

Project note

Strategy Development for the Annie E. Casey Foundation

Background

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is the largest philanthropic organisation solely devoted to improving the lives of US children. The Foundation's work has three strands; one concerned with family and economic success; a second focused on community change; and a third that has system reform as the centre of attention.

The system reform work has a strong reputation in the US. The Foundation has a direct service arm promoting permanence for children in foster care, and has several significant achievements in altering how large children's services systems operate, for example in reducing the rate of children in state care or young people in detention centres.

The Foundation is reviewing its programme of work. There is interest in greater integration between the divisions, and of shifting some resources into using system reform to improve the well-being of children.

Aim

The Social Research Unit worked with the Foundation to:

- Examine the pros and cons of an outcome based approach to the reform of children's services, and the place of operating systems like Common Language in facilitating that reform
- Develop a strategy that will sustain the Practice and System Reform part of the Foundation over a five to 10 year period
- Consider the implications of that strategy for the wider Foundation.

Method

The Social Research Unit's Common Language methods have been adapted to help the Practice and System Reform division of the Foundation devise a revised strategy. Over 30 people in leadership positions across the Foundation participated in the work. Data on the well-being of over 10,000 children in Atlanta were used as a catalyst for the strategy development work. Data on the perspectives of US thought leaders on the role of philanthropy in improving children's lives also played a part in deliberations.

Funder

The Annie E. Casey Foundation

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Dissemination

The results of this work are restricted to the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The results of the epidemiology of children's health and development in Atlanta that informed the strategy development process will be disseminated once the evidence has been fully considered by the children's services agencies in the city.

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