

**SUNDERLAND SHADOW
HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD**

31 July 2012

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide the Board with an update on the development of a strategic approach to Strengthening Families in Sunderland and its links to the government's 'Troubled Families' initiative, which has been renamed locally in Sunderland as the Family Focus Project.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In December 2011, the Prime Minister launched a new three-year payment by results scheme aimed at reducing the problems presented by "troubled families" in England. specifically those who are involved in crime and anti-social behaviour, where children are frequently truant or excluded from school, and at least one adult is out of work and claiming benefits.
- 2.2 In Sunderland, the 'Troubled Families' initiative has been renamed the Family Focus Project (see Appendix 1). The Council (like other participating local authorities) will receive funding based on their success in achieving an identified set of outcomes defined by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). However, the programme is being viewed as an opportunity to review and improve the way partners work with the most challenging and vulnerable families across the city, adopting a more systematic and strategic approach with a greater focus on early intervention and prevention, as well more asset based ways of working and thinking.

3.0 A Strategy for Strengthening Families in Sunderland

- 3.1 The Family Focus Project operates within a wider strategic context in the city, one which is concerned with strengthening families and building their capacity to achieve positive outcomes for themselves and their community, with less dependence on the public sector. The primary aim of the Family Focus Project is to improve behaviours amongst an identified subset of families in the city. More fundamentally, however, in the longer term we are seeking to transform the way services are delivered to achieve a wider set of outcomes for a wider set of families in Sunderland.
- 3.2 A multi-agency Strengthening Families Board is leading the development of an integrated strategy for supporting and strengthening families in Sunderland. The 'Strengthening Families' Strategy and its associated delivery mechanisms (including the Family Focus Project) will seek to ensure that families in Sunderland can easily access the right support, at the right time

and in the right way to enable them to meet their needs and achieve their goals. It will outline our commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of those who are vulnerable by working with them at the earliest opportunity and making the best use of all resources available. This will include identifying and building on families' strengths, helping them to recognise and fulfil their potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

3.3 An inclusive definition of family

The term 'family' in this context is used to refer to the bond between people brought together through birth, legally recognised relationships, or kinship with other people through a close connection. The City Council and its partners recognise and celebrate the wide diversity of family structures in Sunderland, and we are seeking to support and strengthen all families in the city, whatever their shape or size. The definition of a family is intended to be broad and inclusive, recognising families of all ages, those with or without children, and those with connections across more than one household, in more than one community.

3.4 Strategic Principles

The strategic principles underpinning our approach cut across a number of different local agendas, including the emerging Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Community Resilience Plan:

- Early intervention and prevention
- Building capacity and reducing dependence
- Asset based approach
- Whole systems thinking – whole family, whole life, whole community
- Responsive local services and publicly valued outcomes
- Multi agency and integrated working

3.5 Developing a Vision

The intention is to produce the Strengthening Families Strategy through a partnership approach. It will therefore represent the way in which a wide range of organisations – from across the public, private and voluntary and community sectors – will work together to support families in Sunderland, from the development of the strategy through to delivery in localities.

4.0 The Family Focus Project and Emerging Service Delivery Model

4.1 The Family Focus Project will serve as a precursor to the development of a wider delivery model for the Strengthening Families Strategy. Work is already underway and in some cases has been completed to identify: the Family Focus families in Sunderland; national and international best practice in relation to engaging with such families; and what is already working well in Sunderland. Families are also currently being consulted on their views as to how services can be developed to best meet their needs.

4.2 A well attended partnership workshop was held on 9 May 2012 where the basic design principles for the Family Focus Project were discussed. The

broad aspects of the service delivery model have now been agreed by the Strengthening Families Board and consist of:

- Integrated Multi-Disciplinary Teams – one based in each locality which will be the single point of identification and the initial triage point.
- A multi-agency Information Desk to pool information from different agencies and provide a family profile showing which agencies are currently working with the family, what interventions they are involved with etc.
- A single point of contact with the family through a key worker chosen by them (within guidelines).
- A single assessment/family snapshot using a single tool that takes an asset based approach.
- A single Family Support Plan which details what is needed to meet the identified outcomes for the family which will have been developed with input from the family. This will include what families need to do alongside professionals. It will be a two way pledge detailing the role and responsibilities of all parties.
- Flexible packages of support for each family based on the Family Plan.
- Regular progress review and monitoring with the family and information passed to the Information Desk.

4.3 Key work packages have been created to develop the detail underpinning the model and determine how it will work in practice. Lead Officers from each of the work packages will present their initial products to a Strengthening Families Working Group at the end of July 2012. If agreed, these will then be submitted to the Strengthening Families Board for consideration before the model is implemented.

4.4 The Family Focus Project will apply to a specific cohort of families in the city (i.e. those with multiple and complex needs) as defined by guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government. However, the intention is that the initiative will act as a springboard for transformation across the board, dramatically improving the way all services work with all families in Sunderland to achieve better outcomes as well as efficiency savings in the longer term.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to note the contents of this report.

FAMILY FOCUS PROJECT

In December 2011, the Prime Minister launched a new programme designed to 'turn around' the lives of 120,000 'troubled families' in England by the end of this Parliament. The announcement followed the release of new government figures which suggested that the country's 120,000 most troubled families are costing central and local government an estimated £9bn per year in terms of extra spending on the NHS, the police and social services. This was based on previous indicative research which defined a 'troubled family' as one who met five out of the seven following criteria:

- No one in the family is in work
- Living in poor or overcrowded housing
- No parent has any qualification
- Mother has mental health problems
- At least one parent has a longstanding illness, disability or infirmity
- A low income
- An inability to afford a number of food, clothing items

In Sunderland, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) estimates that there are 805 such families with an estimated cost to the taxpayer of £60,375,000. It is estimated that up to 28 public services might engage with the members of one family, often uncoordinated, with separate interactions, assessments and funding streams. Each agency addresses a separate symptom but do not tackle the root causes of the problem.

The 'Troubled Families' programme in Sunderland has been renamed the **Family Focus Project** and is overseen by the Strengthening Families Board.

Identifying the Family Focus Families in Sunderland

The criteria for drawing up the local list of families to be targeted by the Troubled Families programme has been set out by the DCLG. Any family that meets the following first three criteria below will automatically be expected to be part of the scheme:

1. Young people involved in crime and families involved in anti-social behaviour.
2. Households affected by truancy or exclusion from school.
3. Households which have an adult on out of work benefits.

Local areas then have local discretion to include other families who meet any 2 of these 3 criteria and are a cause for concern. In Sunderland partners have agreed the local discretion criteria as: domestic violence; substance misuse (both adults and young people); and child protection issues.

How will the programme work?

This programme will run on a **payment-by-results basis**. The Government will pay up to 40% of the cost of interventions designed to turn around the lives of these families. It is estimated that the average unit cost of intensive interventions known to work with such families is around £10,000. Therefore DCLG will make available up to £4,000 for each identified family that has demonstrated achievement of the following outcomes in order to receive payment:

Each child in the family has had fewer than 3 fixed exclusions and less than 15% unauthorised absences in the last 3 terms;

60% reduction in ASB across the family in the last 6 months; and

33% reduction in offending by all minors in the family in the last 6 months
= £3,900.

Plus

If one adult has achieved 'progress to work' (has volunteered for the Work Programme or attached to the ESF provision in the last 6 months) = £100

Or

One adult in the family has moved off out-of work benefits into continuous employment in the last 6 months = £4,000

Upfront attachment fees are also being paid for eligible families annually.

The Family Focus Project will apply to a specific cohort of families in the city as defined by the guidance from the DCLG. However, the intention is that the initiative will act as a springboard for transformation across the board, dramatically improving the way services are delivered to achieve a wider set of outcomes for *all* families in Sunderland as well as efficiency savings in the longer term.