

Annex 4 – Sunderland Family Pathfinder Update

Both elements of the Pathfinder are now established and working across Sunderland. The young Carers element works with children and young people whose lives are in some way restricted because they provide care, assistance or support to another family member.

Through the Extended Family Pathfinder it is intended to

- (i) Identify young carers at an early stage and prevent them falling into inappropriate caring roles
- (ii) Work intensively with a cohort of families to lift children out of inappropriate caring
- (iii) Identify 'hidden' young carers to enable them to obtain the support they might need

The Pathfinder is city-wide but concentrates on the most deprived wards, older young carers (16+) and young carers of people with mental illness or addiction problems.

An example of a case worked with in the East is a 12 year old boy who lives with father who has learning difficulties and an older sister who has ADHD. The 12 year old has a significant responsibility for his father and sister but little opportunity to spend time positively with his father because of the demands the sister makes. This was causing a significant distress in the family. A care package has recently been put in place which has arranged for the sister to attend a summer school for three weeks giving the son the opportunity to spend quality time with his dad.

The family element of the Pathfinder is working 37 families currently 9 of whom are in the East catchment area. These as anticipated are a mix of families ranging from families at the point of breakdown and their children going into the "looked after" system to families where there are multiple risk factors and it is identified that if a sustained intervention is not put in place they will progress from children in need to at risk.

Referrals are coming via a range of routes, Parenting Panel, TYS panels, Adult Mental Health etc. Social care are also key referrers and the Strategic Service Manager has agreed to set up a formal link with one of the principal social workers both to coordinate referrals but also to manage the interface between the Pathfinder and Social Care.

An example of a case worked with in the East is the M family consisting of Mother, partner and 4 children, James 14, Richard 10, Liam 9, Brian 8 (not real names) all subject to Child Protection Plans at the start of the Pathfinder intervention.

The children had been removed because of extremely poor home conditions constituting a health hazard. School attendance was poor and there were few rules or boundaries set for the children which lead to frequent conflicts. The children returned home once the conditions at home achieved an acceptable standard, and that improvement has been maintained, School attendance is now acceptable for the three younger children. An alternative education package has been put in place for James that is proving successful.

Through working with the Family Nurturing programme the parents now have in place routines around bedtimes, behaviour, school attendance etc which have reduced the frequent arguments in the home and enabled the parents to gain confidence in saying no and creating and enforcing rules. Parenting ability and confidence has increased, which has had a positive impact on the family as a whole. The children no longer have child protection plans.