Troubled Families Update

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Children’s Select Committee on the work of the Troubled Families programme

Background

2. In December 2011 the government announced funding for local authorities to work with partners to radically transform the lives of the country’s most troubled families. Wiltshire was allocated 510 families to “turn round” before end March 2015. The criteria for this phase were families who:
   - were involved in crime or anti-social behaviour;
   - had a child who has been excluded or is persistently absent from school;
   - were in receipt of out of work benefits;
   - had a high cost to the public purse.

This was a payment by results (PBR) scheme and Wiltshire achieved 100% success, making a difference to all 510 families.

Main Considerations for the Council

3. Wiltshire is now into the second year of phase 2 of the programme and families are brought into the Troubled Families programme under the new criteria:
   - Parents and children involved in crime or antisocial behaviour
   - Children who have not been attending school regularly
   - Children who need help
   - Adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion or young people at risk of worklessness
   - Families affected by domestic violence and abuse
   - Parents and children with a range of health problems

Funding is provided through an Attachment Fee of £1,000 per family and Payment by Results of £800 per family where significant and sustained progress has been made or there has been a move into continuous employment.
Last year we brought (attached) 477 families into the programme and claimed for 14 families (this is in line with other south west authorities). This year we have a target of 517 to bring in (attach) and claims to be made for 489 families. As there are changes in the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) we have been allocated an extra 100 families from 2017. This will take our overall total to 1990 for the five years of the programme.

Eligibility and claims

There are two main ways of identifying families as eligible for help and support thorough the Troubled Families Programme:

- Via the Gateway Panel which gives access to intensive family support. This may be through the newly formed Family Intervention Service (previously two separate services - Wiltshire Families First provided by Action for Children and the in-house Family Intervention Service). The two services were brought together to allow delivery of a more flexible family support service that could meet needs across both early help and social care thresholds.

- Families receiving effective help from children’s centres, early help or social care teams. There must be an assessment, a Lead Professional and intervention taking place. Families must agree to sharing their information and can be included in the monitoring if they agree to share their information. They will also be able to access the support of an employment adviser to help them progress back to work.

Progress under the troubled families initiative is monitored against the Outcome Plan (Appendix 1) which provides a set of success measures applicable to all families, from which the outcomes and measures relevant to each family may then be drawn, ie, these form the goals against which significant and sustained progress will be judged for each family. The Department for Communities and Local Government (which runs the troubled families programme) has strengthened the expectation on how the families are worked with to ensure the priorities of the programme are met. Therefore families with multiple problems who are of most concern and have the highest reactive costs should be prioritised and a lead worker appointed for each family who manages the family and their problems.

A claim can be made for Payment by Results (PbR) if a family has:

- Achieved significant and sustained progress, compared with all their problems at the point of engagement, or

- An adult in the family has moved off benefits and into continuous employment for at least 13 weeks.

Just over 100 payment by results claims have been made in September and more claims will be made in January 2017.
As a Local Authority we submit data to a National Impact Study which is managed by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This study works with national databases to create a rich understanding of the profile of families across the country. This is supplemented by Family Progress Data, which is collected every six months and includes around a dozen measures for which there are no national administrative datasets - including eviction notices, homelessness, rent arrears, and police callouts.

**Transformation**

The Troubled Families Programme is a key driver in ensuring that we have effective family support services available in Wiltshire. It is important that children’s and adult services work together across the Council and the CCG and that there are good links with the Police. Data sharing agreements have been put in place with police, drug and alcohol support, housing, probation and children’s centres and this means that families who meet the troubled families criteria are identified and appropriate support is delivered and information on progress is shared. Some examples of the benefits of having information sharing agreements in place are set out below:

- Families who will be affected by the benefit cap, which will be introduced later this year, have been identified by housing colleagues, and support will be offered to families via the employment advisers to get them into work so that the cap does not have a negative effect on them.

- Children’s centres share data about families who are accessing an outreach worker and receiving support. The employment advisers will offer back to work courses on a rolling programme in the centres across the county.

- Turning Point are sharing information about families that they are working with so that children’s services are aware of what support is being offered to parents with substance misuse difficulties.

**Challenges**

- Getting parents into work. Two DWP employment advisers are co-located with the Local Authority. Their role is to support families back into work and to upskill the LA workforce on the eligibility, referral processes, support packages and benefits of DWP’s mainstream employment provision. Achieving returns to work has been quite difficult, so we are reviewing the way that the employment advisers work so that this can be improved. They will now be co-located in children’s centres three days a week. Families who are receiving support from social care are often not ready to return to work so the employment advisers will focus on upskilling them and preparing them for the work environment when they are in a place to do so.
Data sharing with health partners due to concerns about confidentiality. Data from health visitors could play an important part in getting the right support to families at the right time and we are looking to develop an information sharing agreement about families that have been identified by Health Visitors as needing more intensive support (known as Universal Partnership Plus under the National Healthy Child Programme).

Safeguarding Considerations

4. All the services and teams involved in delivering our local troubled families work have robust safeguarding policies and processes in place.

Public Health Implications

The Troubled Families Programme has a focus on improving children’s life chances and reducing inequalities.

Conclusions

6. Wiltshire has been recognised by central government as having delivered the first phase of the Troubled Families Programme very successfully. Our work was also commented on favourably within our last Ofsted safeguarding inspection. The challenge now is to develop the programme further through better information sharing, increased engagement of other partners (eg, housing) and improved joint working. The focus needs to be on better outcomes and reducing the overall cost to a range of services and agencies of supporting troubled families.

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3 October 2016

Background Papers

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

None

Appendices
Appendix 1 – Troubled Families Outcome Framework