

Meeting: Haringey Children's Trust

Date: 17 December 2009

Report Title: Haringey's Family Intervention Project (FIP)

Report of: Mark Gurrey, Interim Assistant Director - Performance

Purpose

To respond to the Trust's request of 11 November 2009 to explain how Haringey's Family Intervention Project (FIP) will operate in the Borough.

Summary

FIP's are part of the Government's **Think Family** strategy, which means reforming systems and services provided for vulnerable children, young people and adults to secure better outcomes for children, by co-ordinating the support they receive from children's, adults and family services.

The FIP approach

FIP's provide intensive support to vulnerable families and in particular those facing legal actions, evictions, or who are affected by long term worklessness and poverty. The FIP model was based on a number of projects run by Action for Children and expanded as part of the Government's Respect programme to target families involved in persistent anti-social behaviour, who were at risk of losing their homes. Through multi-agency support plans and assertive working methods projects reduce the likelihood of legal sanctions and help families address their problems. The package of support offered to vulnerable families may include accredited parenting programmes and co-ordinated programme of support from other services such as health or drugs treatment which responds to the needs of different family members.

Three types of FIPs currently operate in different parts of the country:

Anti-social behaviour, Child Poverty, Youth Crime.

Haringey is a Youth Crime FIP aimed at families experiencing problems including child behavioural problems, mental ill health, domestic violence, having a parent in prison, prolific parent offending, substance misuse, and child neglect which often lead to youth offending and other poor outcomes.

FIPs are important partners in assessing whether children's safety or welfare may be at risk and can help develop and deliver elements of Child Protection Plans. FIP key workers will work closely with the social worker for any child

considered to be at risk and acts as the lead professional for that child. Key workers visit frequently and have in-depth knowledge of a families functioning.

Governance

A small project group of senior managers has been working over the past few months to put in place the building blocks necessary to establish the FIP and Think Family aims. The group reports to a multi-service steering group chaired by the assistant director. Further work is being done on governance to clarify where issues and outcomes need to be reported. The FIP will initially account for performance to the steering group through the team manager.

Resources

The project is funded by the DCSF until 2011 with the prospect of continued funding good. Current funding will enable staff to be employed and equipped including a manager, four key workers, a health professional and a half time admin. support worker. Some staff has already started and job offers have been made to others. The manager will be in post by the end of January 2010. The calibre and number of applicants for the posts has been good. Staff are currently based in the Professional Development Centre but will shortly be located in a more permanent base.

In November 2009 extra Government funding was announced for local authorities to bid to establish a Housing FIP, either freestanding or as part of an existing FIP. At the time of writing Haringey is preparing a bid which will align with the existing FIP.

Practice

A referral process has been agreed and in place. A referral form and assessment pro-forma have also been agreed. Referrals may be made by any public sector agency or indeed the family.

After considering all the evidence including meeting set criteria, the FIP manager will decide whether or not the family will be allocated. Unallocated families will be referred to the CAF manager for further review. Each key worker will work with a maximum of five families at any one time. A contract will be agreed between the key worker and the family and post intervention support will be available where required. The family needs to agree to project intervention but sanctions will be applied if they do not. The FIP has started working with two families and several referrals are currently being considered with more in the pipeline.

Legal/Financial Implications

The DCSF funding allocation is sufficient to cover project costs. All staff are employed on time limited contracts. No other agreements have been entered into.

Recommendations

- i. That the Trust notes the report.

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| <p>ii. That the Trust requests the Assistant Director to propose a formal structural arrangement with the Trust to report FIP progress and highlighting significant Think Family developments.</p> |
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Background

Family Intervention Projects (FIP's) are targeted at the most challenging and anti-social families. These are few in number but can cause disproportionate disruption and damage to the communities in which they live.

Previous research on six similar projects in the north-west showed that 70% of the families had members who were engaged in youth nuisance, 54% were associated with more general neighbour conflicts whilst 43% had committed property damage. Almost 25% of families had members with an Acceptable Behaviour Order (ASBO). Early findings from the monitoring of families where FIP's are working, shows that a significant percentage has members who are engaged in the criminal justice system.

In addition the families themselves typically have entrenched problems. Evidence shows that:

- Almost nine out of ten (89%) families had some form of threat to their tenancy including 14% who were homeless or at immediate risk of homelessness at the time of referral.
- Poor mental or physical health and/or substance misuse affected 80% of adults.
- In 94% of families there were schooling concerns with at least one child.
- A high proportion was claiming Income Support (89%) and Housing Benefit (87%).

The families targeted by FIP's will be known to, and receiving services from a wide range of agencies. However the range of agencies involved, the individual basis on which service are offered and the absence of a compulsion to engage with support mean that these are often ineffective.

That means that the wider community continue to experience unacceptable levels of anti-social behaviour which can destroy people's enjoyment of their home and public space and undermine community spirit. It also means that the families themselves become socially excluded and sometimes homeless. In particular children's physical and emotional development and educational attainment can be severely damaged. The financial cost of these failings is also significant – it is estimated that the cost of dealing with these families can be up to £250-£350.000 per family per year.

An evaluation of the projects mentioned above in the second paragraph showed at the point at which they exited the project, complaints about ASBs had ceased or reduced for 85% of the families. In addition, for 90% of the families project workers felt that either there had been no complaints to the police or the number of complaints had reduced after engaging with the

project. In nine out of ten (92%) case there was either no risk to the community or the risk had reduced by the time families exited the project.

There were also positive consequences for the families themselves. Workers reported that in four out of five cases families tenancies had been had been successfully stabilised with a similar percentage of cases also being assessed as having reduced risk of homelessness. 53% of children showed improvement in their physical and 40% showed improvement in their mental health after intervention. 36% of children who had schooling concerns had an improvement. In 48% of cases there had been a reduction in the likelihood of family breakdown.

A briefing paper was considered at the Trust's meeting 11 November 2009

Contact: Ray Westcott X3399