



SinglePoint Plus Project

Independent Evaluation

Wider Impact Consultancy
July 2017



LOTTERY FUNDED

Valuable and life-changing support

As Head Teacher of one of the four schools partnered to the SinglePoint Plus Project, I am extremely grateful to Wider Impact for capturing how vital and unique the SinglePoint Plus Project is.

The Project has delivered life-changing and valuable support to hundreds of families across the four schools, and this has partly been achieved by offering a safe, supportive and welcoming place for our families to work alongside our skilled staff, in addition to work taking place in homes, in schools and in the community.

The vision we had prior to 2012 was to provide a safe, welcoming 'one-stop' support hub for families. We have built on the success of the previous Project, introducing a dedicated family support suite and forged stronger links

with the Christ Church Wrap Around Childcare provision. Our model of schools working together has gone from strength to strength. This project has touched the lives of so many and exceeded our expectations. I have no doubt that without the Project and dedicated staff team many of our families would continue to feel isolated, suffer economic hardship and struggle with the day to day challenges of family life.

Wider Impact has once again provided an informative and accurate picture of the outstanding work which takes place at SinglePoint Plus. We have always known the value and impact this Project has on the lives of those involved but it is rewarding to have this independent report to reflect our own opinions and belief that this project must continue.



Michaela Long.

I know that all of the schools Head Teachers, families and partners are grateful for the fantastic support that SinglePoint offers to our families and hope that we can continue to build on this vital support in the future.



The SinglePoint team.

INTRODUCTION

In days of austerity, SinglePoint delivers

It is always a pleasure to deliver such a positive report, which hopefully does credit to all those involved in the development and delivery of this excellent Project.

This is the second time Wider Impact has been privileged to independently evaluate a SinglePoint Project, and we hope it will hopefully not be the last as it looks to move on to develop further and reach even more beneficiaries with complex needs.

The SinglePoint concept and the teams that impressively govern, manage and deliver it are special; and in days of austerity and cut backs to front-line services to the most vulnerable, are almost unique in that they deliver **what** is needed, **when** it is most needed and **to** whom it is most needed by.

Most significantly the SinglePoint concept provides **long-term value for money**, with indications of significant positive social returns on investments (SROI). Indeed social care savings achieved by the Project are estimated to be in the region of **£3.2m** annually, reaching **£9.5m** over the period of the Project.

Such should certainly be noted by those who have in their gift to ensure the ongoing and sustainable development and delivery of this impressive concept of front-line, much needed support to the most vulnerable members of a region's most deprived local communities.

Edwin Lewis, Director, Wider Impact Consultancy



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

About the Project

Based on the successes of the previously funded Reaching Communities Project, **SinglePoint – Inspiring Families, Changing Lives**, which was independently evaluated by Wider Impact Consultancy as being 'highly successful', the **SinglePoint Plus Project** is a multi-school based centralised hub.

Delivered in partnership with over **25** active partner agencies the innovative and proactive Project is successfully and sensitively meeting the needs of the area's most vulnerable local people and family members.

Funded by the Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund, the ethos of the Project includes:

- An active collaboration between the four participating schools: **Christ Church Church of England Primary School, St Francis Xavier Catholic Primary School, Langley Primary School and Rood End Primary School**
- A well-equipped and accessible 'drop-in' Central Hub based at Christ Church Church of England Primary School, Oldbury town centre
- Identification and targeting of parents/families who need support
- A talented and multi-skilled team that works in partnership to deliver services
- Early and effective relationships with service users
- 'Wrap around' support aligned on mentoring and signposting models of support
- Enabling service users to 'help themselves, and obtain appropriate support from a wide variety of local agencies

Holiday Provision

In addition to the popular Before and After School Clubs, the Project is also offering subsidised holiday activity places in external provision and on site delivered in partnership with the Christ Church Wrap Around Team.



The Central Hub

Capital funding has enabled extension and development of the previous facilities within the Central Hub to include:

- A **separate external door**, enabling confidentiality where required and providing access to a welcoming and modern reception area.
- A welcoming **family room** – set up as a 'real' living room with sofas, soft furnishings and toys to facilitate family meetings/sessions in an informal 'homely' environment. This is used for contact sessions between siblings/parents involved in social care and counselling and family support work with PSAs
- **'The Snug'** – a 'crisis room', set up in a small private room with comfy chairs. Access isn't timetabled and it is kept open and free for parents who need to be seen immediately in a safe and private environment
- **Meeting room** – a formal style meeting room for a wide variety of meetings with families and professionals. This is also used by external providers working with families engaged with the Project
- **'The Cubby'** – a large storage cupboard for household equipment and good for families in need e.g. halogen heaters, microwaves,

kettles, cookware, bedding etc, toys and clothing/school uniforms

- A refurbished and additional WC

The following four key outcomes have been agreed with the Big Lottery:

1. Families have better access to activities and opportunities to reduce social isolation
2. Parents have improved independence leading to enhanced economic wellbeing
3. Families spend more quality time together to strengthen family relationships and improve wellbeing
4. Families living with multiple and complex needs get the support they need to improve their confidence and parenting skills

CHANGES Parenting Programme

Referred to within the case studies, the **CHANGES Parenting Programme** was originally developed by Sandwell MBC staff and parents and has regularly been updated and modified to reflect the different and growing pressures on modern day family life to ensure it stays responsive and relevant to local needs.

What people say about the Project

As a single parent it has proved difficult to balance having a full-time career and bringing up two young children. I certainly want to avoid any dependence on benefits, so having SinglePoint there has proved to be a lifeline for me.

It has proved most beneficial for me to have access to the Breakfast and After School Clubs, when I can drop my children off early and pick them up later so I can complete full days work during school hours.

As well as being affordable and good value, my children really enjoy it there, which is so important to me, knowing my children are well cared for and happy as they are at SinglePoint!

Kara Penicooke, Wrap Around Care Parent

For me one of the strengths of SinglePoint is that this friendly team has a base that parents can access as and when they need it, and it is particularly useful to see parents encouraged to take ownership of their responsibilities.

Parents are referred to SinglePoint for many different reasons: support with parenting skills, finances, behaviours, toilet training and emotional support.

They are assured of the correct support being given and/or further advice if appropriate.

Magdalena Jones, St Francis Xavier Catholic Primary School

By working in partnership alongside Murray Hall Community Trust, SinglePoint have been able to provide counselling support to parents.

They have worked hard with parents pre-counselling to identify those parents who are ready for such support.

This has enabled the service to be effectively utilised and beneficial to those accessing the service.

Jenny Hartwell, Murray Hall Community Trust

Statistics, facts and feedback

Project Outcomes

As the table on the right highlights, there can be no doubts that on the whole, the Project is on course to achieve, and in a number of cases, significantly surpass targets agreed with the Big Lottery, when the Project ends on the 31st August 2018.

Value for Money/Social Return on Investment (SROI)

Linked to the current Project having supported 55 similar families with multiple and complex needs, it is not unreasonable to estimate social care savings achieved by the Project being in the region of £3.2m annually, reaching £9.5m over the period of the Project.

Feedback from Service Users

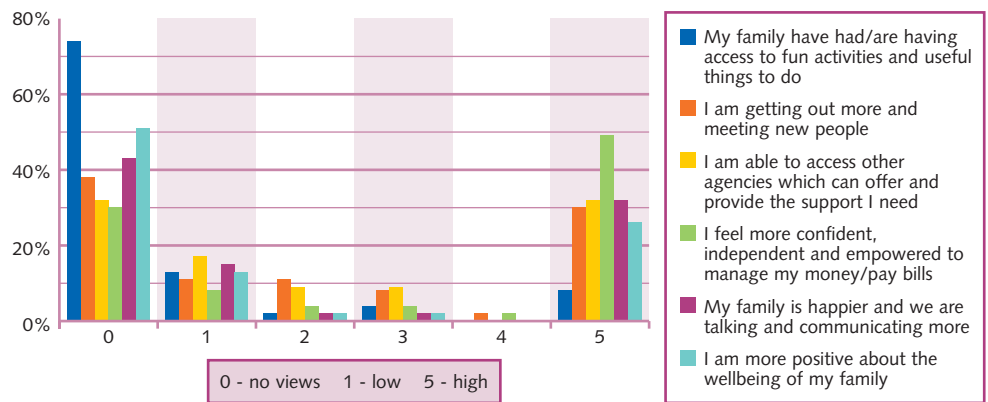
This graph, below right, highlights the views of consulted service users about how well the Project is achieving outcomes agreed with the Big Lottery.

During a workshop session service users have made it clear that:

- There is unanimous support and appreciation for the SinglePoint Plus Project, with noticeable outcomes including bringing families together for 'quality time', access to trips, which otherwise could not be afforded and positive support with children and providing access/communication links with schools
- Reasons why the Project works for service users include Project staff being non-judgmental, supporting, being there when needed, bringing families together and providing flexible/bespoke support when it is most needed

Outcomes	Description	Targets	Timescales	Actuals (July 2017)
1	a) Number of people attending activities and opportunities offered by SinglePoint	200	Annually	2325
	b) Number of registered users who access multiple activities as a result of the Project	75	Annually	254
	c) Number of family support cases reporting reduced isolation	20	End of Project	36
2	a) Number of children who register and access breakfast or after school club	40	Annually	180
	b) Pupils accessing fully or part subsidised holiday provision places	20	Annually	240
	c) Parent volunteer placements facilitated by SinglePoint	10	End of Project	11
3	a) To provide family experience days to local/national attractions	250	Annually	981
	b) Provision of family fun days and weekend community events	100	Annually	369
	c) Number of people attending joint parent and child activities	250	End of Project	1820
4	a) Families are referred, and access the support of appropriate agencies	10	Year 1	29
	b) Families with multiple and complex needs report an increase in confidence after engaging with the Project	20	Year 2	55
	c) Families referred to the Project will exit statutory social care plans as a result of SinglePoint's involvement	20	End of Project	16

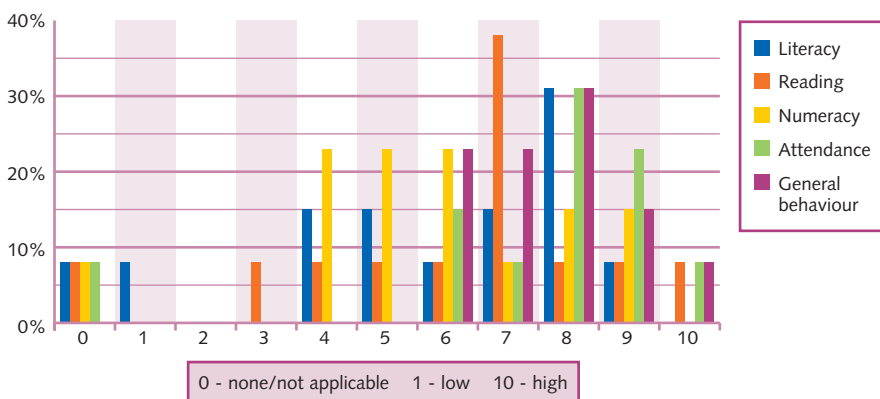
Project Outcomes Targets/Achievements (Years 1 and 2 only – one year to run)



Pupils' Progress

This graph highlights the progress children of those parents who are actively being supported by the Project continue to make in relation to: literacy, numeracy, attendance and general behaviour.

Similar to previous research, it remains apparent that support provided to parents/carers is directly and significantly supporting the progress their children make in their schools.



I feel that the SinglePoint team provides a level of service, such as consistent case workers, which other agencies are unable to match.

I am aware of numerous examples where SinglePoint has directly supported vulnerable and isolated mothers and wider family members sort out complex issues, which has positively impacted the wellbeing and education of pupils at the school.

Barbara Carter,
Head Teacher of Rood End Primary Schools

CASE STUDY 1: Maxine

Case study names changed and photographs posed by models.

Maxine is 44 years of age, lives locally in the area in her own house with her 4 children.

She says, "All was well in my life until I was made redundant from work. My hubby had always looked after me and I also felt it would be harder to get a good job due to being older. The financial costs of not working quickly took effect as did worry, which turned into depression. The longer it goes on the worse things get and the more unemployable you feel."

Maxine remembers the first time she met the SinglePoint team. She says, "They are all amazing and showed real understanding and empathy towards me and where I was. They are so friendly and the door at the Centre is always open to you. They quickly came up with a plan for me and I began to meet people who were where I was. I felt less isolated very quickly and my confidence began coming back.

"It was also clear they were guiding, not pushing, or doing things for me. They gave me focus and lots of support, which is almost impossible to get anywhere else. They never fussed over me or panicked. Everything was structured to take place when I was ready. I went on the CHANGES course, which helped so much with my parenting skills and how to manage expectations in life as a family.

"After a while I was ready to explore the job market, which the SinglePoint team helped me with in areas such as job searching, completing application forms and



interview techniques. I couldn't believe it when I got a job as a Lunchtime Supervisor at a local school. It felt so good! From that point I went from strength to strength. Whilst I am naturally a shy person, my confidence was back and I know that with effort and preparation I could achieve my dreams – which includes being financially independent and able to support and look after my kids."

What has been the key to the successes of SinglePoint?

Being there as and when I needed them the most; and providing me the support and skills to help myself. Confidence building at my pace and never judging. Lots of empathy and understanding.

What is my 5-year plan?

In addition to paying off my debt, I plan to be a Learning Support Assistant and have a career pathway. SinglePoint are supporting me to achieve a Level 3 accreditation and with their on-going support I have no doubts that I will achieve it.

In conclusion

I was drowning in depression before SinglePoint supported me. I was at rock bottom and who knows what could have happened to my family. I almost dare not think about it.

On behalf of my family I can't thank the whole SinglePoint team and the Lottery enough. You have helped to save a family from drowning, and I have certainly been SinglePointed!

CASE STUDY 3: Sarah

Sarah is single, 31 years of age, is local to the area and lives in a rented house with her 3 children. She is currently in the first year of a full time university course with an objective of working with children in need of care.

She says, "I first came to need the support of SinglePoint as I was having difficulty in communicating with the staff at the kids' school. I was so angry, as we were under pressure, our landlord at the time was kicking us out of our rented home. We were in real danger of being homeless and I just didn't know our rights, or who to turn to for support. It was a horrible time.

"I remember when I first came across my PSA from the SinglePoint team. She immediately put me at ease and did not have a teacher stereotype about her. She really seemed friendly and had lots of confidence.

"I went onto the CHANGES course and it was a turning point for me. I got to meet other parents who had the same worries as me and I could compare my situation with others. I learnt such a lot about being a parent.

"The SinglePoint team took time to help me manage my bills and whilst there is no magic wand, I learnt that I could help myself by managing my money and the bills better.

"A big thing was the risk of being homeless, my PSA and the team put me in touch with the Council, a Housing Association and the Citizens Advice Bureaux. I learnt that I had rights and nothing needed to be rushed.



"We also enjoyed going on the SinglePoint trips, which we could not have afforded otherwise. As well as enjoying ourselves as a family, we got to meet other people and I enjoyed socialising with nice people.

"My kids could also go to the SinglePoint Breakfast Club and After School Club, which enabled me to study and to take on some work to meet the bills."

What has SinglePoint done for me?

I am a calmer person and feel I am more in control of my life. I know I have rights and know who to turn to if I need support. Whilst money will always be tight I am more in control of my finances, which is important to me. I am getting out more and socialising with other people, which I really enjoy. I guess I am a more confident person.

What is good about the SinglePoint Team?

Most importantly they don't judge you and really understand your situation and where you are. You can trust them never to let you down and are always there for you. It's like a pop-up shop that wraps itself around you.

In conclusion

I dread to think what would have happened without my PSA and the rest of the SinglePoint team. They simply care, are so professional, have the time and help you to make good things happen. Thank you!

CASE STUDY 2: James

James is 47 years of age, is local to the area, married and lives in his own house with his two sons. He is currently out of work and has claimed ESA allowance for around 3 years.

He says, "All was well until I sustained a number of injuries, one of which required a serious operation. It was all life changing and of course seriously affected the income that came into our home. We needed to use up our savings to make ends meet. To be honest I haven't coped well at all.

"It hurts not being able to take your kids out on treats and having to sit in day after day because you can't afford to go and spend money you haven't got.

"And then came SinglePoint, which is helping to change my life. Where do I start? Well, for example we have enjoyed taking the kids on the trips, which we just can't afford at the moment. This has meant that we have enjoyed 'family time', which has helped so much to relieve the pressures we have been under. It is so good to see the kids laughing and enjoying being with me.

"I attended the CHANGES course and really benefitted from it, as in addition to practical things you learn, it has made a big difference to how I see my role as a good parent and given me lots of confidence and knowledge.

"I have also benefited hugely from one to one counselling at SinglePoint. It has helped me to come to terms with who I am and why I get so frustrated about my situation and where I am.

"Most significantly I am learning the



skills to plan ahead and make the best of my life, with coping strategies and forward planning.

"Other members of my family have also benefitted. For example, my kids use the After School Club, which is enabling my wife to hold down her job."

What has been the key to the successes of SinglePoint?

The range of support that has been on offer, which has been for my family and well as for me. The staff and those they use are really professional at what they do and they all really care and want to make a difference.

It would be almost impossible to receive such support anywhere else, and if you could you would have to wait months and months for it.

What is my 5-year plan?

I understand that I have a long way to go before I can say life is normal, whatever 'normal' is? But in the longer term I am looking to put something back and plan to train as a counsellor. I am looking into the training and qualifications I will need and SinglePoint is working with me on this.

I would also like to be financially secure again, which I am sure I will achieve with the ongoing support of SinglePoint.

In conclusion

I have been in a very dark place, and would have been alone but for the SinglePoint team.

CASE STUDY 4: Fiona

Fiona is 31 years of age, lives locally in rented accommodation with her 4 children aged between 5 and 15 years of age. She is originally from Somalia having lived in the London area for a number of years.

She says, "I am so grateful for the support the SinglePoint team have provided me with as I felt so alone and isolated before they came along. My English is not too good and they are helping me with that. They are at my side when I have important and complex meetings with social services, as I would feel out of my depth if they were not with me.

"I have no family or friends to support me, it can be so lonely. They have also helped me sort my benefits out and helped me with my landlord and furnishing my home.

"They are so good at pointing me to other agencies and people who can support me and teaching me to help myself and have the confidence to do things that I would normally not think of tackling.

"I don't understand computers and they are helping me to do things now and teaching me how to use them.

"The most important people in my life are my children and it is important to me that they are happy and get a good education. It is so rewarding for me to see my children doing well at school.

"We don't have a lot of money spare for going out and it has been lovely to



be able to go on trips as a family and meet other people and socialise. I don't feel so lonely or alone since I have been supported by SinglePoint. They never judge me or tell me what to do, or what I should be doing. My PSA is lovely and is so professional and caring.

"With her support I have been doing voluntary work, which in addition to getting me out of the house and helping to improve my English, is giving me valuable work experience as my aim is to get a good job and become less dependent on benefits."

Where are you now?

I am less dependent on the SinglePoint team, although I do keep in touch and drop in if I need help with complicated phone calls. It is also nice to drop in for a chat and reassurance that they are still there.

Where do I want to be in 5 years?

I want to be more independent and with no links to Social Services.

In conclusion

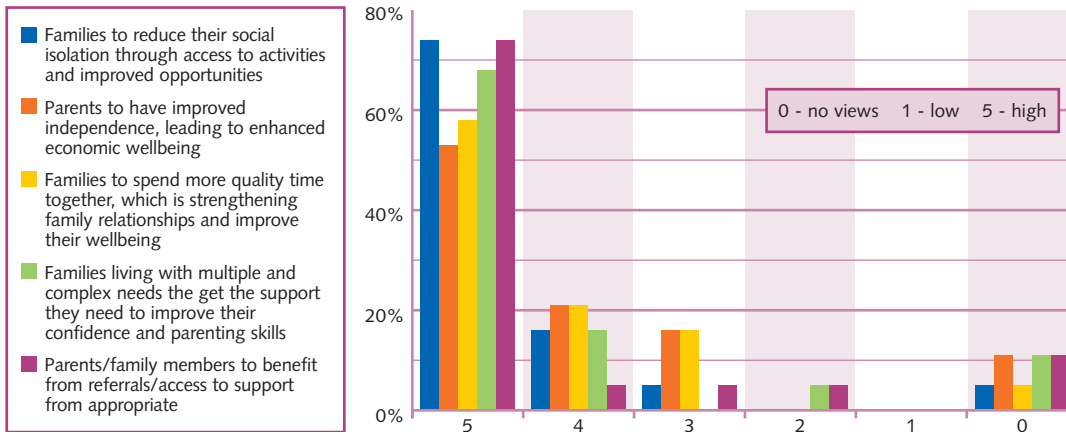
My life and my children's lives are so much better since we have received support from SinglePoint. I feel less lonely and isolated and have the confidence to help myself.

We are a happier family and as I have said my children are doing so well at school.

The views of partner agency members

This graph highlights the views of consulted partner agencies members about how well the Project is achieving outcomes agreed with the Big Lottery.

It is clearly apparent that partner agency members are confident that the Project has achieved the agreed outcomes.



I can only say good things about the SinglePoint Plus Project and the excellent team; and I know that mine are also the views of many other professionals locally.

The work they do is often integral to the support that local vulnerable families receive from statutory agencies such as the local authority.

Key to their successes are issues such as time and the resources needed when and where they are needed, as well of course as the experience and skills to support the area's most vulnerable parents and families.

Carla Grant,
Sandwell MBC Early Help Team

Summary of findings

There can be no doubt that the Project is a success and will achieve all aims and objectives agreed with the Big Lottery. Project indicator targets have been exceeded, and will be further exceeded when the Big Lottery funding ends on the 31 August 2018.

In no particular order the following good practice is noted:

- The SinglePoint partnership – a partnership between four primary schools, enabling open dialogue, joint working, information sharing, joint problem solving and innovative approaches to developing social challenges and opportunities
- Management and leadership – provided by the SinglePoint Board and the SinglePoint Managers
- The SinglePoint approach, in close partnership with form teachers and other school staff, providing a single point of contact and bespoke, long term, often immediate 'wrap around' support service for service users and wider family members
- The SinglePoint Centre/Hub, which is centrally placed and easy to access by service users and partner agency members. Facilities/rooms are well thought out and fit for purpose
- The SinglePoint team – hard working, multi-skilled professionals, who work in close partnership, providing a non-judgmental and friendly service to often vulnerable service users and family members
- Partnership working with multi-agency colleagues and departments, all of whom interviewed and surveyed having the highest regard for the SinglePoint Project/team
- Financial assistance to support course fees/resources/childcare, enabling parents to access higher education courses

- The provision of affordable trips/visits to local and national attractions, which is enabling families to 'get out of their houses', enjoy 'family time' and wider social/community interactions
- A partnership with a number of the participating schools that enables the provision of subsidised/affordable breakfast/after school clubs and holiday provision, which is enabling parents to work, with outcomes that include financial independence, reduced reliance on benefits and positive feelings of 'self-worth' and wellbeing
- Impressive progress made by those pupils whose parents are being supported by the Project

Recommendations

Based on research findings the following recommendations are tendered:

1. Steps should be taken to ensure the continued development and delivery of the SinglePoint Project/team, which should continue well beyond the end of current Big Lottery funding.
2. Steps to enable the ongoing development and delivery of the SinglePoint Project/team should be treated as an immediate priority, as
3. Consideration should be given to establishing 'satellite' services in those schools that are furthest away from the Centre/Hub site
4. Consideration should be given to increasing the number of schools involved in the SinglePoint partnership.
5. Whilst considering increasing the number of schools involved in the SinglePoint partnership, care should be taken not to dilute the quality of services provided to service users, participating schools and multi-agency partnership members.
6. Consideration should be given to enhancing the support provided to families of children with special education needs.
7. Opportunity should be taken to enhance the marketing/external awareness of SinglePoint/the SinglePoint Project.

Conclusion

SinglePoint should be regarded as a 'jewel in the crown' of the Oldbury area and immediate steps should be taken to ensure its continuation beyond current funding periods, with a key objective of retaining the current team of dedicated and highly experienced professionals.

Opportunity is taken to thank all of those people who have taken time to contribute to the evaluation, with particular reference to partner agency members and most significantly, those service users who have been open and honest about the wider impacts the Project has had on their lives, and "The amazing SinglePoint Plus team, who continue to make such positive differences to so many of our families' lives".



Pieces of a puzzle

SinglePoint Plus is a unique and special project.

A project about people. This evaluation has explored beneath the surface, getting to the very heart of the Project and we couldn't have captured this without the families who shared their stories, giving an honest picture about how SinglePoint Plus has impacted on their lives. A huge thanks to those involved for their time and openness – we couldn't have done it without your help.

As Project Managers we also want to thank the schools for their continued support and our highly skilled and committed staff team who go the extra mile to make SinglePoint Plus the success it is. From the first greeting to the family support work, the organised events to the high quality childcare, SinglePoint staff are a valued asset and very special people just like the Project as a whole.

This evaluation shows us that SinglePoint Plus delivers services and support for families that act as little pieces bought together to help with the 'bigger picture' of making family life that little bit easier.

Finally, thank you to Wider Impact for an exceptionally high quality report that will hopefully steer us towards securing the future of the project for the families we are privileged to work with past, present and future.

Eve Loveridge and Lisa Harrison,
Project Managers (job share), SinglePoint Plus



The staff really care

As a single parent I was new to the area, I knew nobody and SinglePoint quickly became my default setting for support. I've been involved with SinglePoint for over two years and during this time I've received invaluable help on every level, whether it be directly for me or me and my son.

SinglePoint has always got time for me, dedicated time that schools can't always give. I always feel a warm welcome, never an inconvenience, whether it's an appointment or just walking through the door – they always have time for me when I need them.

I've never left SinglePoint feeling that I haven't got what I've needed. The follow up and ongoing support has always been there which makes me feel someone genuinely cares because they take the time, nothing is too much trouble – they remember, it's a personal touch, like a family. I feel relaxed, I can be open, I'm not embarrassed – they make me feel comfortable because I know I'm not judged just accepted for who I am. SinglePoint staff really care about people.

Looking back, I was broken. They built me up. I can't express how grateful I am. I looked at moving schools at one stage but this was very quickly a no-no when I found out that SinglePoint isn't at other schools. It was one of the main reasons I decided to stay. I can honestly say I don't know what I'd have done without them.

Lynn Charles-Webster,
Parent/SinglePoint Service User



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