

Improving Outcomes for Troubled Families – Update

Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board – 15 March 2012

Background

Torbay was selected as one of 50 areas in the second phase of Local Authorities to adopt the Community Budget approach to turn around the lives of complex families. The Community Budget programme has now been reviewed and revised by the Department of Communities and Local Government with a new approach being adopted across the whole of the country, under the banner of Troubled Families

What do we know so far?

We have been told that we have approximately 365 troubled families in Torbay using the following areas for selection as minimum (exact counter rules/criteria still to be determined)

- Families with Children with below minimum acceptable school attendance levels (likely to be below 85%)
- Families with offending histories (exact criteria unknown, likely to be conviction in previous 12 months)
- Families claiming out of work benefits

We will also have the local flexibility to apply additional criteria to assist with the final selection of our 365 that can reflect our local priorities

The final definition of what constitutes a troubled family is still being developed by the DCLG Troubled Families Unit and will be released following ministerial sign off. It is anticipated that Local Authorities will receive further information by the end of March.

Torbay Strategic Fit

The Troubled Families initiative will play a significant role in achieving the vision and principles of delivering seamless integrated services to the children, families and communities most in need within Torbay.

The principles which will ensure that we get maximum benefit from Torbay's approach to Troubled Families will:-

- Create a tangible/measurable outcome which saves costs by reducing the need for intensive and expensive interventions in the long term
- Focus our efforts on individuals or families and communities in Torbay's most deprived areas or high risk individuals/families across Torbay
- Improve inter-agency working by encouraging partners to work and think together, plus deliver services in a seamless way
- Develop new ways of working to ensure that the right response can be given to individuals/families at the first point of need by building on the strength of families and local communities
- Focus on the causes of the problems, not the symptoms, and where possible target the intervention in a 'whole family' context or whole community

- Facilitate a sustainable behavioural change which recognises the links between employment, health and wellbeing.

What Works with Troubled Families?

The first phase of 16 Community Budget areas included plans to integrate and redesign service, break down barriers between different professions, pool or align funding, develop new forms of partnerships and governance and engaging families and communities. There is a growing evidence base of 'What Works' with complex families with the learning achieved through the Community Budget pilots building on an existing evidence base for projects working across the country intensively with families.

In general we know that the following will be key aspects of a successful model that delivers sustainable change for the family:

- A dedicated key worker with low caseloads who works intensively with the whole family
- Taking a whole family perspective to assessment and tailoring 'packages' of support to family needs
- The use of persistent working methods e.g. very regular contact, contracts with consequences
- Adopting a Strengths based/solution focussed delivery model.
- Exit planning, ongoing support arrangements from other services in place

We already have examples of working in this way in Torbay with the Family Intervention Project and the recently formed Intensive Family Support Service.

Recreating the FIP/IFSS model will not be necessary to turn around the lives of all the troubled families but the principals that underpin the way in which families are engaged in achieving change can be applied in a wider context across the partnership

Funding?

The Troubled Families unit will be applying a unit cost to each family that they estimate is the average amount required to turn families around. They anticipate each family will cost £10K with 60% being funded by the Local Authority and Partner agencies with the remaining 40% coming from the Government.

Following consultation events and extensive feedback some of the 40% will now be offered to each local authority as an up front attachment fee. Recent conversations with the Troubled Families Unit suggests that we will be encouraged/invited to commit to working with 1/3 of our troubled families in year 1 with an attachment figure of £3,200 per family. This figure then reduces in years 2 & 3.

Torbay will also receive £75K per year to employ a Troubled Families Coordinator. This designation has been attached to the current Acting Head of Communities in Children's Service. The senior management structure has been reviewed following the appointment of the Director of Children's Services and revised position of Head of Families Services will be established before the end of March 2012

Responsibilities of the Head of Family Services in relation to 'Troubled Families' will include:

- Taking responsibility for identifying the most troubled families - the numbers, names and locations of the families in their area;
- Using the extra money provided by the Troubled Families Programme to lever all the remaining money and resources needed for their local programme;
- Ensuring local agencies (e.g. police, Job Centre Plus, health organisations, schools etc.) work together to put a robust plan of action in place to deal with the families;

- Focusing local action on the right results for the target families – ensuring the local area has gripped delivery and is on track to deliver against the success criteria set by DCLG;
- Ensuring that the progress of their local programme is being monitored and fed back to the Troubled Families Team.

The detail regarding the payments by results aspect of the funding is still unknown and likely to be less than originally conceived.

What has been achieved so far? Next steps?

Using data sources within the local authority a long list of 485 families has already been generated. This list needs to be 'field tested' with partners and operational/frontline practitioners. This will take place from the 12th March and will be finalised once the National criteria is finalised.

The list is already providing a valuable data set that will assist with local targeting and service design to meet needs.

We will then identify the first 100-120 families that will need to be engaged in the first year. The profile of the families (needs, location, agency engagement etc) will determine which services; agencies that need to work together differently to achieve the outcomes.

A Multi Agency Troubled Families Steering Group (name subject to change) will be established for mid April (or sooner depending on national guidance being issued) to agree how the first cohort of families will be engaged and continue to develop and monitor the approach over the three year period.

Nigel Denning

Acting Head of Communities

Childrens Services

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