

Strengthening Families Framework

Report of the Children's Trust

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide the Health and Wellbeing Board with an overview of Sunderland's Strengthening Families Framework (Appendix A), which was formally adopted as a strategic framework for the Sunderland Children's Trust and its membership on 9 January 2014.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The current government has committed to 'turning around' the lives of the 120,000 most disadvantaged families by 2015-16, leading to the development of a new programme in Sunderland called 'Family Focus'. Family Focus is the city's contribution to the national 'Troubled Families' programme, which focuses specifically on the small but high cost cohort of families who have longstanding and complex problems that place high demand on public resources.
- 2.2 While Family Focus is targeted towards the most challenging and vulnerable families in Sunderland (in line with the government's funding requirements), the intention is to use the initiative as a catalyst for wider systemic change by developing an integrated model for strengthening families that can be extended to include families with lower levels of needs. This involves looking towards more integrated partnership working to tackle not only the Family Focus cohort but also to reduce future demand by identifying and supporting families with potential emerging needs at a much earlier stage. By working together more effectively across a wider pool of families, partners can help to prevent vulnerable families from becoming the 'troubled families' of the future.
- 2.3 A draft multi-agency Strengthening Families Framework has been produced, which lays the foundation for a consistent and integrated approach to working with families across Sunderland. We are not seeking to implement a single large scale delivery model but instead to recognise and build upon existing good practice, such as Family Focus and Improving Futures. The aim is to establish clear, co-ordinated and integrated support pathways for families across all levels of need, providing a common framework for the seamless delivery of services. The purpose of the Framework is to challenge commissioners and service providers to consider how local provision might be reconfigured to make better use of all resources – including the often untapped resources and potential within families and communities.

3.0 Current Position

3.1 The Strengthening Families Framework sets out:

- a vision for the city
- an inclusive definition of family, which encompasses families without children, and adults of no relation living in the same household
- the strengths (or 'protective factors') we are seeking to develop within families
- the strategic outcomes we aim to achieve for individuals, families, communities and organisations

3.2 In order to achieve our vision and secure the desired outcomes, the Framework also sets out four strategic priorities for change. These priorities will underpin the future development and delivery of services for children, young people, adults and their families, and serve as a set of design and operating principles for commissioners and providers.

- Priority 1: Empowering families to do more for themselves
- Priority 2: Encouraging the community to do more for families
- Priority 3: Investing in prevention and early action
- Priority 4: Providing integrated whole family services

3.3 The implications for services and practice are expanded upon within the document, and members of the Health and Wellbeing Board are encouraged to consider what this approach means for their individual organisations.

4.0 Next Steps

4.1 In addition to the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Framework will be presented to the following representative bodies for information:

Governance Body	Date
Strengthening Families Board	31 January 2014
Safeguarding Children Board	12 February 2014

4.2 Outcome measures and action planning to support the delivery of the Framework will be discussed and agreed at a future meeting of the Children's Trust. Products will then be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board for their information and input.

4.3 A final version of the Framework will be produced and published on the Sunderland Partnership's website, which will include photographs that celebrate the diversity of family life in Sunderland.

5.0 Recommendations

- 5.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to endorse the approval of the Children's Trust for the Strengthening Families Framework.

