

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 4
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Report of the Executive Director of Communities and Targeted Services

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THE CONNECTING FAMILIES PROGRAMME

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the current phase of the Connecting Families programme and proposals for the expanded programme, planned for implementation in 2015.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to scrutinise the progress made on the Connecting Families programme relevant to this Committee by providing challenge where necessary and to suggest ideas and initiatives to support the continued delivery of priorities within programme.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy aims to deliver a bigger and better Peterborough, through improving the quality of life for all. The Connecting Families programme supports the aspirations of the whole Sustainable Community Strategy.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Connecting Families Programme is the name given in Peterborough to the national Troubled Families programme. 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 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. The work is often not co-ordinated well and there is a duplication of activity and effort. 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.
- 4.3 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. 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 made £448 million available to councils on a payment-by-results basis. This represents a contribution of up to £4,000 per family, around 40% of the estimated costs of actions needed to turn a family around. Funding has come from a number of departments including Communities and Local Government, Education, Work and Pensions and Health, with full payment being 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. 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, improving poor school attendance and reducing criminality.

4.5 For the purposes of qualifying to be part of the Connecting Families Programme, families are those who meet three of the following four 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

4.6 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

5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 In Peterborough, the Connecting Families programme has two component parts; the first being 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 co-ordinated and the demand on them reduced.

5.2 This more targeted and focused work, with the most complex families, is led by a range of Connectors from a number statutory and non-statutory agencies. For example, Drink Sense and Cross Keys Homes both provide Connectors to the programme. These expert family support workers will be allocated families whose primary needs are around substance misuse and housing, respectively. The Connectors come together in a virtual team environment, where they can support each other with specialist knowledge and share good practice.

5.3 The current programme has identified a cross over between families potentially caught by the benefit cap and those meeting the criteria for the Connecting Families programme: budgeting issues are highly relevant to many of the families the programme is working with. We are working closely with Jobcentre Plus to better understand the context of both welfare reform and welfare to work regime delivery and thereby support progress of individual troubled family members towards work.

5.4 The second part of the programme involves the analysis team in the Communities and Targeted Services trawling 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 to evidence where services across the city have worked with families who meet the troubled families criteria and achieved the results needed to qualify for a payment by results.

5.5 In terms of the overall progress of the project, the table below shows the number of families who have been ‘turned around’ according to the DCLG criteria¹:

Improvements made by the family	Number of families turned around
Education or ASB improvement	211
Adult in the family returned to work	54
Adult in the family has made progress to work ²	5
Total	270 of 450 families (60.0% towards target)

Once families have been ‘turned around’, this does not necessarily mean that support from the family will be removed. The way the programme is designed, by building capacity throughout the City, rather than relying on statutory only organisations, means there is capacity for families to receive ongoing support.

6 THE FUTURE OF THE PROGRAMME

6.1 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 for another five years, committing a new £200 million to the budget, and working with a further 1,500 families in the City. The expanded programme is broader than the current one and will focus on families who are:

- affected by domestic violence
- with vulnerable children
- with a range of mental and physical health problems
- at high risk of worklessness
- involved in crime from generation to generation.

6.2 The programme will still focus on families with multiple problems (at least two of the above), but gives areas more flexibility to draw from a range of indicators to find the families of greatest concern and cost and, crucially, by intervening earlier, this will reduce the need to access specialist services later on.

6.3 Peterborough has been invited to be an early starter onto the new programme, assuming we can evidence that we are working with and have ‘turned around’ 65% of families from our current cohort by 31st October 2014. This means that Peterborough can start to deliver the new programme from 1st January 2015 and can expand the support we are currently offering to 1,500 families over the next five years.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None

8. CONSULTATION

8.1 None

¹ Information up to 16th October 2014

² Progress to work is defined as one adult in the family has either volunteered for the Work Programme or attached to the European Social Fund provision in the last 12 months.

9. NEXT STEPS

9.1 Once we have had confirmation from DCLG that we have formally been accepted as an early starter onto the expanded programme, work will begin to develop the new programme to ensure that it works with the most complex and in need families in the City.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

10.1 None

11. APPENDICES

None