

Troubled Families

Purpose

For discussion and decision.

Summary

At the Board meeting in September members suggested there might be lessons relevant to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour arising out of the Trouble Families programme. This report provides an overview of the programme to date, the issues that have been addressed when working with families and what factors have made a difference to the families involved in the programme. Joe Tuke (Director, Troubled Families Team, Communities and Local Government) will be at the meeting to share learning from the programme to date.

Recommendation/s

Members are invited to:

- (a) note what the Troubled Families programme has achieved and the factors that have made a difference in turning round the lives of the families involved in the programme.
- (b) explore what lessons the Troubled Families programme has for wider work by councils and their partners in preventing offending and reducing.

Action/s

Officers to progress as directed.

Contact officer: Charlotte Breen
Position: Adviser
Phone no: 0207 6643243
Email: Charlotte.breen@local.gov.uk

Troubled Families

Background

1. Following the riots in the summer of 2011 the government announced the Troubled Families programme. The aim of the programme was to turn around the lives of the 120,000 most troubled families by the end of the parliament, and also reduce the £9 billion these families were estimated to cost the economy and the state. At the heart of the programme has been the development of a multi-agency approach to supporting the families that deals with the families' problems as a whole and was based on the community budget concept. There are of course strong similarities between this approach and with successful programmes to reducing offending and re-offending.
2. The initial launch of the programme saw the government make £448 million available to councils on a payment-by-results basis, with the money pooled from a number of different departments including Education, Work and Pensions, Justice, Home Office and Communities and Local Government. Troubled families were defined as families involved in youth crime or anti-social behaviour, had children excluded from school or were truanting, and had an adult on out-of-work benefits.
3. As of October 2014 the government reported that the programme had reached 117,000 families out of the target of 120,000, and the lives of 69,000 of those families had been turned round. An expansion of the programme was announced in August, with 51 of the best performing areas piloting this expanded programme. The expanded programme will run from 2015 to 2020 and work with an additional 400,000 more families. The expanded criteria for a family to be included in the programme will include those with a history of domestic violence, children at risk of being taken into care, and family health problems as well as the three original criteria.

Understanding Troubled Families

4. In July, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published the report Understanding Troubled Families (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-troubled-families>). The report sets out the complexity of the issues faced by families involved in the Troubled Families programme. The key finding from the report was just how difficult and complex these families' lives are. On average nine serious problems exist in any one family at one time. Unsurprisingly these number of problems mean families are often in chaos. The report also noted the level of mental and physical health problems experienced by the adults and their children, and the level of violence – three out of ten of the families experience domestic violence. The report also highlighted the need for services to work with the family as a whole to make a difference.

Changing lives

5. As part of the Troubled Families programme the government evaluated the success of intensive and persistent multi-agency approaches to supporting families to overcome their problems between 2007 and 2011. The evaluation report by the National Centre for Social Research found that a family getting intensive support and challenge is twice as likely to stop anti-social behaviour as one not getting the intervention. It found that:

- There was a 58 per cent reduction in the percentage of families engaged in ASB - from 81 per cent of families to 34 – when they exited (representing a 47 percentage point reduction)
 - There was a 41 per cent reduction in the percentage of families involved in crime - from 35 per cent of families to 20 per cent – when they left a family intervention (representing a 14 percentage point reduction based on unrounded percentages).
6. From this work the Troubled Families team in the Department of Communities and Local Government identified key features of effective family intervention. These were having a dedicated key worker, dedicated to the family who could provide practical hands on support, but who were persistent, assertive and challenging. The workers also had to understand the family as a whole and gather as much information about them as they could. Family intervention workers were also important in pulling together and aligning a range of agencies, and working with them to use sanctions to change behaviour.
7. Wider critical success factors of the programme have been identified as:
- Personalised, ‘wraparound’ interventions – understanding that family problems are complex and diverse and that local responses need to be flexible to the unique problems each family faces
 - Multi-agency working/co-location – the multi-agency approach allows for a ‘whole family’ approach
 - Strong relationships – Good relationships between local agencies are a key feature to delivering high performing reform of family services
 - Commitment and leadership – Strong local relationships need to be endorsed by senior management locally and nationally
 - Data sharing – Data sharing protocols and trust are key to enabling the services to work alongside each other to deliver a ‘whole family’ approach.
8. The Government have collated a series of case studies from local authorities showcasing the impact the role of the key worker has had in supporting families to turn their lives around (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/troubled-families-case-studies>). The emphasis is on a role that is both supportive and challenging and they help to remove some of the barriers that prevent families from resolving or managing their problems. Many of these case studies share a story on how youth engagement in crime and anti-social behaviour emerged as a manifestation of wider family problems, the key worker has been critical in resolving some of the wider concerns and as a result there has been a significantly improved outcome in reducing anti-social behaviour.
9. Case studies from the London Councils report on the Troubled Families programme in the capital highlighted how important multi-agency approaches are. Waltham Forest for example transformed the way services worked with each other to avoid duplication by bringing the Youth Offending Service, Educational Welfare Service, Community Safety and Targeted Youth Support into one service area, while Wandsworth’s approach was

based around a multi-agency team consisting of outreach workers, data analysts, police officers, a psychologist, a mental health worker, health visitors, a substance misuse officer, a community nurse, a housing officer and a domestic violence worker.

10. Programmes to reduce reoffending such as integrated offender management have taken a similar multi-agency approach to work with offenders to stop them committing further offences. Given the scale of the cohort the Troubled Families programme has worked with, the complexity of issues within families that have had to be addressed and the overlap between these issues (such as substance misuse and mental health problems) and the factors that can push people into committing offences, there are likely to be lessons from the Troubled Families work of relevance to preventing people from offending.

Next steps

11. Members are therefore invited to explore what lessons the Troubled Families programme has for wider work by councils.

Financial Implications

12. There are no financial implications for the Board arising from this report.