

REPORT TO: Safer, Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 13 March 2012

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Children and Enterprise

PORTFOLIO: Children Young People and Families

SUBJECT: Tackling ‘Troubled Families’ – Initial Plans

WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To outline Government proposals for tackling troubled families and the Council’s initial plans for delivering this new initiative in Halton.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Executive Board

1. Notes the Government’s initiative for troubled families.
2. Support the Council’s initial response to troubled families listed in paragraph 4.
3. Requests a further report once consultation has been undertaken with key partners on the delivery of the ‘Troubled Families’ programme, and after the initial analysis of the 375 troubled families calculated by Government as living in Halton.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Government has announced that almost £450 million has been made available in a cross-government drive to turn around the lives of 120,000 troubled families.
- 3.2 The money is being made available to local authorities to fund a national network of Troubled Family ‘Trouble-Shooters’ and family intervention projects. The trouble-shooters will oversee the programme of action in their area.
- 3.3 A new Troubled Families Team based within the Department of Communities and Local Government, headed by Louise Casey, has been established to join up efforts across Whitehall, provide expert help to local areas, and drive forward the strategy. It reports directly to Eric Pickles, Secretary of State.
- 3.4 It is estimated that troubled families cost the taxpayer an estimated £9 billion per year, equivalent to £75,000 per family. The initiative is intended to cut the costs of this to the state.

- 3.5 The Council believes that by co-ordinating public services for families with multiple problems across Runcorn and Widnes support can be provided more effectively and efficiently.
- 3.6 It appears the troubled families programme will build on existing work, rather than some new, separate initiative being bolted on. In Halton this means augmenting the 'Team Around The Family' approach in Widnes and Runcorn. It should enable us to scale up and broaden this work, particularly multiagency working
- 3.7 All agencies, central and local, will need to work closely together to get over some of the hurdles in delivering more co-ordinated and effective services, for example, in information sharing.
- 3.8 It will be challenging to achieve the 375 target by 2015 and success will depend on all public services in Halton and Government departments working closely together.
- 3.9 Local partners, such as health and the police will also need to contribute; they should realise the benefits such as fewer police call outs, and alcohol and drug related hospital visits. The initiative relies on Government Departments giving a strong message to their agencies about contributing.
- 3.10 The Government will make money available to local authorities to fund a national network of Troubled Family 'Trouble Shooters', or 'co-ordinators'.
- 3.11 The funds should help councils to co-ordinate different activities with troubled families across local areas.
- 3.12 The Criteria for defining a family as 'troubled' is still under development, that said, information so far suggests such a family would have the following characteristics:

- Not be in work
- Children not attending school
- Children involved in crime and/or anti social behaviour

The 375 families calculated for Halton were based on an analysis from the 2005 Family and Children survey using the child welfare index and indicators of multiple deprivation; these include:

- No parent in work
- Poor quality housing
- No parent with qualifications
- Mother with Mental Health problems
- One parent with a long standing disability
- Low income
- Family cannot afford some food/clothing

3.13 We are requested to undertake the analysis in Halton to convert this indicative estimate into verified figures of 'real' troubled families, moreover:

- To estimate how many would achieve success criteria with current provisions by 2015
- To develop service redesign plans to expand provision to meet the needs of the remaining group of troubled families.
- To formulate a business case to match the 40% offer of funding by Government with a 60% local offer.
- Finally, we need to plan how we track outcomes. The initiative is based on payment by results
- £20k will be provided to fund this initial work (to be completed by the end of April 2012)

4.0 THE COUNCIL'S INITIAL RESPONSE

- 4.1 To undertake an analysis of and identify the 375 troubled families in Halton. This will need to be multi-agency, and be informed by Government criteria currently under formulation. Such information is not kept with any one agency.
- 4.2 To request Halton's Children's Trust, in collaboration with the Safer Halton Partnership, to oversee the programme through the establishment of a joint project group.
- 4.3 To develop a person specification and recruitment process for the Halton Troubled Families Co-ordinator (TFC) – the Government funded post that will have operational responsibility in each top level council area. The Government wants to see these in post by April 2012.
- 4.4 To place the TFC as a direct report to the Operational Director: Children's Organisation and Provision within the Children and Enterprise Directorate. It is anticipated that the TFC will work closely with both the Team Around the Family Manager for Halton and appropriate Community Safety, Adult, Youth Offending and Education staff.
- 4.5 To recommend that the Lead Member for Children and Young People's Services takes the lead for Troubled Families on behalf of the Council. Other participating agencies will need to nominate a lead of appropriate seniority.
- 4.6 To ensure that this latest Government initiative fits with the 'Work Programme' and Halton People Into Jobs.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The programme involves an initial start up grant of £20k; and a three year grant of £75k for the Troubled Families Co-ordinator, and 40% match funding for service delivery costs based on payment by results.

5.2 A full financial analysis for the programme will need to be developed between now and April 2012. The programme is underpinned by making cost savings.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

The troubled families' initiative is intended to address the crucial factors in children in disadvantaged settings not meeting their potential.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

The programme will be integrated with other employment/learning based initiatives.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

A range of Health partners will need to contribute to the initial case analysis and service delivery.

6.4 A Safer Halton

The troubled families programme will need to be integrated with Community Safety activities.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Troubled families are a drain on public resources; a more targeted approach offers economic advantage.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

The troubled families programme builds on Halton's 'Team Around the Family' Early Intervention work and that of Community Safety. It therefore augments current Council and partner work.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

Narrowing the gap for the most disadvantaged, complex or problematic families is at the heart of the Council's anti poverty and equality work.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

9,1 None under the meaning of the Act.