

## **Families First: Understanding Families, Assessing Impact**

February 2013

Families First is Harrow's approach to the government's Troubled Families initiative. The approach explores ways to deliver a whole family approach with our children and families to improve outcomes at less cost to the public purse.

This report provides 3 case studies describing the impact of the approach on workers, families and key partner agencies.

### **Impact**

Measuring the impact of preventative work is notoriously difficult, particularly where the aim is to change families. It is essential we are able to judge how effective the approach is in making a difference to families.

Systems are in place with families to judge the impact of intensive key workers, through the use of tools such as the Impact Circle where we map out with each family the progress toward their objectives. These are linked to the overall aims of the whole family support model in the Early Intervention Service.

We will also collect hard data on the 3 main objectives set out by DCLG: school attendance and exclusions; youth crime and ASB; adults claiming benefits. These outputs will contribute to the claiming of payment by results

The case studies in this report demonstrate the impact key workers are having on families as they grapple with the issues surrounding a family. There are signs the personalised budget is proving effective in encouraging families to make the necessary steps toward lasting change. Working with families brings benefits, which can be mapped across a range of services around the family. At this stage it is a work in progress, and these are only early indications, but it is progress towards direct financial savings.

In addition, we have allocated resources to invest in an evaluation partner to help measure and develop practice with a focus on demonstrating cashable savings. In future we will have a much greater understanding of a cohort well beyond our target of 395 troubled families.

### **Background**

Troubled families are those that have problems and often cause problems to the community around them, putting high costs on the public sector. In December 2011, the government launched a new programme to turn around the lives of 120,000 troubled families in England by 2015. The aims of the Troubled Families Programme are to get children back into school, reduce youth crime and anti-social behaviour, put adults on a path back to work and bring down the amount public services currently spend on them.

The project is funded from central government in a combination of up-front payments and payment by results. Harrow Council must work with 395 families before the end of the project in May 2015. Children from troubled families often go to be the next generation of troubled families. By working together and intervening earlier with families we can reduce the incidence of intergenerational cycles and improve outcomes for the families.

## National Picture

The government are clear about the impact the project must have and about the approach local authorities should adopt when working with troubled families. They expect local authorities to work towards joining up local services and deal with a family's problem as a whole. This involves appointing a single key worker to get to grips with a family and adopt the following approaches:

- Practical hands on support
- A persistent approach
- Consider the family as a whole
- A common purpose and agreed action

## Harrow

Families First is adopting this approach as it aims to change the way we work with families, and to achieve more effective sustainable long-term outcomes for families while delivering cost effective services. This includes securing a step change in service delivery from focusing on individual children to working with a whole family; developing joined up local services; ensuring each family has an experienced and well trained key worker that can support families to understand their needs and support them to bring about sustainable change; and research into the interventions used by services to develop outcomes focused commissioning.

### Whole family approach

Sustainable – aims to move families closer to independence from public services

Consequences – realising these will lead the family towards taking increased responsibility

Listening – understanding the needs of the family

### Intensive key workers

Team Around the Family approach (TAF)

Freedom and flexibility to find solutions

Personalised commissioning at family level

Families / workers able to access services quickly

### Commissioning

Supports early / earlier intervention

Builds on good, well evaluated practice

Will develop graduated model of interventions

Evaluation partner to help map out cashable savings

## Case Studies

These 3 case studies go some way to outlining the approach of Families First in Harrow. They also map out the effect the approach is having on families and children, and on some internal and external services.

