



Summary Paper for Overview and Scrutiny

Torbay Family Intervention Project

Background

Torbay Family Intervention Project (FIP) has been operational since October 2008 and to August 2010 has worked with 36 families and 125 children across Torbay, in order to reduce anti-social behaviour, youth crime issues and prevent homelessness. Recently, the FIP has launched a Female Offenders 'strand' to the service in partnership with Devon and Cornwall Probation Trust, to provide earlier intervention to female offenders and their families.

The FIP works intensively with families for between 9-12 months in order to challenge and address entrenched patterns of behaviours impacting on the family and the local community. In most cases, the issues for any one family include various difficulties which impact on their ability to function and create positive outcomes for the children. These difficulties can include being subject to domestic abuse, substance misuse, patterns of offending behaviour, poor or no educational attendance, poor parenting and isolation.

FIP works from a 'can do' mentality, assessing the needs of all family members within the household, offering a holistic and whole family approach. The FIP provides an intensive family intervention service, coordinating a multi-agency response to problem solving alongside the family and other partnership agencies and teams including; Children's Services; Police, Youth Offending Team; Targeted Youth Support; Probation; Education and Health Services.

An independent evaluation of just **seven** families the FIP has worked with has shown that the project has averted costs totalling **£740,575**. This figure is based on the historic behaviour and costs of these families to the public purse compared to their present behaviour. Future savings will also accrue from the other **29** families (and the ongoing number of families the FIP are working with) who have been supported by the FIP, but whose change in behaviour has not yet been assessed. These cost savings will be calculated when the families have exited the programme.

To summarise, the aim of the FIP is to help families to help themselves whilst saving money, time and effort of the Local Authority and other partners.

This document for consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Members provides examples of how life has changed for some of the families who have worked with the FIP, and the long term financial savings the intervention has achieved.

Practical Examples

Family 1

Prior to FIP intervention, 'F' was in an abusive relationship and she and her two children 'G' and 'H' regularly smoked cannabis. 'H' was known to the Police and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) team and had poor school attendance.

Since FIP intervention, 'F' has been supported to leave the abusive relationship, and 'G' and 'H' stopped smoking cannabis. 'H' wants to pursue a career in the Army. Police and ASB complaints reduced from 22 in the 12 months prior to FIP intervention to 2 since FIP intervention.

Based on the average cost of an intervention per family in Torbay of **£19,578**, this example shows a saving of **£197,390** through completing the intervention versus doing nothing.

Cost breakdown	
Total cost of whole project to date	£ 704,804
Total no. of families	36
Average cost of Intervention	£ 19,578
Total Family Saving	£ 197,391
Family Savings	
Family Member 1	£ -
Family Member 2	£ 118,885
Family Member 3	£ 27,815
Family Member 4	£ 68,693
Family Member 5	£ 1,186
Family Member 6	£ 390
Family Member 7	£ -
Total family cost averted	£ 216,969
Category of Savings	
Domestic Violence	£ 116,272
Crime/anti-social behaviour	£ 33,245
Drug & Alcohol Services	£ -
Education/Employment	£ 55,016
Health Care	£ 2,032
Housing	£ 9,096
Social Care	£ 1,308
Total cost averted	£ 216,968
Organisation	
Commercial sector	£ -
Criminal Justice	£ 777
Health Service	£ 2,032
Local Authority	£ 2,566
Police	£ 9,351
Private Sector	£ -
Social Services	£ 1,308
Society	£ 171,288
Various	£ 7,145
YOT	£ 22,503
Total cost averted	£ 216,968

Family 5

Family 5 comprised single-parent 'M' and her four children 'J', 'Mk', 'A' and 'B'.

The family was referred to Torbay FIP due to ongoing concerns regarding noise nuisance, complaints from neighbours about underage drinking and ongoing reports of regular parties at the address. There were also concerns that 'B', aged nine, lacked parental supervision and suffered neglect.

There were reports of anti-social behaviour regarding 'A' climbing and sitting on neighbours' cars. There were also ongoing concerns over the financial circumstances of the tenant and the inability to pay utility bills.

The family continued to refuse assistance or support from any other agency and were considered 'very hard to reach'. The family had received a 'second stage' anti social behaviour (ASB) letter advising that their case was at the cusp of a Notice of Seeking Possession (NoSP). There was a lack of care in the property and in the garden. Damage to interior walls and doors and fences in the garden was not reported and not repaired.

After FIP intervention, reports of ASB have ceased over the last six months and there are no underage drinking concerns. No reports of noise nuisance have been received by the housing association and no further complaints made by neighbours.

'A' is now attending school regularly, engaging well and working towards their exams. 'Mk' is now in college full-time and engaging well. They also have a part-time job. 'B' presentation and attendance at school is no longer a concern.

'M' has redecorated the hall and landing and re-carpeted the property. The gardens are now kept tidy and free from rubbish. Essential maintenance to the property to ensure repairs are carried out has been logged with the housing association to continue. 'M' is now managing her debt and has been referred by FIP to Homemaker to continue to monitor and support this.

Based on the average cost of an intervention per family in Torbay of **£19,578**, this example shows a saving of **£44,681** through completing the intervention versus doing nothing.

Cost Breakdown

Total cost of whole project to date	£	704,804
Total no. of families		36
Average cost of Intervention	£	19,578
Total Family Saving	£	44,681

Family Savings

Family Member 1	£	-
Family Member 2	£	4,687
Family Member 3	£	30,811
Family Member 4	£	-
Family Member 5	£	28,761
Family Member 6	£	-
Family Member 7	£	-
Total family cost averted	£	64,259

Category of Savings

Domestic Violence	£	-
Crime/anti-social behaviour	£	876
Drug & Alcohol Services	£	-
Education/Employment	£	59,572
Health Care	£	63
Housing	£	3,748
Social Care	£	-
Total cost averted	£	64,259

Organisation

Commercial sector	£	-
Criminal Justice	£	-
Health Service	£	63
Local Authority	£	3,252
Police	£	-
Private Sector	£	-
Social Services	£	-
Society	£	59,572
Various	£	1,372
YOT	£	-
Total cost averted	£	64,259

Why Invest in intensive support for families with multiple problems?

A family with multiple problems may be lacking the resilience to overcome the problems facing them, or the motivation or capacity to get the support they need. A large proportion of these families will have four or more members, often where the father is absent and the mother struggling to cope and set boundaries. Substance misuse and/or mental health problems are common and often a factor leading to family violence and increased risk of children being taken into care. A lack of capacity to cope and poor family functioning will often result in a lack of engagement in learning, leading to low school attendance and attainment as well as consequences from poor behaviour in the classroom. Positive parenting that can help achieve success for parents and for children are often missing in these families.

The work with the seven families highlighted in the independent evaluation report has shown that their lives were chaotic, they were known to many agencies and their behaviour caused misery for local communities. They were families who had moved in and out of services as they hit crisis intervention points, entered the criminal justice system, come near to eviction, etc.

Many agencies will work with elements of these families at different times but only when they meet their threshold for service or intervention. Individual services are not meeting the range of needs for the whole family and agencies will be familiar with the revolving door and intergenerational issues within these families.

These high cost/high demand families may be worked with over a long period of time by a multiple of different agencies with little or no effect. This whole-family and intensive approach is a cost-effective way of **engaging the most difficult to reach families** and **supporting families who make the highest demands on services**. The FIP has demonstrated that it is able to work with and change the behaviour of these families not

only for their good, but for the good of the community and savings money to the Local Authority and its partners.

Measuring Performance

An independent evaluation of the Torbay FIP provided the following information:

In terms of promoting and improving multi-agency working, Torbay's FIP does this by:

- Providing co-ordination and reducing duplication.
- Holding people to account, ensuring delivery.
- Managing meetings better.
- Addressing the past difficulty in getting hold of appropriate agencies.
- Focusing attention on the context rather than the individuals.
- Improving and making continuous communication and information-sharing between agencies (e.g. allowing information about families to be shared more efficiently and effectively).
- Allowing housing associations to refer families direct to the FIP rather than through the ASB process (though there is no saving in staff time).
- Sharing information and providing early, lower-level interventions (e.g. help with getting children ready for school, improving attendance), so preventing later issues (e.g. underage drinking, substance abuse, behavioural problems etc).

In terms of helping deliver specific strategies and outcomes, stakeholders considered that Torbay's FIP delivers the following strategies/agendas:

- Community Development Strategy
- Partnership working
- Every Child Matters
- Child Protection
- Neighbourhood Policing priorities
- Police & Community Together (PACT) priorities
- The aim for financial inclusion
- Increased profile, public confidence and satisfaction

When evaluated against the benefits delivered to the families involved, stakeholders credited the Torbay FIP with:

- Increasing the opportunity for families to change (including 'FIP families' recommending the process to other families).
- Handing responsibility back to the families, empowering them and 'weaning' them off support services.
- Families are empowered, making other improvements around domestic abuse, self-confidence and changing lifestyles.
- From a parenting point-of-view, families have 'begun to stop blaming everyone else and have started taking responsibility for themselves'.
- Providing insight to parents (e.g. that their behaviour, as well as their children's, needs to change).
- Improving attitudes and confidence and changing families' views on life for the better and creating motivation that carries forward into other areas (e.g., to sort out all types of issues down to finances, repairs, etc).
- Providing 'respite' for families, enabling parents to cope better with their children.

- Breaking the cycle for families with long histories of ASB/offending behaviour and the intergenerational 'learned behaviour'.
- Helping contribute to economic well-being.
- Limiting the disruption in children's schooling that otherwise results from a family moving.

As the work of the FIP impacts on the broader community as well as individual families, in terms of the benefits for neighbours and neighbourhoods, stakeholders credit the Torbay FIP with:

- Increasing the freedom for neighbours.
- Providing some respite for neighbours.
- Effecting a visible impact in areas (e.g. achieving noticeable repairs to property, removal of rubbish, etc).
- Improving relationships between tenants and housing associations.

As stated in the introduction an independent evaluation of just seven families the FIP has worked with has shown that the project has averted costs totalling **£740,575**. This figure is based on the historic behaviour and costs of these families to the public purse compared to their present and ongoing change in behaviour having exited the FIP programme. Future savings will also accrue from the other families who have been supported by the FIP, but whose change in behaviour has not yet been assessed. These cost savings will be calculated when the families have exited the programme.

Summary

Many families are responsible for a significant amount of ASB and crime in our communities. Family units with complex and challenging needs not only have a negative impact on our neighbourhoods and the wellbeing of local people, they are also expensive. The long term cost of not intervening with such families is significant, for all statutory agencies. The long term impact of not intervening, particularly in terms of those children involved, can result in generations of entrenched negative behaviours and social inequalities.

The work of the FIP is targeted, co-ordinated, intense and challenging. Its results can change lives, improve communities and generate long term cost savings to the local authority and its partners.