Moving in the right direction
Insights and actions from learning from the frontline

Kent’s Troubled Families Programme

Kent’s approach to helping troubled families
We are making steady progress in helping turn around some of Kent’s most complex families. So far 560 have been turned around. While momentum is growing, we still have much to do and I challenge you to ask yourself - how can you best support this vital programme?

I would personally like to thank those who attended the Learning from the frontline conference and for sharing your experiences with us. It was reassuring to hear that:

- lots of positive work is being delivered for families
- local project delivery managers have proven key to coordinating local delivery and acting as a single point of contact
- initiatives funded by the programme are delivering results.

At the conference your feedback was also instrumental in identifying a number of opportunities to further improve our efforts to support families. I am determined to help make sure nothing gets in the way of working with these families.

The key messages I took away from the conference were:

- the importance of a single family plan
- more use needs to be made of multi-agency resources
- the urgent need for partners to identify families where they are providing a service to a family member; therefore the family as a whole can be part of the programme.

By understanding what is working and what is not, we are in the best possible position to adapt and develop the programme. As the programme grows it is vital we remain focussed on making every family intervention as effective as possible.

Over the coming weeks I will be working with senior managers from the programme’s multi-agency steering group and the Troubled Families core team to ensure that we take the necessary actions to ensure further progress in the coming year.

Paul Carter, Leader Kent County Council
A Troubled Families conference was held on 7 February 2014 to bring together frontline practitioners and learn from their experiences of working with families. The aim was to help the programme move forward by provoking honest discussions around key issues and to understand the barriers of working with families. It also gave practitioners the opportunity to highlight any areas of best practice and share innovative solutions to problems.

Two hundred and fifty delegates attended; the majority of whom were frontline practitioners. Senior managers from both statutory and voluntary sectors also participated.

The day featured guest speakers and activities that included a voting pad session and two table discussion themes.

Patrick Leeson the KCC Corporate Director now responsible for the programme said “The programme offers strong hope for families. A lot of good work is going on and we all need to learn from the Troubled Families Programme. We need to build more joined-up ways of doing things, speedier responses and need to recognise the important work being undertaken by the FIPs.”

Summary of key learning from the programme

- communication and coordination across agencies is improved when working as part of a Team Around the Family (TAF), with one plan for the family – resulting in shared and agreed actions with the services and family
- it is important that statutory agencies strengthen and deliver family-centred services, supporting them to achieve a broad range of outcomes; including improved attendance, a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour, and adults back into work
- identifying a single dedicated worker to get to grips with the family’s problems and to work intensively with them to change their lives for the better, is key to turning around families

Separate traditional interventions by different agencies will only reap limited benefits and the biggest benefits will be generated by agencies working together to deliver a whole family approach.
Actions and next steps arising from the conference

Five key priorities

On the day delegates and the panel agreed five key priorities to be taken forward which are summarised below.

1. Mental health

Improved mental health and wellbeing is associated with a range of better outcomes for people of all ages and backgrounds. This includes improved physical health and life expectancy, better educational achievement, increased skills, reduced health risk behaviours, and reduced risk of mental health problems and suicide.

Challenge for Kent: We are aware that children and young people are experiencing prolonged and delayed access to treatment from Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). This picture is complicated by an increase in demand on the service, with more young people presenting for support. This trend is also reflected nationally. Can we ensure the services respond promptly and effectively?

- explore opportunities for improved access to mental health support for troubled families
- training for multi-agency staff; to raise their awareness of mental health issues, provision and to support them in achieving early conversations with families.

ACTIONS:
- deliver mental health first aid training for multi-agency staff
- explore opportunities to improve access to all elements of CAMHS provision.

2. How we work with families

Transforming the way we deliver services for families, and redesigning them with our partners around meeting the needs of the whole families, is key to ensuring we embed this as a way of working for all agencies supporting Kent’s families.

For each family there needs to be one plan, which is coordinated by a single worker, with broader support provided by a Team Around the Family.

Challenge for Kent: We recognise the need to embed whole family working across agencies; delivering better outcomes for families. Public services are under pressure with reducing funding and increasing demands. Can we use a whole family approach to respond to increasing pressures and deliver better outcomes for families?
There should be no wrong door for Kent’s families - we need to ensure that all partners are able to respond to a problem as soon as it is identified, acting quickly to prevent escalation and connecting families to the most appropriate response.

- whole family working – embed it as a way of working across all agencies
- collaborative and joined-up working – network of support for families
- it is important we share data so long as it is in accordance with the Data Sharing Agreement - Standard Operating Procedure.

**ACTIONS:**
- refresh *Making it Happen* – a practitioners guide for those supporting troubled families
- specialist children’s services, other agencies and staff working on the project to use the guidance in the new *Frequently Asked Questions* protocol.

**3. Housing**

Home is more than just a roof over your head. Housing is an issue that affects every one of us. We all know how important having a decent home is. From our health and emotional well-being, to our achievement in education and our ability to get work, where we live has an enormous impact on our lives.

A home is a place that provides security, privacy, decent living conditions, and links to a community.

**Challenge for Kent:** *We cannot underestimate the role that secure housing plays in enabling people to take up employment and increase income from work and its wider impact on the lives of families in Kent. Can we promote the critical role Housing services have in turning around troubled families?*

- we need to work with housing providers to ensure we are all targeting our efforts at the right families; so we can intervene earlier to enable families to sustain their housing or improve their housing options
- develop closer links with local housing staff to increase nominations and share data
- train existing multi-agency staff to give them confidence to have conversations with families around housing issues
- consider opportunities for developing models of funding FIP; learning from the Tower Hamlets model.
Kent’s approach

ACTION:
- develop and introduce a Housing Good Practice Guide for housing professionals and dedicated workers; to be endorsed by Kent Housing Group
- pursue opportunities to develop trading models in support of FIP.

4. Increase the awareness of the Troubled Families Programme

We recognise the need to ensure we are delivering the right messages, in the right way, to the right people, at the right time. Our aim is to ensure we inform, inspire and engage multi-agency staff who will be involved in delivering local services to families.

Challenge for Kent: That over the coming months we work with our multi-agency partners to ensure that we are delivering the right messages, in the right way, to the right people, at the right time. Can we improve the way we engage with all stakeholders across the programme?

- develop closer links with schools to maximise nominations and promote the programme.

ACTION:
- update communication plan – produce regular briefings
- develop a new campaign to target schools
- identify a single point of contact in each partner organisation
- all agencies to sign the SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) data sharing agreement.

5. Increase nominations

Your nominations are driving the programme. We need all partners to nominate into the programme existing families they are involved with who may meet the criteria.

Challenge for Kent: To build on the momentum in Kent in supporting troubled families. Can we ensure agencies flag families to who they are providing a service to a family member and who may fit the programme criteria, so the family as a whole can be part of the programme?

- We need to identify additional families who may meet the programme criteria and are already being supported by multi-agency partners. We can then have a discussion about what additional support can be provided e.g. allocation of a JobCentre Plus employment advisor or access to a local funding pot.
• Provide training to support work with families and share learning from the programme to inform practice.

**ACTIONS:**
The programme core team will:
• implement a nomination acceleration plan
• explore opportunities to speed up the verification process for nominations on to the programme
• obtain data on health, housing and young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).
• provide additional training for multi-agency partners.

Programme board to:
• prioritise the identification of families who are already being worked with, who can be nominated into the programme
• give staff the authority to widen their remit to deal with whole families; enable wider support to be secured from the programme to support existing work with families against the programme criteria e.g. access to local funding pot or allocation of a JobCentre Plus employment advisor.
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**Broader actions to be taken forward**

During the conference delegates were asked to participate in an electronic pad session and two themed discussions. We have analysed the results from these activities and developed the following additional actions to be taken forward.

At the next multi-agency steering group (MASG) members will discuss and agree what is required from the programme. Complexity vs volume – sustained vs short term – focussed vs reactive and size of caseloads.

It was clear from the voting pad session and the discussion that took place on the day, that we need to work with our partners to ensure we maximise use of available resources.

We recognise that more work is needed to champion the troubled families agenda across schools in Kent. We will work with the Education and Young People’s Service directorate and schools, to ensure every head teacher is fully behind the programme.

The programme team will review the verification process to ensure we are able to turn around nominations as quickly as possible and that we update you around the status of your nominations at the earliest opportunity.

We will work with partners to ensure nominations contain sufficient information to enable them to be verified, allocated and prioritised as quickly as possible, and that we then share this with our dedicated workers to support work with families.
During the conference delegates were given the opportunity to vote anonymously on a series of questions, using electronic voting pads.

These questions covered a diverse range of vital issues. The results have given us a better understanding of what needs to be done to shape the programme in the future and will help ensure we focus on the right families.

The following graphs show the top three or four answers.

**Given your experience of working with families to date, what percentage of troubled families will we make a significant and sustained change to behaviour?**

- **14%**
- **14%**
- **30%**
- **38%**

**What is the main presenting issue with the majority of families you are working with?**

- **17%** Lack of motivation
- **23%** Family relationship
- **26%** Mental Health

**Without the need for long term, light touch support for these families, is the government being overly optimistic about the impact of the Troubled Families Programme?**

- **7%** Unsure
- **11%** No, it’s achievable
- **82%** Yes, it’s a concern
In your opinion, how many troubled families will continue to need on-going support beyond the life cycle of the current programme?

- 50%: 26%
- 75%: 48%
- 90%+: 21%

Are we maximising our existing multi-agency resources?

- Unsure: 17%
- No: 65%
- Yes: 18%

What are the main challenges in mainstreaming the programme?

- Reduced public sector resources: 22%
- Current programme criteria too rigid: 25%
- Organisational priorities: 26%

With the government committing to the programme for 2015/2016, which families do you feel should be included?

- Existing criteria: 13%
- Worklessness: 13%
- Domestic abuse: 14%
- Not in education, employment or education: 21%
Guided by Chairman Jonathan Shaw, delegates talked about their experiences and concerns, as well as taking part in two themed around-the-table discussions.

**Theme one: how are we working with the current cohort?**

During the first discussion multi-agency partners talked about the programme and the families we work with, identifying what is working well, and what is not. This was also an opportunity for workers to discuss the barriers they face and to share examples of good practice.

**Issues and results from discussion one:**

Discussions from each table varied, however, the most common feedback was:

- difficulties with schools – lack of/no engagement, unwilling to help/engage
- more shared knowledge is needed about the range of services and interventions available for families
- joined-up working needs to improve
- more mental health training required for frontline workers
- verification of nominations needs to speed up
- FIP caseloads need to be reviewed
- need for better data sharing across agencies
- information provided to dedicated workers needs to improve, in relation to the referral form.

**Theme two: how will we do business in the future?**

The second discussion focussed on how, in the future, we get all of our multi-agency partners on board. As we look to mainstream this essential programme, it’s vital for all partners to understand its importance.

This was also an opportunity for delegates to discuss what criteria the programme should include post 2015, to ensure we are working with the right families and delivering the right level of support. The results of this discussion will be passed on to the Department for Communities and Local Government, as it looks to expand the programme.
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Issues and results from discussion two:

- Review and refresh support for, and engagement with key partners. For example, the programme would benefit from having better access to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) support – perhaps with co-located teams to improve joint working.
- JobCentre Plus has significant resources which need to be better utilised.
- This programme presents a huge opportunity to redesign services. The Troubled Families Programme must influence this transformation in partnership with others, not isolation.
- Embedding of the FIP model is crucial.
- Lack of key agencies at TAFs and/or LOGs to help tackle specific issues. If they don’t attend, that work cannot progress.
- Mainstreaming: Creating a co-located team of all professionals in one team, integrated as a whole unit rather than in silos.
- Better use of technology – need for shared systems with a holistic family view.

Panel discussion

Throughout the conference delegates were given the opportunity to ask questions to the panel. The panel consisted of:

- Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community Services
- Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Education and Young People’s Service
- Robert McCulloch-Graham, Corporate Director for Tower Hamlets Education - Social Care and Wellbeing Directorate
- Angela Slaven, Interim Director of Preventative Services
- Mairead MacNeil, Director for Specialist Children’s Services
- Doug Lawson, Head Teacher at Aylesford Sports Academy
- Rob Price, Assistant Chief Constable for Kent Police

The programme has collated all questions and has sought to answer these in this booklet.
What has been delivered in Kent so far?

Key deliverables
Single point of contact for each district. Local project delivery managers coordinate local delivery, working in partnership with a wide range of agencies to target support around identified families.

Key milestones
April 2012: Business case developed - setting out arrangements for the Kent programme – including governance, local delivery model, coordinator post and local project delivery managers.

January 2013: Local delivery model commenced.

April 2013: JobCentre Plus employment advisors seconded to the Kent programme.

May 2013: Family intervention project (FIP) service goes live.

July 2013: Kent hosts a Troubled Families Conference to showcase the Kent programme and raise awareness about work underway.

August 2013: Local areas submit business cases for funding via a grant allocation pot held centrally.

September 2013: Kent Offer developed – creating training and apprenticeship opportunities for families.

October 2013: FIP light service goes live across eight districts.

January 2014: Suite of activities developed to complement the work with families and can be accessed via dedicated workers.

What have we achieved with families?
Since the programme started we have turned around 560 families for the period up to February 2014.

Turned around means that at least one adult has returned to work and is no longer claiming out-of-work benefits and/or that the children in these families:

• are showing positive engagement and improved and sustained attendance at school
• have reduced or stopped offending or committing ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour)

We are currently actively working with over 780 families.
Questions posed to the panel during the conference

1. How do you see Children Centre’s supporting the programme?

A key priority is to target provision to the most most needy. There is recognition of the need to extend Children Centre agenda to 0-11 years and an important shift to deliver outreach and focus on intervening earlier.

2. What role is housing playing in London in supporting troubled families?

Housing has history of delivering a FIP service and fund FIPs in London. Need to up skill staff around housing.

We have been able to develop a housing related support contract for troubled families and are currently looking at how we might be able to secure additional support from the generic housing related support contracts.

3. How is the programme supporting troubled families with travel costs?

Kent County Council (KCC) has a well-funded freedom pass scheme. Local project delivery managers (LPDMs) are also utilising local commissioning pots flexibly to support meeting local needs. Partners should consider opportunities to develop a social enterprise model. Engaging with schools is also key to helping to solve this issue.

4. How can we get a better data sharing agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)?

Although this is a key issue for the Kent Troubled Families Programme it is also an issue for the other Troubled Families Programmes around the country. Conversations are being held centrally between DCLG and DWP to try and resolve some of the issues around data sharing.

Kent is also part of a national pilot scheme with DWP, where if a family member has been referred to the programme on the education or crime criteria we can check using the family’s unique property reference number (UPRN) if anyone in the household is claiming work related benefits. This is assisting in the verification process for families and is starting to improve the turnaround time for verifying nominations.
5. If national funding reduces, can all services contribute to pooled budgets enabling the programme and the FIPs to continue?

As part of the future of the Troubled Families Programme, national funding will reduce in Phase 2 (May 2015 onwards). In order to ensure that the programme continues the Kent Troubled Families core team have to submit a proposal to DCLG in July on how this can be achieved. The mainstreaming of the Troubled Families criteria into other services will be a key part of this proposal. As will be increasing the amount of preventative work undertaken by the programme to ensure more families do not end up becoming troubled families of the future.

6. How do we best use statutory services to deliver a better service for families in Kent?

The Troubled Families Programme is currently working alongside statutory services to improve how we work together and how these services can complement each other more effectively. Evidence of this is in the recent FAQs developed between social services and the programme. This document has been designed to encourage and support multi-agency working with these families. The aim is to ensure a seamless and consistent approach from all professionals to support families to make and maintain change.

7. As we look to mainstream this programme, we need to consider how professionals flex their professional boundaries to take responsibility as lead workers.

The Kent Troubled Families Programme supports this view and believes that managers allowing staff to focus on the Troubled Families criteria, as well as their own, will allow for a more holistic view to be taken and more significant turn-around for these families.
8. **Can adult social care services improve their engagement?**

The current Troubled Families criterion does not specifically target those families who have a need for adult social services intervention. This may change with the proposed widening of the criteria post April 2015 in phase 2 of the programme. If a family on the programme requires adult social services intervention then this should be highlighted in the common assessment framework (CAF) and a representative from this service should attend the team around the family (TAF) for this family.

9. **Is the criteria going to widen or, at the very best, acknowledge the host of other issues present such as mental health, substance misuse, alcoholic issues, housing and debt, all of which impact on the success of the payment-by-results criteria (in respect of targets)?**

DCLG have stated that for phase 2 of the programme they are looking to potentially widen the criteria based on the feedback they are getting from across the country. We will be feeding back to DCLG to say how we believe it should be widened in the future. This will be based upon the responses we had at the conference and also the work we are currently undertaking with families.

10. **Why does Troubled Families only target the three main areas?**

The Troubled Families Programme criteria were set nationally by DCLG. As stated previously DCLG are looking to potentially expand the existing criteria in phase 2 of the programme. Although the programme targets just these three main areas, it also ensures that other issues the families may have are addressed in their action plan.

11. **Concerns about waiting times for CAMHS – what is the programme doing to improve this?**

The Kent Troubled Families core team will explore opportunities to raise awareness around mental health issues and training for multi-agency staff.

12. **KCC need to negotiate the widening of targets with central government and ensure smaller steps to progress are also rewarded.**

As mentioned previously, DCLG are looking to widen the existing criteria as part of the expansion plans.
13. Does the Troubled Families Programme have a marker system which flags troubled families on multi-agency partner data systems; to improve information exchange and ensure agencies escalate action to minimise delays?

Kent’s Troubled Families Programme has already organised with DWP to have a flag on their system which highlights families who are on the programme. The core team are looking to expand this across relevant and key partner agencies through the programme board to ensure quick data sharing between agencies working with troubled families.

14. There is a need to embed Troubled Families Programme in all key agencies through regular briefings. Who has capacity to do this?

Kent’s Troubled Families Programme will look to embed the programme within key agencies by using a variety of different means and has committed to revisiting and updating its communication plan.

The core team currently produces a newsletter which highlights progress to date and future steps that are to be taken. The local project delivery managers also have a key role to play by giving districts and local partners updates on what’s going on. Another aspect that is being looked into is to create Troubled Families champions within key partner organisations who can act as information points for their agencies on the latest Troubled Families updates.

15. Can we look at the screening of new mums and stress levels around them which has been proven to have an impact on their likelihood of producing children with ADHD and all of the costs to families and society, particularly crime and education?

The majority of local districts have a business pot which can be used to fund new project elements. A business case would need to be submitted to the local project manager and they will decide whether they have the funding for this.

16. Are the resources there to deal with the workload given the number of families Kent has to work with?

The current resources that exist on the programme are currently nearing full capacity, making it difficult to take on new families. The programme is currently exploring opportunities to increase resources with our multi-agency partners.
Kent’s approach

For further information

FAQs – an inter-agency guide to working with troubled families: 
kscb.org.uk/professionals/troubled_families.aspx

Summary of Kent’s approach to working with families and contact details for the individual project delivery managers: kent.gov.uk/troubledfamilies
You are key to a better future.

Working together, we can empower families by doing things differently.

Hands-on, practical support from a single dedicated worker can lead to change.

www.kent.gov.uk/troubledfamilies