

CABINET – 17 JULY 2012

DEVELOPING THE THRIVING FAMILIES AGENDA

Joint Report by the Director for Public Health and Director for Children's Services

Introduction

1. This paper sets out the direction of Oxfordshire's Thriving Families programme. It describes what the programme is, how it meets the requirements of the Government's Troubled Families initiative and how we intend to build on and adapt this work to meet local needs.
2. For several years, through the Family Intervention Project and the 'Breaking the Cycle of Deprivation' programme, the council has been working to help and support some of the most resource-intensive and vulnerable families in Oxfordshire.
3. The additional resources now available through the government's Troubled Families programme will be used to create a sustainable model, mainstreaming our existing approach so that by April 2015 we have fully integrated the approach within the Early Intervention Service. This will mean that the programme becomes embedded as core council business, and will ensure delivery over the longer term .

How does the Thriving Families programme build on the National 'Troubled Families' Programme?

4. The Troubled Families programme is a Coalition Government initiative led by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). It is aimed at helping some of the most challenged and disadvantaged families living in local communities to turn their lives around. The overarching aim of the national programme is to fight the problems of poverty, disadvantage and disconnection from the mainstream of society which persist down the generations and are experienced by a group of our most troubled and troubling families.
5. In Oxfordshire we have in place strong foundations and our approach to the new national initiative will be to build upon our well established Family Intervention Project and Breaking the Cycle of Deprivation programme.
6. We will give our programme the positive title 'Thriving Families' as this is what the programme aims to do – to help some of our most disadvantaged families thrive.
7. Government estimates that it spends £9 Billion per year on 120,000 of these families. £8 Billion of this is spent reacting to problems rather

than solving them. The government is therefore making available up to £4,000 per family to turn this situation around through a payments by results scheme. The payment comes in two parts, an initial 'attachment fee' for each family worked with, followed by a 'results payment' for achieving demonstrable success.

How will this build on previous work in Oxfordshire?

8. This programme builds strongly on our existing direction of travel. Previous work by Oxfordshire's Family Intervention Project demonstrated that with proper practical help and support some of the most problematic of families could be helped and supported to address their significant difficulties. In addition, formal evaluation of the Family Intervention Project demonstrated that significant savings were achievable for Oxfordshire

What principles are proposed for work in Oxfordshire?

9. We propose to take the best of the emerging national models and adapt these to work with our own local services. This approach is supported by Government. The following principles will guide our work:
 - a. By the end of the programme this approach will be integrated with existing family services in Oxfordshire to make sure it is sustainable. It is intended that by April 2015 we will have fully integrated our approach within the Early Intervention Service.
 - b. All agencies work together in a coordinated way to improve outcomes for the family and society.
 - c. The programme will work with the whole family across the whole County.
 - d. A specific worker will be the single point of contact for the family acting as lead professional supported by a team made up of multi-agency workers
 - e. A Family Worker will offer intensive, persistent support and challenge to the families with the most complex needs to achieve agreed outcomes within a specific time frame.
 - f. The programme will make best use of public resources to change the way families are worked with in order to reduce costs and improve outcomes over the longer term.
 - g. The programme takes a view that in order to achieve sustained changes within families, workers will work with them for an extended period of time and maintain contact over an extended period of time to ensure changes are sustained.

How will it work: the proposed Oxfordshire Model

10.
 - It is proposed that the programme will follow national good practice by identifying a family worker for each family.
 - These workers and their colleagues in other agencies will work alongside staff in existing Early Intervention Hubs or Children's

Centres. This will help to develop and share best practice with many of our staff.

- The service will be supported by a small senior team operating countywide.
- Staff supporting families will have a dedicated caseload and will be engaged in providing practical face to face support for families.
- Families with complex needs will have specifically appointed and trained family workers. Allocation of these workers to families will be carried out through a multi-agency allocation panel. The allocated family worker will take on the lead professional role for the family and identify the services that need to be brought together to make a difference, working creatively, intensively and persistently to make very practical interventions. Plans will be made for the whole family and for each individual.
- Families with lesser needs will be supported by a network of existing workers who will be identified as the family's key worker.
- A wide range of organisations will be involved in working with and supporting families building on existing working arrangements.
- Referrals will operate through the existing procedures in the Early Intervention Service.

How will Families in Oxfordshire be identified?

11. The national programme provides flexibility to ensure that the approach meets local needs. As well as the three nationally-set criteria below, we are also adding an additional criterion for Oxfordshire because we believe that this enables us to address the root causes of families' failure to thrive.

The national criteria are:

- 1) families which include one or more children under 18 with a proven offence in last 12 months and /or one or more member who has an antisocial behaviour order, behaviour injunction or housing related antisocial behaviour intervention in last 12 months
- 2) families which include a child who has been permanently excluded or has more than three fixed term exclusions or is in pupil referral unit or alternative education or is off-roll and/ or is a persistent absentee.
- 3) Families which include an adult on benefits

Any family that meets all three national criteria will automatically be in the programme. Note that payment by results is achieved through making a difference on these national measures rather than the locally added issue below.

The additional Oxfordshire criterion is:

- 4) families which present a high cost to services (ie those families with frequent police call outs ,child protection issues, domestic violence, substance misuse or mental health problems)

Numbers of families we will be working with

12. The national programme tells us that we are expected to achieve outcomes with 810 families. We will receive payment by results for 675 families, with European Social Funding for Families with Multiple Problems achieving outcomes for the remaining 135. In order to achieve this and to meet our own local ambitions we envisage working with between 1200 and 1400 families.
13. The government's expectations are that authorities will work with one third of each of these families per year over the three years of the programme. However in Oxfordshire we have been granted additional funding to enable us to work with 45% of families from year one.

How will this programme benefit Oxfordshire?

14. This programme is expected to benefit Oxfordshire's people in a number of ways. The families themselves will benefit from improved life chances while substantial savings are expected in the provision of public services. These benefits are outlined below.
15. Savings through more efficient use of public services
DCLG estimate that each of these families costs the taxpayer on average £75,000 per year. Oxfordshire's previous Family Intervention Programme (2009-2011) found that 43 families with high levels of need were costing, on average, £162,000 per year. This level of savings will not be replicated for all families, but the figures do give an indication of what can be achieved.
16. All of Oxfordshire will benefit.
Families will be admitted to the programme based on need wherever they live. This programme is not limited to specific localities within Oxfordshire and so the whole of the County will benefit.
17. Improving the evidence-base
Some of the resources in the programme will be used to fund high quality research into finding out which interventions really work locally to improve life chances and give the best return on investment. This will equip Oxfordshire with an array of proven interventions that can be used with confidence by all services in the future.
18. Human potential
The programme is designed to improve the lives of the families involved and to break the cycles of entrenched behaviours down the generations. Particularly important to Oxfordshire is to reduce the number families on the threshold of social care. The DFE National Evaluation of Family Intervention Projects found that one third of troubled families had child protection issues and that this number was halved by the end of the programme.

19. Developing local community initiatives

An important benefit to working with families in this way would be to connect up with existing community and neighbourhood work in the immediate area. It would also add capacity to community and neighbourhood groups and help to develop innovative working in local neighbourhoods.

What are the financial implications?

20. Funding for the programme is made up of two central government un-ringfenced grants which the Council has agreed to spend specifically on the programme. The year one allocations were confirmed by the end of May 2012. Notification of the additional year one funding will be received in writing by the end of July 2012. In addition the Council has made a contribution of £0.8m for two years from available one-off funds. It should be noted that the full funding allocation from central government will only be received if all the payment by results criteria are met.
21. The planned spend on the programme is still to be fully developed however early indications show that there will be sufficient funding over the three years to fund the planned programme and leave a positive legacy of embedding delivery over the longer term

Learning from the programme

22. We will be contributing to a national evaluation of the programme, and will also be developing a local approach, through links with either Oxford University or Oxford Brookes university.
23. In addition we have been selected by the Department of Communities and Local Government, and Louise Casey (Head of the National Troubled Families Unit) to work as a 'learning laboratory', to enable them to understand effective and best practice beyond deprived big inner city areas. We recently hosted a visit from Louise Casey who was keen to understand our approach and use the Oxfordshire approach to develop a nationally replicable model.

Conclusion

24. Oxfordshire's Thriving Families programme aims to make a real and lasting impact to the lives of some of the most vulnerable families in the County while reducing the impact on the public purse. It builds on work to break the cycle of deprivation across the whole County and takes local work on the Family Intervention Project to its next logical stage.

RECOMMENDATION

- 25. The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to note and approve the Council's response to the Government's Troubled Families initiative.**

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