

Intensive Family Intervention Programme

1.0 Background

Nationally all 152 local authority areas have signed up to the Troubled Families initiative with £450 million being invested to turn around the lives of 120,000 families. According to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) these families cost the public purse approximately £75,000 each per year.

The criteria for being identified as a troubled family is as follows:

- (i) A child within the family whose attendance at school is <85%
- (ii) Involvement in criminal or anti-social behaviour
- (iii) A member of the family is in receipt of out-of-work benefits

In addition to the above we are able to apply a fourth local filter which can be changed throughout the duration of the project.

In Wirral we are expected to work with 900 families between now and 31st March 2015 to improve school attendance, reduce criminal/anti-social behaviour and raise aspirations regarding employment and training.

2.0 Outcomes for Services and Families

There are a number of features about this project which will have a positive impact on outcomes for both services and families:

- (i) We will work persistently and consistently with families who have a history of non-engagement with services, or those, who despite multi-agency support, have failed to maintain positive changes
- (ii) One key worker will work intensively with the whole family to co-ordinate all interventions. This will make the intervention less chaotic for the family, reduce the amount of resources deployed by agencies and address issues of duplication.
- (iii) The programme will be intelligence-led. Using an intelligence hub, staffed by key partners such as police and health, a comprehensive history of the family including their involvements with agencies will be produced to allow more effective targeting of services and resources. This will give the Key Worker a greater understanding of who the family are, their historical issues as well as their current needs.
- (iv) The intelligence hub will also provide Key Workers with 'real time' updates on key events such as admissions to hospital, police call-outs and non-attendance at school, allowing immediate action to be taken.
- (v) A Strategy for Sanctions will be employed to ensure that families are aware from the very outset the risks they face if they are unable to make the necessary changes to their behaviour. We will not be introducing any new sanctions, rather we will be applying a more explicit and consistent approach to utilising and acting upon sanctions

3.0 Challenge and Support

As described above, the use of sanctions will offer challenge to families to change their behaviour. In addition to this we will be offering families a support package which builds on the existing offer within the local authority area. Specialist support will include:

- (i) Counselling for parents, couples and/or family groups. Research tells us that many of these parents have had traumatic childhoods and been through the care system themselves. We want to get to the root of the problem and will offer this support where we believe it will make a positive impact on family dynamics.
- (ii) Fast-tracking to Mental Health Act assessments, services for substance misuse and domestic abuse.
- (iii) Fast-tracking to housing and debt management services.
- (iv) Introducing a *Family Role Model* service. This service will match a volunteer with a family in order to provide them with someone (who is not a 'badged' professional) who can be a positive influence, promote healthy family relationships, boundaries and roles. The volunteer will also be able to stay engaged with the family for up to 6 months after the intervention is complete, thus helping families to maintain positive changes. (Appendix 1 'IFIP Delivery Model' document)

4.0 Project Delivery

In the first phase of the project we will focus on working with families in the Seacombe area. This will involve enhancing the Area Team, based within the Children's Centre, by bringing in more adult-focused services, implementing the intelligence hub, and using the Family Assessment, Family Contract and Team Around the Family processes. We aim to target 80 families in Seacombe who meet the criteria for selection. In the second phase of the programme we will extend the model to Birkenhead, Tranmere and Rock Ferry and by the final phase it will be in operation across Wirral. (Appendix 2 'Delivering IFIP' document).

In addition to using the project as a means by which we improve the way we work with families, we are hoping to be able to support community development. Working with partners such as Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, Wirral Community Patrol, Voluntary, Community and Faith organisations and the Youth Service, we will be hosting events and supporting community-based initiatives to enhance family life within the areas that they live.

5.0 Recommendations:

5.1 That Wirral Children's Trust Board notes the report.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 IFIP Delivery Model
Appendix 2 Delivering IFIP