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Troubled Families

**Louise Casey CB, Director-General, Troubled Families Team,
Department for Communities and Local Government**

Purpose of report

For noting and discussion.

Summary

Louise Casey CB is speaking to the Councillors' Forum about the Government's programme to tackle troubled families that was announced by the Prime Minister on 15 December 2011. It is an opportunity for Louise Casey CB to outline the approach and for members to raise any issues.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the presentation and raise issues for local government.

Action

As directed by the Forum.

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The problem

1. The Government estimates that there are around 120,000 'troubled families' or 'families with complex needs' across the country. The estimate of the number of families in each upper tier local authority area has also been published, ranging from a handful to over 4,000. They cost the public purse approximately £75,000 per family annually or £9 billion in total. £8 billion of this is spent on reactive services, for example taking a child into care or police and court costs.
2. Up to 28 public services might engage with the members of one family, often uncoordinated, with separate interactions, assessments and funding streams. This is not only inefficient, but the fragmentation of each service addressing a separate symptom also hinders investment in tackling the root causes of the problems. There is a split incentive as the savings resulting from investment in prevention by one part of the public sector accrue to another.

Existing local action

3. Family intervention projects (FIPs) are not a new concept; 83 per cent of councils were operating them as of September 2011 (Department for Education). FIPs have a key worker acting as a single point of contact for a whole family, intensively working with them to identify and resolve problems, as well as coordinating the range of services. This approach has been demonstrably successful. An evaluation of 3,675 families published by the Department for Education this year showed a 58 per cent reduction in antisocial behaviour, 53 per cent reduction in truancy, 34 per cent reduction in child protection issues and 48 per cent reduction in alcohol problems.
4. A FIP coordinates services for a family, but it does not address the fundamental problems of fragmentation and split incentives within public services, something local government has long recognised. 16 areas (covering 28 councils) have been piloting community budgets for families with complex needs and more than 70 councils came forward to join them.
5. Community budgets offer an opportunity to bring together the myriad local public services in a different way, aligning outcomes and pooling resources to

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enable joint investment in services and joint sharing of the savings. This should allow both greater efficiency and investment in family intervention.

6. The first 16 areas have taken a variety of approaches, reflecting the different existing local priorities and arrangements. Lewisham has identified that not all families have the same problems and therefore need different interventions, for example one focuses on reducing involvement in gangs and another on getting families back into work. Some areas, such as Kent and Essex have focused on families in particular geographic areas, developing arrangements with the relevant district councils. Westminster has built on its successful Family Recovery Project and Swindon has continued to develop its work with the social enterprise Participle on the LIFE programme, which puts families at the heart of developing services. Many areas, such as Birmingham and Bradford are incorporating early intervention and prevention into their programmes to build resilience in communities.
7. Progress has been made, but the pace has sometimes been frustratingly slow and limited. Some areas, including 8 partners in Lincolnshire, have succeeded in pooling funding, as opposed to aligning budgets. However, in most cases this has not materialised. In the last year or so the development of integrated public services in pilot areas has been hindered by vested departmental interests, despite the determination of councils to help families with complex needs.

The changing context

8. The summer disorder dramatically altered the context for community budgets for families with complex needs. The Prime Minister's reiteration of his ambition to turn around the lives of 120,000 troubled families formed a central plank of the Government's response, throwing into sharp focus the work being undertaken locally. The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP was given responsibility and a Troubled Families Team was established in CLG, headed by Louise Casey CB. Local government has not however been standing idly by, waiting for the Government to develop its own plans. Instead councils have sought to maintain the momentum behind existing local action.

The Government's programme

9. The Prime Minister's speech on 15 December 2011 announced the outline of the Government's approach. There is much detail yet to be finalised, but crucially, and in line with the LGA's position, it will enable existing local work to be scaled up, rather than a separate initiative being bolted on. Regardless of the language used, this programme will need to build upon the fundamental principles of community budgets and learn from the experiences of the pilot areas. The LGA will continue to work with CLG and councils on the detail of the model as it is developed.

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10. It is clear that this work is not just a priority for the Prime Minister; it is an important issue for councils too. However, there is likely to be tension between the pace required to meet the Prime Minister's commitment by 2015 and local government's desire to achieve longer-term transformation of public services locally.

Payments by results

11. The Prime Minister announced that £448 million will be allocated from existing Whitehall budgets to support this programme. This figure represents 40 per cent of the estimated £1 billion cost of intervening in the lives of 120,000 families and will be directed to councils, on the basis of results. It is intended to incentivise a shift of local spending from expensive reactive services that respond to the problems of these families to addressing the root causes earlier at less cost.
12. The speech stated that councils will need to match fund the other 60 per cent, however it is not just councils that need to invest to save, but local public services across an area. This includes for example health, police and Job Centre Plus, who will also realise the benefits of improving the families' lives. Local partners have been reluctant to meaningfully engage in community budgets and CLG's Troubled Families Team will need to ensure that a strong message is given to Whitehall departments and cascaded down to their local delivery agencies about the importance of multi-agency working, including financial contributions.
13. The speech identified four key outcomes to be delivered locally:
- 13.1 getting children back into school
 - 13.2 reducing criminal and anti-social behaviour
 - 13.3 getting parents on the road back to work
 - 13.4 reducing the cost to the taxpayer and local authorities.
14. These may sound straightforward, but are not easy to measure. At the same time, it will also be important not to create a system of inordinate bureaucracy. Outcome and progress measures and payment structures will need to be agreed that enable councils and local partners to sufficiently manage their risk and have the confidence to invest. The LGA will work with CLG and councils on the development of the model.

Identifying the families

15. The Government wants councils to have identified who the troubled families are, where they live and what services they use by February. However, the

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definition of a 'troubled family' for the purpose of this identification has not yet been agreed.

16. The LGA considers that councils, with information from their local partners, will identify the families to work with in its area, but that reporting a list to the centre is neither practical nor palatable. Assurance about progress will be provided by the Payments by Results mechanism, with councils providing information in order to receive payments. There is no need for additional reporting.
17. Furthermore the willingness of individual families to engage in programmes of support is critical to their success. The trust between families, councils and other local partners is likely to be undermined if receiving support automatically results in families being placed on a central list held by the Government.

Trouble-shooters

18. A national network of trouble-shooters will oversee the programme of action in their area, including making sure the right families are getting the right type of help, that sanctions are in place when needed, and that positive results are being achieved with the troubled families in their area. It is positive that these trouble-shooters are to be appointed by councils, but again details remain to be resolved, such as whether all upper tier councils will be expected to appoint one; the amount of grant funding available; and the nature of the relationship between the trouble-shooters and CLG.

Louise Casey CB, Director-General, Troubled Families Team, CLG

Louise Casey CB joined Shelter, the housing charity in 1992 and in 1999, she joined the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as director of the Rough Sleeper's Initiative. In 2002 she was appointed to run the Government's Anti-Social Behaviour Unit and subsequently worked as Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Adviser at the Home Office. She has been the independent Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses from March 2010, until her appointment to head CLG's Troubled Families Team.

