event.”

Project Partner

“Thanks so much for all your hard work and making the event work so smoothly.”

British Delegate

“Thanks for organising the event, I found it very enjoyable (and tiring!).”

British Delegate

“Thanks again for organising the event, I really enjoyed it, and have brought back a few items for [my organisation] to discuss!”

British Delegate

“It was a joy being in London. Thank you for all the effort you put into organising the Active Inclusion Event, the good care and follow up. I am so grateful to have been part of this international event. I'm sure everybody can look back on a successful 2 days.”

Belgian Delegate

“Thank you for the excellent organization of the meeting, it was a pleasure attending the event and I really enjoyed it!”

Lithuanian Delegate

“I have (and so did my colleague) enjoyed it very much and learned a lot and made new friends as well.”

Dutch Delegate

“Many thanks for the excellent organisation of the event.”

British Delegate

“Thank for the opportunity to spent my time there. Everything went well. I did have a fabulous experience.”

Italian delegate

Learning and suggestion points for the next events

- **Printing of surveys** – for each sub-theme group a copy of every survey to be assessed was printed out for each delegate. Whilst this meant that all the surveys needed for Day 2 were already available, it did lead to lot of wasted paper as the surveys that weren't identified as being in the 'Top 10 surveys' to be re-assessed were thrown out. As such, a way to reduce the amount of surveys that needs to be printed needs to be identified. One option could be asking the delegates to bring their surveys with them. Another option is to only print enough surveys needed for the marking workshops on Day 1 and then print out the surveys that need to be assessed at Day 2, at the end of the first day, once it is known which were the successful 'top 10' surveys.
- **Methodology for identifying top 8 surveys** – on Day 2 there wasn't a common approach used by the partners to identify the Top 5 and 3 reserve projects to invite to the PL2 Peer review events. As such, for the next events it will be important to ensure that there is an agreed common methodology used in the sub-theme groups to identify the top projects to invite to the next stage of events.
- **Reorganisation of agenda**
 - Some of the delegates commented that they found the event quite tiring, especially the afternoon session of the first day where they had to mark the surveys, and then have a discussion about what the group learnt collectively from the surveys. A suggestion, therefore, is to have the first workshop where the surveys are marked before lunch, and the second session after lunch.
 - Secondly, more time should be given to the sub-theme group discussion about what they found interesting about the surveys they found. As such, the last workshop in the afternoon on Day 1 should be dedicated purely for a sub-theme group discussion on the 5 points of innovation, transferability, critical success factors, learning points and anything else they found interesting about the surveys. A wider group discussion, involving all the sub-theme groups, can they take place at the end of Day 2.
- **Number of surveys to mark and time to mark the surveys**– some of the small groups struggled to mark all of the surveys that they were allocated in the time frame given (e.g. 8 or 9 surveys per group). As such, a suggestion is to divide the sub-theme group participants into pairs to mark the surveys - rather than groups of 3 or 4. This would reduce the maximum number of surveys that need to be marked per pair (e.g. maximum would then be 6 or 7 surveys each). Also, the amount of time allocated in the agenda to mark the surveys should be increased. Also, a greater emphasis on the need to read surveys in advance will mean that the workshops where the surveys are marked are more productive and run to time.

- **Evaluation grids** – some delegates identified that the question in the evaluation grid asking whether the project is context-dependent and transferability should be divided into two different questions.