

SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES	Agenda Item No. 6
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Report of the Safer Peterborough Manager Gary Goose

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TROUBLED FAMILIES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To review the progress of the Troubled Families programme (known locally as Connecting Families) in rural localities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Commission is asked to note the contents of the report and the issues contained therein.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1 The issues pertaining to the Troubled Families agenda links across all aspects of the Sustainable Community Strategy, particularly around Creating Strong and Supportive Communities.

4. BACKGROUND TO THE TROUBLED FAMILIES PROGRAMME

- 4.1 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 Prime Minister launched a new programme to turn around the lives of 120,000 troubled families in England by 2015.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 All 152 upper-tier local authorities in England are taking part in the programme and have agreed the number of troubled families in their area that they will work with.
- 4.4 The Government is making £448 million available to councils on a payment-by-results basis. This represents a contribution of up to £4000 per family, around 40% of the estimated costs of actions needed to turn a family around. Funding will come from a number of departments including Communities and Local Government, Education, Work and Pensions and Health, with full payment made only when results are achieved. The other 60% will be covered by local authorities and other local partners who all benefit from the savings that result.
- 4.5 A one-off average investment of £4,500 in work with each family is expected to reduce the annual £15,000 cost of dealing with their problems, by supporting families to access work, reducing anti-social behaviour, poor school attendance and criminality.
- 4.6 DCLG reported figures to the end of October 2013 indicate that, nationally:
- 92,000 families have been identified
 - 62,000 families are being worked with

- 22,000 families have been 'turned around' (1,400 into sustained jobs)

5.0 HOW THE PROGRAMME WORKS

- 5.1 For the purposes of qualifying to be part of the Troubled Families Programme, they are those who meet three of the four following criteria:
- Are involved in youth crime or anti-social behaviour
 - Have children who are regularly truanting or not in school
 - Have an adult on out of work benefits
 - Cause high costs to the taxpayer
- 5.2 The outcomes set out by Government required to achieve a payment by results are:
- 60% reduction in anti-social behaviour, across the family in the last 6 months and/or a 33% reduction in youth offending.
 - Each child in the family having fewer than three fixed term exclusions and/or less than 15% unauthorised absence in the last 3 school terms
 - At least one adult in the family to have either volunteered for the Work Programme or be attached to the European Social Fund (ESF) provision in the last 6 months
 - At least one adult in the family moving off out-of-work benefits into continuous employment in that last 6 months

6.0 TROUBLED FAMILIES IN PETERBOROUGH – THE CONNECTING FAMILIES PROGRAMME

- 6.1 Peterborough's response to the national Troubled Families programme is 'Connecting Families'.
- 6.2 Troubled families often have a whole host of agencies involved with them, often focussing on the individuals within that family, which can bring its own problems as families become confused by overlapping professionals, assessments and appointments. This costly and unfocussed activity can mask the lack of progress for that family. Some of the starkest evidence for this collective failure to properly help families is to be found in the frequency of problems which are transmitted from one generation of the same family to another.
- 6.3 The Troubled Families programme works by assigning a dedicated worker to engage with a whole family on all of its problems, such as ensuring that the children attend school, appointments are met and appropriate services are accessed. Crucially, all of the public services involved with members of a family are coordinated and the demand on them reduced
- 6.4 The model creates a virtual team where partner agencies provide their own co-ordinator(s) referred to as 'Connectors'. Each full time equivalent Connector will hold a caseload of approximately 10 families, managing the family's action plan, co-ordinating the family's participation with partnership interventions, and acting as the single point of contact to their host agency.
- 6.5 Troubled Families funds will support agencies towards payment of the Connector. This equates to £15,000 per connector. A personal budget of up to £2,000 per family will be made available to support interventions.
- 6.6 The analysis team in the Communities and Targeted Services Directorate are currently in the process of identifying these families. The identification process involves a trawl of historic information from a wide range of data sources including, school attendance data, school exclusions, children in Pupil Referral Units, Youth Offending Service data, Police data, Children's Social Care data and information from Registered Social Landlords. This information is taken from across the Peterborough Unitary Authority area and is not confined to urban wards.

7.0 KEY ISSUES

- 7.1 The local identification of troubled families in Peterborough is ongoing. Based on the Government figures suggesting that there are 450 troubled families in the City as a whole, it can be inferred that given that 12% of households¹ in Peterborough are situated in rural wards, this equates to 54 troubled families who live in rural wards.
- 7.2 This is a crude analysis but provides an illustration of indicative numbers. Further work is currently being done to identify more information on the location of these families and this is likely to be completed by the end of financial year.
- 7.3 The Commission for Rural Communities, in their Annual Report for 2006, identified three main causes of rural isolation in England:
- Lack of income and employment
 - Lack of access to transport and other services
 - Lack of contact with, and help from, relatives, friends and neighbours.
- 7.4 The Troubled Families programme can be viewed as an integral part in reducing the rural isolation that families living in outlying villages often feel. The programme focuses on creating lasting change. Getting adults back into work may involve working with families to improve, for example, access to local services, internet access and access to transport, amongst other things.
- 7.5 The anticipated results of the programme will be families working better as a unit, with children attending school regularly, parents in jobs or training, lower levels of crime and anti-social behaviour and, overall, healthier, happier and stronger communities.

8.0 FAMILY CASE STUDY

The case study below provides an anonymised example of a real case in where a Connector is working with a family, this is the words of the Connector who describes the issues they faced.

8.1 Summary of the problems the family faced

- State of the house: Mum and son were living in was in such bad condition their health was being affected. Mould on the walls, damp, grimy and discoloured.
- Heating was constantly being cut off as the Landlord had arrears which Mum was ending up paying.
- Domestic violence from son towards mum in which Police have been called.
- Son's attendance was low and dropped below 85%
- Mum was finding it difficult to find work.
- Son's behaviour inside and outside of school fluctuated and could become angry very quickly. Also involved in anti-social behaviour.

8.2 Description of the situation before intervention

Before Connecting Families intervention the conditions that Mum and Son were living in was in such a bad state, their health was being affected, particularly Son's as he had rashes from being so cold inside the property. This caused his attendance to drop as he found it difficult to go to bed and get up for school, the school attendance team got involved at this point without realising the extent of the situation. He was also angry at Mum because of the situation and this led to violent behaviour from time to time towards her. Mum was also struggling for money, when she

¹ 8,709 households are located in the rural wards of Barnack, Eye and Thorney, Glinton and Wittering, Newborough and Northborough, All Occupied Household Spaces, Census 2011

paid for her heating on a meter half of it was being cut off as it had arrears. This meant she needed to pay more for fundamental requirements and left her little money to spend on other things such as food.

8.3 **Description of the intervention**

Date intervention began - 16/01/2013

Date results achieved - 10/1/2014

8.4 **Type of/ intensity of intervention**

The first initial meeting with the family was at a Team Around A Child Meeting at the school. It was at this meeting that all the issues the family faced was brought to light. For example the condition of the property, her financial situation and school attendance etc. The meeting was a good way to begin to build a rapport with the family, from the Team Around A Child Meeting the Connector set themselves some actions to support with Mums issues. These actions involved organising some new heaters for the property which would help in the short term, whilst at the same time get the family moved to a more appropriate property.

Completing these action helped build trust between the Connectors and family. This ensured that Mum was being honest and open about her situation. The Connector continued to take actions from the case to offer continued support. These actions included contacting the energy company to obtain compensation for Mum and to prosecute the Landlord for the arrears Mum had been wrongfully paying off. Getting Son involved in extracurricular activities and clubs outside of school, having this social interaction and burning off extra energy really helped son in school and out with behaviour and attendance. Support was also made with attending meetings to CAB and the Job Centre. The Connector made sure all her benefits were on track and that she paying off any arrears appropriately. It was important whilst working with the family that the intensity of the intervention dies down and that we give Mum responsibility for herself, to achieve her own actions, this way the family can be independent without the need for intervention in the future. We helped support Mum with employment, we got her onto flower arranging courses which she wanted us to attend with her, this built up her self-confidence and give her self-esteem. This was a big boost, and gave her the confidence she needed to attend interviews. The Connector found a job close by which Mum applied for, she got an interview, passed and then started employment. Mum was extremely excited as she would have more money and more confidence.

8.5 **Result of intervention**

- Son's attendance is over 90%
- Mum is in employment.
- Family are now in a property which provides their fundamental needs.
- Son is more active and less angry.
- Mum would like to go into full time employment.
- Relationship between Mum and Son is much better, no domestic violence.
- Son is not involved in any crime or ASB.

9.0 **EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE - WANDSWORTH**

9.1 The London Borough of Wandsworth has been held up nationally as an authority of good practice in the way they have delivered their Troubled Families model. They launched their Family Recovery Project in November 2011 with 30 of their most challenging families who were failing to engage or make progress with existing services; had children subject to or on the edge of care; and who had multiple of complex problems.

9.2 The Family Recovery Project (which operates a family intervention service) has been funded through a Community Budget that brings together the staff-in-kind contribution of two police officers, a Job Centre advisor, mental health worker, housing officer and health advisor, alongside existing local authority family intervention workers. This pooled budget also includes

significant cash contributions from the Primary Care Trust, registered social landlords, the Home Office's Safer Stronger Communities Fund and local authority contributions.

9.3 To date, Wandsworth has worked with over 600 families and in November 2013 was ranked 1st in London for the proportion for Troubled Families being worked with and 6th in London for the proportion of Troubled Families 'turned around'. Qualitative evaluation of FRP in Wandsworth suggests that the programme is strongly valued by families and other agencies; that families welcome the team around the family approach; and that direct emotional practical

9.4 Cost avoidance evaluation carried out in Wandsworth using data for families before and after FRP intervention suggests annual projected savings to the public purse of around £29,000 per family.

10.0 THE FUTURE

10.1 Due to the nationally recognised success of the programme, a commitment to Troubled Families phase 2 has been announced by the Government. This will extend the programme to 2015-16, committing a new £200 million to the budget. It is likely that local authorities will be asked to identify families for phase 2 in 2014/15. DCLG see phase 2 as a 5 year programme, however they only have the financial commitment for 2015/16 at the present time. It is also expected that they will broaden the Troubled Families criteria for phase 2.

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