

Stakeholder Engagement 26
Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG),
Troubled Families Unit
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Background

The Troubled Families Programme (TFP) was launched by the Prime Minister in 2011 in order to deliver his aim of turning around the lives of 120,000 'troubled families' in England by 2015. The purpose of the Programme is to work alongside local authorities to achieve a number of specific objectives to turn around the lives of troubled families. These objectives include reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, getting adults on the path to work, and getting children back into school. A total of £448m, drawn from the budgets of six government departments, has been made available for this programme over a three year period. The Government announced an expansion of the Troubled Families programme to reach up to an additional 400,000 families from 2015-16, investing an extra £200m. TFP is funded by Department for Communities and Local Government, Department of Work and Pensions, Home Office, Department of Health, Ministry of Justice and Department for Education.

Emma Jones (EJ) joined the Department for Communities and Local Government's Troubled Families Team in November 2011, where she led work to the design of the current Troubled Families Programme, and particularly its payment by results scheme. She now manages the team's policy work across Government departments and its national independent evaluation.

More recently, Emma has led the development of the programme's expansion to an additional 400,000 families across England, with a heightened focus on driving service transformation and embedding an integrated whole family approach across public services.

THE TROUBLED FAMILIES PROGRAMME

From a TFP family perspective Young Adults may be in a family or be parents themselves, many of their problems will relate to the people they either do or did live with and one important aspect of the programme is reducing the level of offending as well as preventing children entering the Criminal Justice System.

The eligibility criteria for TFP for Young People with CJS contact is:

- A proven offence during the last twelve months; TFP will work closely with the Youth Offending Team (YOT) with either the YOT getting in touch with the TFP or the other way round;
- Children not attending school over 85% of the time is a second national criteria, Local Authorities (LAs) collate data on persistent absence from all schools and academies (a minority of children, possibly those who move around may fall through the gaps in this recording but it is generally good).
- Anti-social behaviour, this could concern the whole family as it presents a risk to the children of entry into the CJS and flags other harm and risk in the family i.e. violence. The definition of Anti-social behaviour is as flexible as it can be and will consider the concerns from a range of sources.

Data sharing is a significant issue for TFP and is always a challenge but they look to have a full data picture from all sources about the whole family, this may include the police, job centre and housing provider in order to have an holistic view, and this whole family approach is a defining feature of the TFP.

Every Upper Tier authority has a TF coordinator leading the local troubled families programme, their responsibility includes, looking at their local data and operational referrals to identify families who would benefit from a whole family intervention.

If a young adult whose family is on the programme goes into custody they would remain on the TFP and the support becomes more important, TFP will continue to work with the family as ultimately this will lead to better outcomes and cost savings in the long-term.

TFP use a Family Intervention approach, this consists of a single key worker who will use an holistic, persistent and assertive approach as necessary. Families are often in a crisis on a range of fronts and the key worker will coordinate all specialist services including health where relevant, they may also play an advocacy role for the family to access all appropriate services, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for example. The advocacy role could extend to making representation to divert a young adult from custody, this will be on a case-by-case basis. Key workers will highlight and try and support families to take opportunities to change direction (from a criminal or otherwise damaging situation) and this requires an honest and at times challenging approach by the key worker.

TFP work with families where children have educational special needs and / or behavioural problems, this work could include, possibly supporting a return to mainstream education.

As of February 2015 TFP have turned around 105,000 families, (NB this figure has been updated since the session took place) and this means that for each of these families they will have achieved the inverse of the three eligibility criteria. For example within a family a child will have achieved 85% school attendance over 3 terms, a reduction in (youth) crime by one third over 6 months, recorded incidents of anti-social behaviour will have reduced by 60% over 6 months and / or an adult in the family will have moved off benefits into full time work. Payments are made against these results (under the Payment by Results (PbR) formula the TFP has in place) on a per family basis. As well as claiming PbR, local areas will also begin a 'stepping down' process as some support is no longer needed, what exactly this is will depend on the overall situation at the beginning of the contact. This improvement has to be sustained which doesn't mean that all the problems in the family are solved but that there has been a significant level of change.

6% of the TFP families have children in care but that doesn't take into account any history of care. In the future anonymised data will be available and this should show whether there is any family history of care. The panel explained the review had heard negative reports about Local Authorities (LA) not meeting their responsibilities to care leavers, TFP said it hadn't been a major issue for the programme so far and, in relation to care leavers, said it would be interesting for them to know more about how a history of care affects the parenting skills of the families they are working with.

Currently accommodation following custody is not a major issue in their work but issues arising from a family being housed in inappropriate accommodation are picked up by key workers – again this is done on a case by case basis.

TFP said that they were aware of challenges for families to access mental health services and said that one fifth of their families has a child with mental health issues.

TFP described a bell curve in which as engagement with a family develops, unmet need is identified, thus increasing the support required, this then reduces as their situation improves. Sometimes issues of consent to sharing information were a problem but there are pockets of good practice and health partners form part of local TFP to support families which has been really beneficial. TFP feel that local programmes would still benefit from greater integration from the wider health system. TFP nationally, are working with the Department of Health, Public Health England and NHS England programmes to enable this, in particular in relation to data sharing.

The expansion of the programme from April 2015 to include up to an additional 400,000 families will mean that they are able to increase their eligibility criteria and are looking to include families with inter-generational risks, a broader crime profile, health problems, younger children and domestic violence. TFP expect that this will bring in families at an earlier stage i.e. before the thresholds for some services have been met.

The programme has been planned as a five year programme. Spending review 13 identified £200m funding for the first year in 2015/16. Future funding will be decided at the forthcoming SR after the election. TFP has commissioned for the expanded programme and will look to learn and share good practice, interventions and 'what works' results. This expansion seeks to enable local public services transformation in the form of greater integration across the range of services supporting families. Each LA is able to access an on-line cost saving calculator so that they can estimate what savings they can / have made and which services provide the greatest cost benefits. A national cost savings benefit approach is planned so that it will also be possible to see which LAs are achieving the greatest savings. The national TFP team works in partnership with the 152 LAs delivering the programme, this is done via the national team's area leads (seven people), they challenge and support the LAs to deliver the programme and share good practice around interventions, service transformation, identifying and recording cost savings etc. The relationships the national TFP team have built, led by Louise Casey (DG and head of TFP), with the local TFP teams has been critical to the programme's success. Cost savings will be published to support a transparency based accountability. The TFP will be looking at longer term benefits for the expanded programme and will develop the use of the information.

TFP have commissioned MORI to poll 800 families to find out what differences the Programme has made to their lives, so far initial findings are very positive across a range of issues, particularly public services.

TFP felt that the endorsement by the Prime Minister meant that they were able to get strong 'buy in' and support from Local Government and high tier sign up. Six departments across Whitehall have providing the funding and, for all of them, there was originally a 'leap of faith' to an extent. So far the Programme is proving successful, hence the expansion of the programme to up to an additional 400,000 families.

TFP runs in England only but contact has been made with the devolved governments in Wales and Scotland.