

Annexe 2

Strategic Commissioning CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Families First: Approach & Development Plan

September 2013

Background

Harrow Council signed up to the government's Troubled Families initiative on 30 April 2012. The council has committed to work with 395 families during the life of the Families First project up until May 2015. The project must work with 198 families in 2013/14. In each of the identified families we are expected to achieve the following: improve school attendance, reduce crime and anti social behaviour, and help individuals back into work, or onto a work programme.

In addition to the government's criteria, we will focus on those families where there is evidence of domestic violence and those on the edge of custody and the edge of care, with particular emphasis on the prevention of gang activity and youth violence.

In May a full review of the project was carried out and the future challenges to successfully deliver the project assessed. Last year's aim was to kick start the project and achieve the target of working with 75% of our families. While this was achieved areas for continued improvement have been identified including:

- scaling up capacity to meet demand
- having a greater understanding of outcomes for families
- securing progress towards Payment by Results.
- evidencing the impact Early Intervention has and to demonstrate the cost benefits of early help and a whole family approach.

Approach

The Government's Troubled Families initiative offers the opportunity to change the way we work with families and try *evidence-based innovative approaches* to improve outcomes for vulnerable families.

The Early Intervention Service was positively commented on by Ofsted during the most recent inspection. Therefore, our approach to Troubled Families will not be a separate initiative, but rather embedded in the Early Intervention Service as a way of working differently to achieve better outcomes.

Families First is required to work with a minimum of 395 families. Our evaluation partner will facilitate a greater understanding of our actual family cohort; those families who need some level of support yet fall outside of the narrow criteria from DCLG. We expect this number to be in the region of 1000+ families and will be commissioning from this perspective in future.

Troubled Families criteria

Troubled Families must have:

1. Under 18s involved in crime and/or family member involved in anti-social behaviour
2. Child excluded from school or persistently absent – below 85%
3. An adult on benefits

Families must meet at least 2 out of 3 criteria to be eligible

Co-production¹ will be a key part of Families First and future commissioning for EIS. We will ask families what they need and work with them to achieve this. The empowerment and participation of families and children in the design and delivery of services should become accepted practice.

We will develop our approach to commissioning our Voluntary Sector providers so that staff work together in multi-agency teams to build our collective *system capacity* across the children's economy and enrich our practice.

Early Intervention

The Early Intervention Services Division in Harrow encompasses the Early Intervention Teams, Youth Development Teams, Harrow Tuition Service and Children Centres. The Early Intervention Services Division is responsible for developing and delivering a range of early intervention evidence based approaches in partnership with children, young people and their families. The Division works with children & young people from conception up to 19, or up to 24 for young people with a disability.

A primary aim of early intervention and Families First in particular, is to offer cost effective early help and support to children, young people and their families to help them address major problems early on before they have substantial effects on children's development and attainment. Such activities can act to reduce the long term need for expensive interventions and intervening early can be a cost-effective way of providing essential support and guidance, given the very high costs of dealing with the repercussions of failure (a single extremely chaotic family can cost in excess of £250,000 per year²).

Early intervention is vital in supporting the principles of the Government's Troubled Families initiative, particularly by providing resources for the people who will identify families in need of help; make sure they get access to the right services; and ensure that action is taken.

While everyone is focused on the key criteria to *identify* families including: children back into school; reduce their criminal and anti-social behaviour; parents on the road back to work; we should not lose sight of the main success criteria: **to reduce the costs to the taxpayer and local authorities.**

Obstacles to delivering early intervention services

The practical application of early intervention activities will take place at local level. Local authorities, health bodies and schools procure programmes and services to meet local needs. Commissioners face a number of obstacles to collaborative working and early intervention:

- It is easier to prioritise finite resources on later intervention, particularly given statutory requirements in this area
- Early Intervention and innovative investment is perceived as risky, and is likely to require a period of dual running alongside more intensive support for those suffering from severe problems, before cashable savings can be realised

¹ Co-production means delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become far more effective agents of change – Nesta 2009

² Cabinet Office – Social Exclusion Report 2006

- There is limited understanding of what works, and the range of evidence on effectiveness of programmes and practice is vast and varying in robustness

Understanding our families, understanding what works

Families with complex needs are described as those who exhibit the following characteristics:

- Domestic violence in the home
- Parental mental health problems
- Substance misuse problems
- Housing or debt problems
- Youth offending or anti-social behaviour
- poor school attendance and exclusions
- Worklessness in the family
- poor or inconsistent parenting
- Parental learning disability.

The national Troubled Families programme has explicitly focused on three of these characteristics while tacitly acknowledging families with these three characteristics are likely to have other problems too; in addition there will be families that do not specifically meet all of the primary Troubled Families criteria.

The relative strengths and limitations of identifying target populations in advance won't be debated here, though 'snapshot' approaches can be helpful in pro-actively identifying families before they present to specialist services. What is clear is any response to the troubled family initiative necessarily has to take a whole family approach.

In developing the Families First project a range of research summaries were consulted to understand what works when intervening successfully with families.³ The key messages from research state that:

- Programmes are more effective where they build on existing family strengths and address key needs of all family members
- Using robust and clear family agreements about what needs to change and why produce the best results
- Direct work with the family is more likely to succeed than single issue interventions
- The quality of staff and high quality training are essential

A range of specific interventions are frequently cited as proven to work:

- Family Therapy
- Multi Systemic Therapy
- Specific parenting programmes: Triple P Parenting; Incredible Years; Strengthening Families; PAFT

Much of this practice is already embedded within Early Intervention Services and was therefore the most appropriate service in which to deliver Families First.

³ *Allen Review of Early Intervention (2011); The Munro Review of Child Protection (2011); Ofsted: Edging Away from Care (2011)*

To kick-start the project the majority of the initial cohort was drawn from families already known to EIS. Any Families new to EIS are automatically matched against the criteria and brought into Families First.

EIS has made very good progress in engaging with the cohort of families, but further work is required to improve the interface between specialist services and Families First. Firstly, by developing the offer of a whole family approach where the primary engagement is outside early intervention services; and secondly by commissioning a continuum of intervention from universal services through to high end families.

Developments for 2013/14

Governance

In preparation for the Year 2 delivery a review of the Families First Core Group was undertaken. Initially the Core Group was formed to drive forward the initial delivery of the project. While it achieved its aims it struggled to combine the twin strands of operational delivery and strategic development. To support improved working the Core Group has been replaced by an operational group and a strategic board.

The operational group is small, meets frequently and is the 'getting things done' group monitoring and progressing actions to ensure successful delivery of the project.

The board will hold strategic oversight of Early Intervention, Families First and the commissioning of the full spectrum of family needs. Its focus is the development of a graduated model of intervention based on family needs: from additional targeting through universal services to intensive key worker support; through the Families First model with a menu of additional support options and an individual budget for small items.

The board will also work with and monitor the work of the Evaluation Partner ensuring pathway design, thresholds, level of intervention, menu of additional support and other options for prototyping and design for the overall service is built on evidence and sound financial costings.

Dedicated Resource

The project has recruited 3 additional dedicated Families First key workers and 2 dedicated counsellors. These staff sit in a new dedicated Families First team of seven workers ensuring greater focus on cases, and the progress towards meeting the Payment by Results criteria. The additional resource will develop responsibility for joint-working cases allocated to targeted services. The team will accept direct internal and external referrals once the appropriate safeguarding checks are complete.

Worklessness

The workless element of the Troubled Families agenda is the most challenging of the criteria. For Year 2 the project has funded a dedicated resource from Xcite available to eligible families. Xcite will track those families who achieve employment as an outcome and monitor the progress families make towards job readiness.

Xcite work closely with Reed allowing us to identify additional families referred to the ESF funded programme.

Evaluation Partner

It is vital for the project to identify the costs and outcomes of intervening with families. In particular there should be a review of the impact of interventions on families. But this is only a starting point in what we require from an evaluation partner.

Families First has commissioned an evaluation partner to inform pathway design, thresholds, detailed profiling of families, the level of intervention required, a menu of additional support and other options for prototyping and designing the Early Intervention service.

The evaluation will inform the process for commissioning the full spectrum of family needs from early intervention through to Families First. This will result in a graduated model of intervention based on family needs ranging from additional targeting through universal services, and up to intensive key worker support.

The Institute of Public Care (Oxford Brookes University) have been appointed as the Families First and Early Intervention Evaluation Partner. Learning from Families First provides an excellent springboard for broader EIS commissioning and link up to Universal Services.

Team Around the Family

An effective team around the family approach including family assessment is already embedded in EIS. Future development will include bespoke training to improve TAFs.

Personalised Budgets

Families First introduced an innovative model of individual commissioning as part of a personalised support package alongside highly effective key working. Early indications suggest this approach is having a positive effect. Key workers find that access to personalised support provides an innovative lever to initiate change in families. It also helps to step up the pace of change, building trust with families as they can see the key worker engaging with their issues and co-producing a solution which impacts on agreed outcomes.

Intensive Family Support

Intensive support is well documented in supporting families where there are concerns of neglect, or in those presenting a high level of need. An outline is required of how intensive support will be incorporated into a whole spectrum of support and the thresholds for such support.

The voluntary and community sector are well placed to deliver elements of this type of support, and Families First will seek to develop and test out this area. The community sector could be utilised to deliver a range of pre and post intervention support. For example, we are aware of some families who have yet to engage with FF, but are currently working with a local provider from the community sector. The provider can function as a cost effective preparatory to engagement and intervention by key workers.

Stakeholder Engagement

There is an Early Intervention event planned for October 2013 to share headline information from the evaluation with stakeholders, and to provoke their interest in the agenda. In particular we wish to focus attention on their contribution to service and intervention delivery in future.

This will provide an opportunity for stakeholders and the third sector in particular, to get a sense of our market position and be prepared for when we begin to commission interventions.

We are not yet in a position to jointly commission services or interventions with health partners; nor are we in a position to agree investment to reduce demand for specialist services. But we should explore in more depth what we can achieve in this area. This may involve significant investment from the budget for Families First.

Police Mentoring

FF is looking to trial the use of Police Officers as mentors for individual families. The officers would visit families in a non-statutory capacity. There is positive feedback from this approach within the youth offending service.

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