



SinglePoint Project

Independent Evaluation

Wider Impact Consultancy
September 2014



LOTTERY FUNDED

Exceeding expectations

As Head Teacher of one of the four schools partnered to the SinglePoint Project, I am extremely proud and grateful to Wider Impact for capturing that SinglePoint is a vital and unique project, which has been delivered to support the families and the local community in the heart of Oldbury, Sandwell. This has been achieved by improving life chances and offering a safe, supportive and welcoming place for our families and communities.

The vision we had as a small partnership of schools has touched the lives of so many, and exceeding all initial expectations. The benefits of the Project are clearly recognised by all of the stakeholders consulted, particularly the families the Project has supported, who have been given the skills, confidence and helping hand they need; a sample of which is highlighted within this report.

I have no doubt that without this project, and the dedicated staff who are a part of it, many families would continue to feel isolated, suffer from economic hardship and lack the confidence to make the changes they need to better their family circumstances and aspirations.

I am grateful to Wider Impact for such an informative and accurate picture of the outstanding work which takes place within SinglePoint. We have always been proud of the Project, but this report gives us an independent opinion that reflects our own, and strengthens our belief that this work must continue – we now know what works for our community, because they tell us so.

I know that all of the schools' Head Teachers, families and partners are extremely grateful for all of the fantastic support SinglePoint delivers for their families, and hope that we can continue to build on this vital support in the future. SinglePoint is a model that 'works', and all I can say is that we are extremely proud to be a part of it.



Michaela Long, Head Teacher.



SinglePoint Management Board.



**Edwin Lewis, Director,
Wider Impact Consultancy.**

Board, Project staff, volunteers, partner agency members and most significantly those Service Users and their families who have clearly benefitted from the Project.

I have no doubts that the role of the SinglePoint Project should continue for the foreseeable future, and look forward to observing future successful Project outcomes and wider impacts.

Edwin Lewis, Director, Wider Impact Consultancy.

Introduction

Wider Impact Consultancy is delighted to present this executive summary version of our independent evaluation of the Lottery funded, Oldbury-based SinglePoint Project.

We are pleased to deliver access to our innovative **Augmented Reality (AR)** images, which will without doubt bring the report to life. The full report can be accessed within the news pages of our website www.widerimpact.com

It has been a pleasure to work with such amazing people to present such a positive report, which reflects the dedication, innovation, expertise and hard work of all those connected with the Project. They include the Management

Augmented Reality (AR)



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- Open the app and point your device at the photo above to access the video content.
- Double tap for a full-screen.



Augmented Reality services by **ooh-AR.com**

About the Project

Established as part of an innovative partnership between four Oldbury-based primary schools (**Christ Church, St Francis Xavier, Langley and Rood End**), the **SinglePoint Project** aims to:

Deliver a range of recreational, educational, enrichment and support activities for children, families and the local community who link to the four schools.

Based within a modern and well-equipped Community Hub, the Project has benefitted from a 3-year Big Lottery – Reaching Communities grant of over **£346,000** and total budget of over **£494,000**, which included additional funding provided by each of the participating schools, the Project went 'live' during **October 2012**.

Four **key outcomes** have been agreed with the principle funder:

1. Parents of children attending the schools within the partnership feel more confident and empowered to make decisions as a result of engaging in partnership classes and family based activities.
2. Families with worries and concerns about their health and well-being will seek support from local agencies to improve their life chances.



3. Families spend more quality time together to strengthen family relationships and improve communication.
4. Working families will have better access to affordable local child care and holiday provision to improve their economic well-being and employability.

Primarily aimed at local families, and based on consultation with Service Users, SinglePoint offer includes an exciting menu of timetabled activities that include:

- A Community Café with kitchen facilities
- Adult learning
- Adult fitness, health and sports activities
- Parent and child classes
- Free computer access
- Subsidised day trips
- Parent and family support

- Breakfast Club for children
- After school club for children
- Subsidised holiday provision for children
- Confidential counselling
- Specialist family services

The CHANGES Parenting Programme

Linked to **Outcome 1**, the **CHANGES Parenting Programme** is an integral component of the Project, and appears to be well regarded by Service Users, with a waiting list for attendance.

It was originally developed by Sandwell MBC staff and parents in 2007. It has been reviewed, updated and modified to reflect the different and growing pressures on modern day family life and to ensure that it stays responsive to local need. It now includes ten topics, which can be adapted and delivered to individual settings.

What people say about the Project

There is a clear need for the Project in the area, which is linked to key areas such as:

- General deprivation/specific pockets of deprivation
- Immigration – resulting in diverse local community, with complex demands and requirements
- A lack of aspirations/confidence as mothers in particular look to return to the workplace, and/or reduce their reliance on benefits/lack of income/funding to support their families

- Cuts to other services
- To support/develop parenting skills

Head Teachers/teaching staff of the participating schools

SinglePoint enables unique and important access to teachers, parents and pupils, which is always a challenge. It helps us to work as a team, in partnership, building up trust, to ensure that those who need support and help the most receive it. It is far better to prevent problems than to try and solve them.

Police Community Support Officers

SinglePoint works, and provides us with the funding and resources to keep children active and entertained out of school hours. It's wonderful to see the children so happy and learning new skills. It is also enabling their parents to remain in employment.

As a result of the SinglePoint funding we are able to offer extremely competitive rates for the young people to join in activities.

With contributions from SinglePoint we employ 5 full-time staff at our base, and 12 part-time staff for the after-school provision. These are generally young people, who would have difficulty accessing the job market. One of the team, who started as a volunteer on the SinglePoint Project has special needs, and she is currently completing accredited youth related qualifications. This outcome certainly would not have occurred without our being in partnership with the SinglePoint Project.

**Jo Haydon,
CEO Complete Kidz**

SinglePoint is opening doors to parents who may never have had the opportunity to develop their skills and aspirations. For example, Service Users regularly informally visit the College in groups; and as a direct result, one of the ladies has enrolled onto a Level 2 Art programme, which commences in September.

Stacey Boreham, Head of Department (Hair, Beauty and Holistic Therapies), Sandwell College

By continuing to work together we can reach the hardest to reach, and ensure they have the skills they need to get a good job, off benefits, and provide for their families.

**Mandy Phillips, Area Team Manager
Jobcentre Plus**

I got my first job in years. It is a cleaning job, and for now only a few hours a week. It may not seem like much to some people, but it means the world to me! SinglePoint helped me to write my CV and with job applications. I could never have got this far without them. No-one else is there to help me and my family like they do.

Service User



Statistics and facts

Project Outcomes

As this table highlights, there can be no doubt that the Project will achieve, and in a number of cases, exceed agreed outcomes.

Project Outcomes Targets (Years 1 and 2 only – one year to run)

Outcomes	Description	Targets	Actuals (at Year 2, Sept 14)
1	Parents enrolled on CHANGES programme	20	25
	People engaged in Family Network Group	20	25
	Parents attending activities – volunteering, in employment, or increasing personal development	150	136
2	Families who can identify services they want support from	30	347
	Local agencies partnering in the Project	12	30
	Families accessing external support services	80	50
3	Families participating in family-based activities	100	414
	Children reporting feeling happier doing activities with their families	350	237
	Parents feeling more confident in communicating and have stronger relationship with their children	150	177 (est.)
4	Families who register and access childcare provision	50	87
	Increase in number of spaces available in each school for childcare	20	137
	Families reporting they are in paid employment as a result of Project support	10	11

As of September 2014:

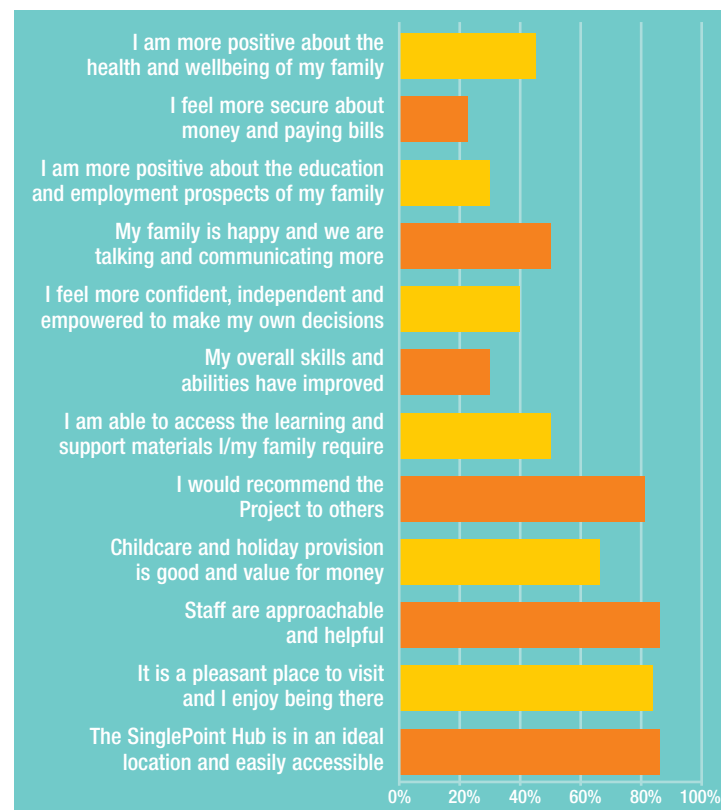
- A total of **348** Service Users (Parents), with **540** dependent children are currently being supported by the Project
- **67** referrals have been received, with **51** receiving active support
- **317** families/children have received full and **50%** holiday provision subsidies
- **47%** of those supported describe themselves as coming from an ethnic minority background
- Over **30** partner agency members are actively supporting the Project

Feedback from Service Users

We surveyed **128** Service Users (**80%** female/**18%** male – 2% not indicated). This graph highlights respondent's views about the Project.

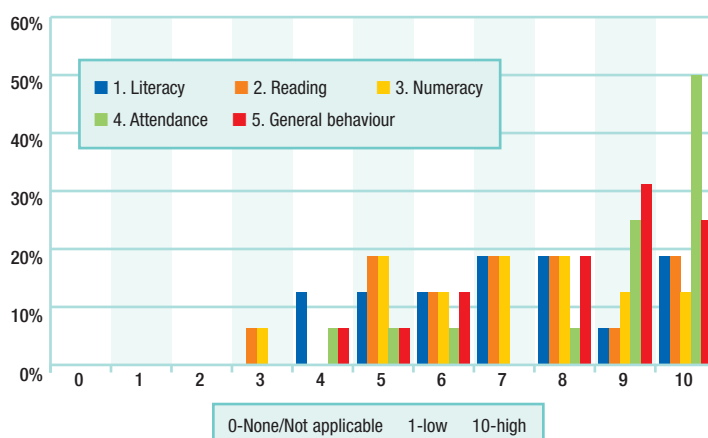
It will be noted that a **significant number** of respondents:

- Feel more confident and empowered to make their own decisions
- Feel positive about their health and well-being
- Are happier, and are communicating with their families more
- Are making good and productive use of (affordable) value for money childcare
- Enjoy accessing the Project
- Appreciate the support received
- Would recommend the Project to others



Pupils' Progress

This graph highlights the progress children of those parents who are being actively supported by the Project are making in relation to **literacy** (writing), **reading**, **numeracy**, **attendance** and **general behaviour**.



It is apparent that:

- Support provided to parents is directly supporting the progress, attendance, behaviour and academic achievements of their children in their respective schools
- There is evidence that the health and well-being of their children is also improving

What teachers have to say

- *SinglePoint and school support for mum has been crucial. Prior to such support, mum had issues of complex domestic violence, isolation and had no English. She is now working, has started to learn basic English and has productive relationships with both parents*
- *Peter is a child that was at great risk – physically and emotionally. Support from school and SinglePoint has ensured that, Peter is in a place of safety, is thriving in all aspects in school, mother – child relationships are now becoming stronger*

CASE STUDY 1: Lucy

Case study names changed and photographs posed by models.

Lucy is 49 years old, separated, a resident of Oldbury and lives in her own home with her young daughter. Previously unemployed, she has held a number of unskilled jobs.

In the past she has been a habitual cannabis user, which hidden from her daughter and other family members was, 'For pain relief and depression really, and I did not feel it was doing me any harm. It was my secret and I made sure my kids or other family members never knew, or ever saw me using it. I suppose I was in denial that it was wrong; and it would ever do me any harm'.

Things came to a head when the authorities (Social Services, the police and her child's school) found out. It was awful. I just lost control of my life. I felt everyone was judging me, and at any time my daughter could be taken from me. I had a horrible year and I felt so alone, as I couldn't share my 'secret' with anyone I knew, such as my mum. There was no empathy at all, and felt I couldn't talk to anyone to seek support. It also became clear that my daughter was not doing well in school, and the school was concerned.

Things improved due to the support that came from CAF (Common Assessment Framework), and I self-referred to Swanswell (Sandwell Drug & Alcohol Support), where my life was turned around. They were great, and I came to realise the hold cannabis had over me, and how it could ruin my life.

Through the school I was put in contact with SinglePoint and they have been great. They never judge and are concerned about me and my family. They listen and began to help me gain my confidence, which is proving key to me. They are giving me the skills I need to get my life back, and helping me to support my daughter and become a family.

Life is now much better. I have a job and feel in control. I take pride in how I look and have lots of confidence. I am now 'me',

not that person the cannabis was in control of. The best thing is I am now a real mum, and I am getting on so well with my daughter. There are no more closed doors and secrets. She is doing lots better in school, and I feel like I am now in control of my life. I realised the other day that I was spending around £80 per week on cannabis. I am saving that now, and am even quitting smoking. That is saving me around £30 a week.

I am so glad that Swanswell and SinglePoint were there for me. There was no one else about who could provide the support I needed.

What has SinglePoint provided me with?

Belief in me.
The skills and confidence to take control of my life.



CASE STUDY 3: Eve

Eve is 37 years old, currently separated and lives in the Oldbury area in her own property with her two children aged 5 and 14 years.

She says, 'My life fell apart, when out of the blue my husband left me. I was devastated and went into shock and depression. The Doctor prescribed anti-depressants, which I certainly needed at the time. It affected both of my children, and the 5 year old in particular. She was a quiet child before, but things got worse quite quickly. I just lost my confidence, self-worth and I feared for my family.'

After a while I asked for help at the school and thankfully the SinglePoint Parent Support Advisor quickly came to see me on a home visit. To be honest I was scared before she came because I expected a judgmental and non-supportive approach, and I did not want my family to break up in any way.

It was such a relief to find the opposite of what I expected. She was so friendly and understanding and quickly put me at ease. It was clear from the start that I had someone to help and not judge me. She kept asking, 'What about you?', and that was just what I needed. She immediately began to build my confidence, and helped me to believe in myself. She encouraged me, helped me talk, and build on the good points about me and my life. From being in melt down, she steered me to recovery.

Over time the fear went away. Key actions included job searching, and lots of 'firsts' for

me and my family, such as taking my family swimming, going to the pictures, having friends around for tea. I remember a 'brilliant summer', with lots of laughter and fun. I became inspired and began to develop a strategy to go forward. SinglePoint was repairing me.

I was provided with the tools to change my life. I was empowered to help myself. It was about me and my family.

I have enrolled at College for a Level 2 course to become a Receptionist. I have a job, prospects and a future as me!

My children have also been supported, but it is clear to me that I have been provided by SinglePoint with the skills and confidence to make a real difference to mine and my children's lives.

Where are we now?

I have me back. I am no longer on medication. I have a job and a vocation. But most importantly we are a happy family. The change in my youngest is amazing. She has come out of herself and is likewise so confident now. The school has certainly noticed. My eldest son laughs more now, and we are all so happy.

What words describe what SinglePoint has provided?

Time, support, tools, options and a strategy. I feel like I have a Guardian Angel looking over my shoulder and can only say thank you!



CASE STUDY 2: Lynette & Greg

Lynette is 23 years old, engaged to Greg, with two young children and are living with his parents in the Oldbury area. Previously both unemployed and on benefits. Lynette was prescribed antidepressants by her GP.

She says, 'My life was awful. The kids had behavioural problems and we both just did not know how to cope as 'parents'. On top of this we had no jobs, money worries, and were always arguing. It is always hard living with parents, and although we were grateful for their support, we just could not be a proper couple. They were very protective of the children and there was so much tension.

I was referred to SinglePoint by the school and the changes in our lives have been amazing. The Parent Support Advisor has been brilliant! She is lovely and is always smiling. She never judges and is there for us, as my partner also received support from SinglePoint.

We both (separately) received counselling arranged by SinglePoint, which really helped us to sort our own issues out. We both also attended the CHANGES Programme, which was all about parenting skills. It is also good to be able to drop into the SinglePoint Centre. There are lots of resources there, such as computers and job seeking tools. The children also took part in after-school activities such as Complete Kidz.

As a result of the amazing support from SinglePoint we both have really good jobs now. We were helped to write job applications, making the most of our skills and abilities.

We were given the confidence to go for really good jobs. I am on an Apprenticeship now, and Greg is working for a leading car manufacturer in the area.

Money is no longer such a big issue. Due to advice and support from SinglePoint, we are off benefits, and I receive the appropriate Working Tax Credits. Greg is a tax payer now.

I am off the antidepressants, and just love my life and my family. The kids have changed so much, as a result of the skills the CHANGES programme provided to us. They are doing really well in school, and their behavioural issues are well under control. They are amazing!

We are all a real team now, me Greg and the kids. We are proper parents, with lots of the key skills we need as a result of the CHANGES programme. We have so much more confidence, and Greg and I hardly argue at all now.

What has SinglePoint provided to me and my family?

Time, confidence, personal development, care, support, being non-judgmental, a 'one stop shop', parenting skills, jobs, a life, happiness, my family – happiness!

Why is SinglePoint special?

There is nothing else like it in the area. It is like a one stop shop, where you can find everything, or be pointed to where the support you need is. It is unique and special.

We just can't thank them enough!



CASE STUDY 4: Massie

Massie is 39 years old and a resident of Oldbury. She lives in privately rented accommodation with her 3 daughters. She is currently not working.

Life has thrown problems at her. She says, 'A lot of stuff is going on in my life at the moment, and my head is all over the place. I have felt like I'm on my own and have no one to talk to or help me.

On top of everything my middle daughter just won't go to school as she should. I have tried everything, but nothing is working. I have been to court and been fined.

I have not been sleeping as I should be, and sometimes think the kids will be better off without me. I just did not know where to turn, or who could ever help me. I lost weight and was prescribed antidepressants by my Doctor.

I was at my wits end until I was referred to SinglePoint by the Head Teacher. The first thing I noticed was they did not judge me. This made such an impact on me. I had someone who would listen and would be on my side. They listened and listened some more. This gave me hope, which was so important to me. Gradually they worked with me to understand that I could get through anything. I had someone to talk to who I could trust and who knew where I could get the support I needed for me and my family, who mean everything to me.

One thing I did notice was they talked straight to me. They also helped me to sort my benefits out, and

pointed me to the right agencies where other support and advice is available. For example my daughter is now receiving targeted youth support, and we are receiving support from the School Nurse. Family Solutions are on-board, and I now have a bit more positive and trusting relationship with Social Services.

I remember a 'light bulb' moment, when the SinglePoint Parent Support Advisor helped me to see me for who I am and what I can be. I am in control of where my life takes me, and SinglePoint is helping me to achieve this.

Where am I now?

I know I have a long way to go, and the problems are still about. But I have hope. I feel sane. I am on a low dosage of antidepressants, and am sleeping far better. I feel like I have friends who I have met at the SinglePoint Centre and on the trips me and my kids have gone to. I have a plan, and have someone to help me to help myself. Most importantly, we are a family and are working together as a team. We are not broken and will be OK!

Where do I want to be next year?

Working. My daughter going to school as she should.

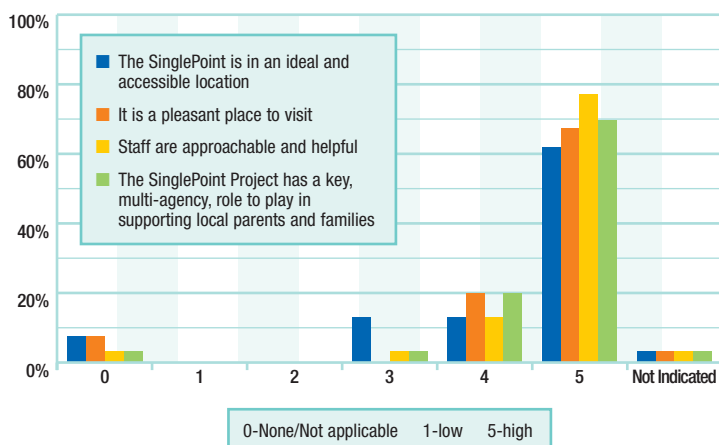
What have SinglePoint given me?

Hope, aspirations, confidence. People who don't judge. Information about whom and where I can seek and get the support I need. Straight talking and honesty.



The views of partner agency members

This graph highlights the views of consulted partner agency members.



Of those consulted:

- The Project/Project staff are well regarded
- There is a high understanding of the role and functions of the Project
- There is a good understanding of the effectiveness of the Project

"The area is developing and building effective 'partnership working', which is exemplified by projects, strategies and initiatives such as SinglePoint, School Learning Communities, Sandwell Locality based Early Help Teams (COGs), and in the Children, Young People and Families Plan. There is clearly value in SinglePoint linking closely with other locality based strategies and initiatives, and from others learning from good practice and lessons learnt from the Project. There will also be value in the Project encouraging and supporting service users to participate in community based activities and initiatives."

Chris Ward, Director of Learning & Inclusion, Sandwell Council.

Summary of findings

It is clear from both quantitative and qualitative research that the Project is a success in terms of achieving aims and objectives, and there are no reasons to believe that the Project will not achieve the [four] outcomes and activities agreed with the principal funder.

As a direct result of the Project:

1. Parents of children attending schools within the partnership are feeling more confident to make decisions as a result of engaging in the various facilities activities being delivered.
2. Supported and enabled by Project Staff, families with worries and concerns about their health and well-being are seeking and obtaining appropriate support from local agencies.
3. Families are spending more quality time together, which is strengthening family relationships and improving communication between family members.
4. Working families (predominantly from two of the participating schools – Christ Church and St Francis Xavier) have better access to childcare (e.g. the breakfast club and after school activities), which has the potential to improve their economic well-being and employability. Families from all four schools are clearly accessing holiday provision.

Good Practice

- The collaboration and active participation of the four participating schools within an area of deprivation to develop, deliver and [part] fund an extremely successful Project
- The roles played by the participating schools in the identification and targeting of parents/families who require bespoke interventions and support
- The creation of a talented, multi-skilled team that works in close partnership to deliver bespoke support to vulnerable parents and their families
- Early and effective contacts and relationship building with Service Users
- The adoption of an adaptable **single point** of contact and support ethos, which 'wraps itself around' Service Users, ensuring that their individual needs and requirements are met for 'as long as needed'
- Support aligned on mentoring and sign-posting models of support, which enables Service Users to 'help themselves', and obtain appropriate support from a wide variety of local agencies

- Collaborative and effective partnership working between local agencies
- A model of delivery, which by enabling parents to become **better parents**, and is extremely effective in enabling them to positively support their own children and families; such providing a cost effective method of **breaking, often long standing and generational cycles of deprivation**

Conclusion

The Project is 'on the right track' in relation to meeting the **needs** of local vulnerable parents and their families, and is doing so in effective partnerships with key stakeholders and partner agency members. Due note is made to important principles of the Project's delivery:

- Targeted school based support works
- By supporting parents there is a high likelihood that they will be well and best placed to support their children and families

Supported by the fact that the Project 'works', and is built on a platform of good practice, continued local **need**, and opportunities for local partnership working, there is strong evidence to support the continuation of the Project.

Value for Money/Social Return on Investment (SROI)

It is apparent that the Project has the potential to deliver a **positive SROI**, and is **without doubt delivering value for money**. If just **10%** of the **348** Project Service Users become/ remain employed and non-reliant on benefits, there is a potential for an estimated **£2m** community centered cost savings. The impressive progress of the children of Service Users in their schools will clearly have additional and substantive long-term financial and social benefits.





A piece of cake!

A little unconventional maybe, but SinglePoint could be likened to a sponge cake. A number of key ingredients, working together creating a recipe that works and gets results.



The 'flour' at SinglePoint, forms the basis for the Project that creates the shape and consistency we have achieved through the ideas, structure and activities delivered for our families. Combine this with the butter and sugar, a sweet, comforting ingredient, the welcome received, a safe, warm environment providing security and support for everyone entering our doors. The 'eggs' are our people.

A key ingredient, the partnerships, committed team and relationships with service users are what binds this project together. A sprinkle of 'baking powder' is that 'something extra' delivered by SinglePoint, helping the Project grow, develop and become what it has today.

The icing on the cake has to be the outcomes achieved for families. Seeing the vision of 'making a difference' and getting real results.

Finally, the 'cherry on top' has to be Wider Impact' capturing all of this. They have given us a clear picture of all these ingredients coming together to show it's a recipe that really works.

We are very proud of our project and hope the recognition of the difference we are making will help secure continued funding to continue this proven recipe long into the future.

Eve Loveridge and Lisa Harrison, pictured, SinglePoint Community Involvement Managers (Job Share).



A perfect project

For me SinglePoint can only be described as perfect. I am the chair of the PTFA (Parent Teacher Friends Association) and a member of the Governing Body at school. I have found partnership working with SinglePoint to be particularly effective. I feel that SinglePoint enhances our community and our school.

I have personally benefitted from the courses, services and facilities offered by SinglePoint and feel that they are a fantastic resource for everyone.

Being involved so closely has enabled me to see how the Project has boosted people's confidence. I honestly think the Project needs to continue, staff are so helpful, it would be a great pity to lose the support they offer. SinglePoint has been a huge help to lots of families.

Laura Oliver, SinglePoint Service User, PTFA Member and School Governor.



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