



Report to the Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee

Title: Families First Programme
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Cabinet Member sign-off: Lin Hazell

Purpose of Agenda Item **Information**

To update members on the progress of Families First (national Troubled Families programme)

Background

The Families First Programme is Buckinghamshire's response to the national Troubled Families Agenda, which seeks to "turn around" the lives of families facing multiple problems. The aim is to improve the outcomes for children and families and to reduce the burden on public sector resources.

The programme is funded by the Troubled Families unit within Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) through a combination of grants (some ring fenced) and payment by results.

The programme was developed in partnership with families, all statutory agencies and the voluntary and community.

Families First was discussed at the Select Committee in March 2014.



Summary

Phase 1 (2012-2015) successfully “turned around” 545 families, attracting £612,900 payment by results funding. The full report for Phase 1 is attached.

Phase 2 (2015-20) widened the scope of the programme and significantly increased the reach, with a target of an additional 1,860 families.

The government’s intention is that by 2020 the approach and lessons learned from the programme will lead to significant changes in how all agencies work together to improve outcomes for children and their families and reduce the burden on the public purse.

Key issues

1. Strategy and approach

Buckinghamshire took the view from the start that the Families First Approach would not involve the employment of new front line teams. Instead, all agencies committed to working in a new way, moving outside their existing remits to provide lead family workers.

Each identified family has a single assessment (the Family Outcomes Star), a single plan, and a lead worker to coordinate all the work with the family, across all of the problems they face. The approach to families is persistent, assertive and challenging as well as supportive. All work is undertaken with the family’s consent, working with them rather than doing to them. This approach has been nationally evaluated and shown to work well.

2. Outcomes and impact

Families are increasingly identified through referral to the Early Help Panels (introduced in June 2015), with data search used as an additional identification tool.

The purpose of the Early Help Panels is primarily to coordinate a response to a referral to ensure that a family gets the right support from the right agency at the right time to prevent escalation to statutory services. This multi-agency panel focuses on securing the best possible and appropriate service for a family with multiple problems in Buckinghamshire.

The Early Help Panels have four main functions:

- To identify key issues for the family
- To identify which agencies are already involved
- To assign the Lead Family Agency (LFA) who will assign the Lead Family worker
- Agree the key outcomes

An evaluation of the panel was carried out at three and six months (the latter is attached), and a full annual report will be produced in autumn 2016, which will include evidence of outcomes.

Strict entry and success criteria for Families First are identified in the Outcomes Plan, agreed across all partner agencies (see attached).

Successful outcomes need to be sustainable across a significant time scale and are rigorously audited internally and by central government.

Evaluations of the programme are carried out annually (see attached for the most recent report).

3. Governance

Partner engagement and support has been significant throughout the life of the project and has been a major factor in its success.

The original Families First Executive Steering Group has taken on a wider remit and is now the Early Help Executive.

4. Budget

The budget is made up of three distinct elements:

- Management grant. This supports a small team of (4.5 staff) who lead the multi-agency partnership and manage the significant evaluation and data collection required.
- A Service Transformation grant to ensure change in how services are delivered. So far, this has been used to provide tools and training for front line staff across all agencies and more recently, to develop a system of secondments to encourage and promote the approach.
- Payment by results per family, once significant and sustained progress has been achieved and audited. This has been used to support a range of partner projects as detailed below.

Partner projects funding

This new way of working has called for partners and colleagues within the Local Authority to work outside their normal remit in order to bring about the outcomes specified by central government. From the start this has been achieved with no additional funding provided to external partners. The Payment by Results income generated throughout has been due to the overall commitment of partners to this agreed way of working.

With the support of Chris Williams during his tenure as the Chief Executive of Buckinghamshire County Council, and the multi-agency Families First Executive Steering group, we committed to making the Payment by Results income available to internal and external partners who would deliver projects and work that directly impacted on the specified outcomes. This has generated good will among our partners, and stimulated a number of creative, impactful projects that continue to contribute to the attainment of the ever increasing stretch targets.

5. Whole system change

While the expanded Trouble Families Programme continues to operate a payment by results funding model, this is far from a purely financially transactional relationship. On the contrary, this programme is based on a common interest and ambition to transform the lives of this country's troubled families, to improve the services that work with them and to ensure more efficient and effective use of public money in the long-term.

On this basis, as part of the sign up process for the new Troubled Families Programme, all upper-tier local authority Chief Executives were asked to sign up to a number of key commitments. These included the following:

- To achieve significant and sustained progress with an agreed total number of families over the 5 year period from 2015/16.
- To integrate and transform local public service

Progress to date includes:

- The Early Help Strategy based on the Families First Approach
- An agreed multi-agency single assessment tool
- A programme of multi-agency training
- The successful establishment of the Early Help Panels

The Families First programme is ambitious to lead and support further change going forward.

Resource implications

The Families First Programme is entirely funded by central government and there are no resource implications for the Council.

Next steps

Summer 2016:



- Expansion of secondments
- Full evaluation of Early Help Panels
- Approval of new partner projects

Autumn 2016

- Publication of Best Practice Guidance for all agencies
- Multi agency Early Help 5 year plan
- Payment by results claim

Spring 2017

- Early Help Conference

Autumn 2017

- Publication of Oxford University 3 year longitudinal study