



**Responsible Authorities Group (RAG)
20 September 2012
Information Report**

Subject: Strengthening Families Programme

Reason for report

To inform RAG members of the Strengthening Families Programme 2012-15 in Milton Keynes (part of the government's Troubled Families Initiative).

Items for consideration

It is requested that RAG members note the development of this programme and consider the effects it is likely to have.

Background

On December 16 2011 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) announced the Troubled Families Initiative. This will take place over three years and will be managed by the Troubled Families Unit in DCLG under the leadership of Louise Casey.

This initiative emerges out of advice given to the Government from a number of recently commissioned reports, especially the Allen Report that demonstrates that there are a limited number of families in each area that take up a high proportion of local funding. Over the years attempts have been made to work with these families but success has been limited. The initiative aims to intervene early with these families in order to:

- Encourage children back into full time education
- Encourage adults back into work
- Reduce the crime and anti-social behaviour committed by these families.

Ultimately the aim is to reduce the level of public funding that is taken up by these troubled families.

In Milton Keynes the government originally estimated from demographic data that there are about 425 of these families. It has therefore assigned £100k to each local authority for each of the next three years to appoint a *Troubled Families Coordinator* at a senior level. In addition, there is an offer to reimburse 40% of the cost of the interventions to turn around the lives of these troubled families.

A multi-agency Board has been established to oversee the programme, chaired by Will Spurgeon, Assistant Director from Children's Services. The vice chair is Chief Inspector Ed McLean from Thames Valley Police. The Board has carried out the following tasks|:

- Initial definition of the programme, including the title of Strengthening Families.
- Appointment of Amanda Farr as the programme lead officer assisted by Jennifer Sergeant as the temporary co-ordinator.
- Identification of a short list of 37 families who meet all three primary criteria listed above.
- Identification of a longer list of 63 families who meet two of the primary criteria together with a local criterion. These local factors include domestic abuse and substance misuse.

Detailed research is currently being conducted amongst professionals involved with families from both lists in order to determine the best ways of delivering the programme.

The solutions are most unlikely to prove to be easy or rapid. The whole point of the programme is to tackle chronic issues that have been unresolved for many generations. However, there is a genuine determination to work with the families concerned in a co-ordinated and novel way that is based on intelligence, targeting specific problems with the active assistance of the families themselves.

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Author:

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