

**Strengthening Families:** Milton Keynes Council's response to the Troubled Families Programme

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**Service Group:** Integrated Support and Social Care

## 1. Executive Summary

'Strengthening Families' is Milton Keynes Council's approach to the Coalition Government's Troubled Families programme, announced in December 2011, to help families with a multiplicity of long lasting problems to improve their lives. The programme is led by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

Troubled families are those that often cause problems to the community around them and place high costs on the public purse. The government characterised these families as households that:

- are involved in crime and anti-social behaviour
- have children not in school
- have an adult on out of work benefits

Through use of their research data, the DCLG identified that Milton Keynes has 425 troubled families who they believe meet the criteria to receive support.

As well as these criteria, the Council is entitled to take into account local factors to act as additional filters alongside the prescribed criteria. In MK, domestic abuse, frequent police call outs, substance misuse and issues relating to housing have been identified as relevant filters. These have been applied to supplement the criteria in identifying additional families and are taken into consideration where families meet some, but not all of the prescribed criteria.

The Strengthening Families programme is led by a programme board made up of partners from the Council, health, the police, the probation service, Job Centre Plus and the voluntary sector.

The three year programme is being run on a payment by results basis. It is judged that intervention with a troubled family will cost £10,000 of which the DCLG will provide 40% (£4,000) of the funding. The payment by results outcomes are:

- More than 85% attendance in schools and fewer than three exclusions from school;
- A 60% reduction in anti-social behaviour across the whole family;
- A 33% reduction in youth offending;
- Households on the journey back into work.

## 2. Content

### 2.1 The Continuum of Support (Appendix 1 – The Effective Support Windscreen)

2.1.1 The Strengthening Families programme is part of the Early Help strategy, focused on those families where targeted intervention can be effective in preventing problems from escalating further and then requiring more intensive support over a longer period of time. Other components of the Early Help strategy include the Children and Families Practices and commissioned services relating to parenting, emotional wellbeing and community cohesion.

2.1.2 Children and Families Practices are three locality-based teams that aim to support children, young people and their families through evidence-based, focused intervention led by a key worker who both directly supports the family to resolve their problems and acts as a conduit through which other services can be accessed.

2.1.3 The practices are part of a continuum of support alongside social workers from the Children in Need team. The Strengthening Families programme straddles the two aspects of early help and specialist intervention providing the means to have more intensive, long lasting support to move the targeted families to a position where they can begin to sustain themselves.

### 2.2 Identifying the Families

2.2.1 The government required the Council to work with at least 425 families over 3 years. The target of 141 families to work with in year 1 of the programme has been agreed with DCLG. The Council is entitled to engage more families in the programme but this would not generate more income and working with fewer families would lead to a reduction in funding and challenge from the DCLG about the reason for this.

2.2.2 It is also presumed that Council staff and their partners are already aware of some of the families and have already dedicated resource to this. This has been arbitrarily measured at 20% so government funding only becomes forthcoming for the remaining 80%. In addition, the DCLG anticipates that we will work consistently over the next three years with a range of families with cases opening and closing throughout that period. Therefore, funding will be phased accordingly.

2.2.3 The anticipated and actual level of activity is laid out in the Table 1

Table 1

			Performance	
Targets	Actual	Indicative	Dec 2012	March 2013
Year 1 (2012-13)	141	118	82	123
Year 2	212	177		
Year 3	72	59		
<b>Three-year totals</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>354</b>		

2.2.4 Data is collected from a range of organisations. Delay in the first year of the programme, beginning in April 2012, arose due to difficulties about data sharing. However, these have been mainly overcome.

2.2.5 Once put forward by an organisation, the data is validated by a multi agency panel that scrutinises all of the information gathered on each individual household and the people within it. This is to ensure that the families in most need are included in the programme.

2.3. Current Level of Activity

2.3.1 No single service is responsible for working exclusively with the identified families. The leading services, to date are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

<b>Current Activity, by Household</b>	<b>Dec 12</b>	<b>Mar 13</b>
<b>Currently working with:</b>		
Children and Family Practices (level 2,3 4)	35	41
Children' Social Care (level 4)	14	20
Youth Offending Team (level 2,3 4)	5	5
Neighbourhood Employment Programme (level 2)	10	0
No further action required	18	26
<b>Previously worked with:</b>		
Family Intervention Project		31
<b>Total No of Households</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>123</b>

2.3.2 Detailed analysis of the families in the programme up until December 2012 is included in Appendix 2. What is immediately clear is that applying the three criteria prescribed by the government would not have led to the level of identification that the DCLG had anticipated. In addition, anecdotal evidence and local community intelligence suggested that the families that were initially identified were not families that were causing most concern to those communities or were not historically most frequently referred to support services.

2.3.3 Between April 2012 and December 2012, 82 families have been identified through the programme, of which 64 families are being worked with. Whilst this is significantly less than the DCLG anticipated:

- It was considered to be appropriate to ensure that both the assessment framework and the strategies for intervention needed to be securely in place at the outset to this programme. Therefore, identification and engagement was particularly slow in the opening six months.
- It reflects the level of identification from our partners. We had anticipated a significant level of referrals, especially from frontline staff working in the local community, such as schools, settings and children's centres but this has not happened. This may be because frontline services are anxious about putting forward a family for what they might consider to be a controversial programme. It may be that the programme is not sufficiently well understood.

2.3.4 The numbers of families identified for the programme between January and March 2013 has increased to 123. This is an increase of families being worked with by Children's Social Care and Children and Families Practices (CFPs) as well as families previously included in the Family Intervention Programme. The latter category counts against the number of families we are expected to have already worked with in Year 1.

## 2.4 Intervention Strategies

### 2.4.1 Team around the Family / multi-agency meeting:

Staff in Children's Social Care or the Children and Families Practice will convene a 'Team Around the Family' or 'multi-agency' meeting and invite all organisations that have, or have had, involvement with the family. The outcome of this meeting will be a family action plan consisting of SMART actions agreed by the family and agencies; some of these will be centred on helping the family to achieve the Strengthening Families outcomes.

### 2.4.2 Multi-agency family plan:

The multi-agency family plan addresses the necessary actions that will help the family achieve the Strengthening Families outcomes. The family action plan will be signed and agreed by all family members, the organisations involved and service providers. The meeting will consider how agency resources are being utilised and whether there is need for additional resources.

### 2.4.3 Family intervention:

Long lasting solutions to supporting troubled families arise from family intervention as opposed to focusing on an individual within a household even if the evidence suggests that most of the problems emanate from that individual. This requires a single key worker to support a family intensively, often every day, at least at the outset. This enables the worker to look at the family from the inside, seeing more completely the dynamics that operate and offering practical support in a way that the worker has learned will be accessible by that family. This leads to solutions that take the family as the starting point and crafts the activity around them as opposed to a narrower, top down approach where the family is forced to fit the solution. Key factors within a family intervention approach include:

- A dedicated worker, dedicated to a family;
- Practical hands on support;
- A persistent, assertive and challenging approach;
- Considering the family as a whole;
- Common purpose and an agreed action plan.

### 2.4.4 Frontline staff include:

- Social workers within the Children in Need team already work with a number of families that have been identified through the application of the DCLG criteria. In addition, they are a source of further identification when local filters are applied;
- CFPs began accepting cases from September 2012. By the end of January 2013, there were 650 open cases across the three localities. Of these, a number are already included within the Strengthening Families programme or are likely to be subject to this level of support in the near future;
- Youth Offending Team (YOT) officers are the frontline team, working with those young people in the criminal justice system. They contribute to intelligence about criminal activity and anti social behaviour;
- Housing officers are able to access resource to support those families at risk of homelessness or in need of support to ensure they become fully integrated into the local community;

- Regeneration officers and continuing adult education teams are employing resources to support adults within identified households on their return to work.

#### 2.4.5 Approaches:

- The development of peripatetic family support workers to provide intensive family support when this is beyond the capacity of existing services;
- The recruitment of a Strengthening Families employment advisor to specifically support and challenge parents and carers to access employment and training. This post holder will work alongside the existing Neighbourhood Employment Programme and will provide a bespoke service based on individual needs;
- Workforce Development initiatives including the training of staff to level 4 Award of City and Guilds Work with Parents with Multiple and Complex needs. The National Families unit recommend this qualification for all practitioners working in family intervention/support. In addition providing training such as Assertive Outreach techniques and Solution Based therapy.
- The use of Family Group Conferencing to independently support families to utilise their own networks and resource to resolve and better manage their difficulties.

## 2.5 The Performance Framework

2.5.1 DCLG has now collated the data returned by each authority involved in the programme in December 2012. The reported national performance for Milton Keynes is unsatisfactory in the identification of families that are eligible to enter to the programme. Performance is better with regard to engaging families that have been identified (equal 97<sup>th</sup> of 152 local authorities) but still not good enough. Performance by Milton Keynes in comparison with its statistical neighbours is laid out in Appendix 3.

Appendix 3 indicates that Milton Keynes is significantly behind like authorities in the identification of the total number of families to be worked with in the course of the three year programme. It is also 8th out of 12 councils with regard to the number of families that it is currently working with. Acceleration in the pace of the programme is required to provide a significant increase in the number of families. This will include:

- Increased promotion of the programme across partnerships, agencies and communities;
- Termly data collection across agencies;
- Monthly meetings with Children and Families Teams to ensure a regular review of cases within the context of the programme;
- Frequent engagement with other internal and external services to seek referrals;
- Seminar programme for staff to raise the profile of the programme and share good practice;

## 2.6 Funding

2.6.1 The DCLG has judged that support to a troubled family can be estimated to be £10,000 and that the government will contribute 40% of that investment.

## 2.6.2 Payment is made in two ways:

- A significant proportion paid at the beginning of each financial year for the next three years, based on the commitment that the council has made regarding the number of families it plans to work with;
- A smaller proportion through payment by results both for the number of families that are engaged in the programme and the effectiveness of the programme in resolving one of the three key challenges (return to school, reduction in anti social behaviour, return to work and removal from benefits);

## 2.6.3 The anticipated payments to be received by Milton Keynes is laid out in table 4 with more detail in Appendix 4.

Table 4

2012/13	Number of families (Indicative)	Number of Families (Actuals)	LA contribution 60%	PBR (DCLG) contribution 40%	80% Upfront fee	20% PBR in arrears
Year 1	118	<b>141</b>	£ 708,000	£ 472,000	£ 377,600	£ 94,400
Year 2	177	<b>212</b>	£ 1,062,000	£ 708,000	£ 566,400	£ 141,600
Year 3	59	<b>72</b>	£ 354,000	£ 236,000	£ 188,800	£ 47,200
	<b>354</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>£ 2,124,000</b>	<b>£1,416,000</b>	<b>£1,132,800</b>	<b>£ 283,200</b>

## 3. Lessons Learned

### 3.1 Information sharing:

Despite considerable planning at the outset of the programme, from January to April 2012, it proved to be very difficult to share data that was already held in a number of databases within public services. This was despite assurance from government lawyers that these hurdles had been overcome and with each partner agency signing up to a protocol that enabled us to bridge gaps at a local level.

This is not a problem for this programme alone. It is clear that multi agency working is the key to many activities of support especially for vulnerable and hard to reach families. Therefore, this experience should act as a stimulus to partners to see if a permanent solution can be found that supports the easy sharing of information and multi agency engagement.

### 3.2 Identifying families:

It was clear within the first 3 months, at least as far as Milton Keynes was concerned, that the three criteria prescribed by the DCLG was not leading us to the families that we expected to be working with. It was also a surprise to our partners that the families initially identified were not the ones that they would have made the highest priority. This demonstrates that we need more sophisticated assessment and data analysis if we are to reflect the true nature of families and their communities.

### 3.3 Local intelligence:

We had expected that once our partners had understood the focus of the programme they would have been very quick to come forward with recommendations regarding families in need. It had been expected that schools, children's centres and other local providers of services would have been a source of significant intelligence. This has not happened. There are two conclusions:

- The local service providers do not have the level of insight that we imagined;
- The local providers are reluctant to put forward the names of families in case it disrupts the relationship they have with the families.

Two years of the programme remain and this key element of access to the highest priorities for support must be exploited in a more effective way.

#### 3.4 Staff capacity:

There is, rightly, considerable anxiety about engaging with families in such an intensive way where problems are extreme and long lasting. It takes a very skilled professional to take on this level of support. In addition, the caseloads have to be significantly reduced. We anticipate that there should never be more than 5 cases (CFP workers currently work with caseloads of 12 – 16). It is the case that there are few workers with this level of skill who are available to be deployed. Most are already in full time work. This is further compounded by the time-limited nature of the programme, due to end in March 2015. Therefore, it is right that time was taken to firstly establish the practices and then ensure that they were effectively aligned with existing social care teams before concentrating on staff deployment within the Strengthening Families programme. The effective management of staff resource will be critical to the achievement of good outcomes and sustainability of the programme longer term.

#### 4. Background Papers

Information about the Strengthening Families programme can be found on the following link:

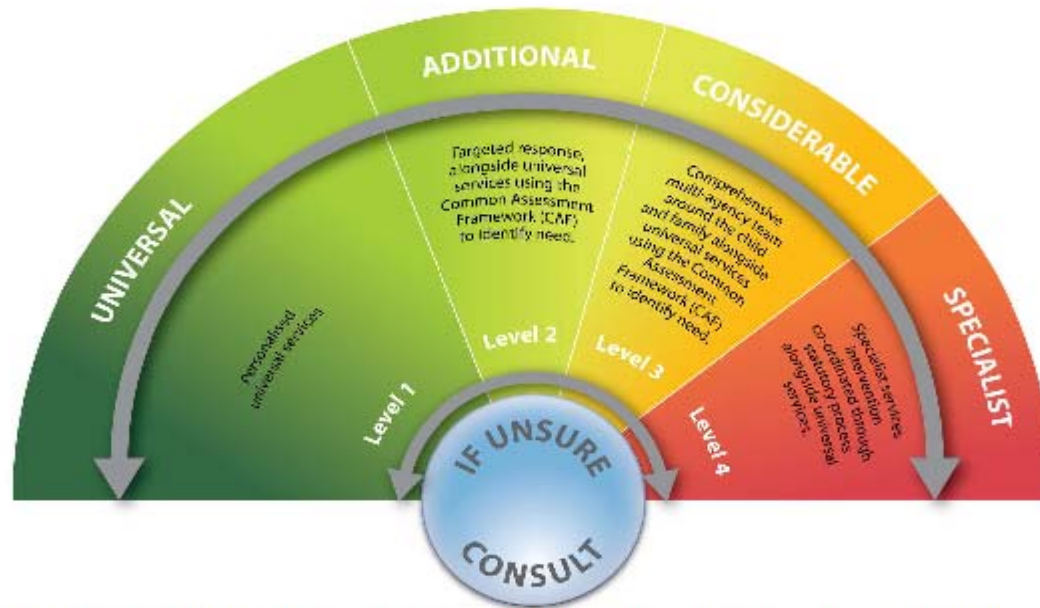
<http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/earlyhelp/displayarticle.asp?ID=88570>

Appendix 1	The Effective Support Windscreen
Appendix 2	Identified families and level of activity
Appendix 3	DCLG Performance Table March 2013
Appendix 4	Funding
Appendix 5	Information leaflet

## Appendix One – The Milton Keynes Effective Support ‘Windscreen’

### The Milton Keynes Effective Support ‘Windscreen’

Multi Agency Guidance: Working in partnership to improve outcomes for children and families



All partners working with children, young people and their families will offer support as soon as we are aware of any additional needs. We will get involved early and tailor support to each child's level of need. We will work in partnership with children, young people and their families to find solutions that enable them to fully benefit from universal services.



## Appendix Two - Characteristics of Identified Families

<b>Young People, by Gender</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	59%
Female	41%

<b>Young People</b>	<b>%</b>
Meeting 3 criteria	37%
Meeting 2+1 criteria	63%
<b>Young People</b>	<b>%</b>
Known to Soc Care, active or recent case	93%

<b>Young People, by school year</b>	<b>%</b>
School Year 1 - 6	12%
School Year 7 - 8	8%
School Year 9	16%
School Year 10	16%
School Year 11	46%
School Year 12	2%

<b>Young People, educational needs</b>	<b>%</b>
No SEN	32%
School Action	15%
School Action	36%
Statemented	17%

<b>Young People, Free School Meals</b>	<b>%</b>
Entitled to Free School Meal	54%

<b>Young People, by Ethnicity</b>	<b>%</b>
A1 White British	78%
A2 White Irish	0%
A3 Any other White background	3%
A4 Traveller of Irish Heritage	0%
A5 Gipsy / Roma	0%
B1 White and Black Caribbean	1%
B2 White and Black African	0%
B3 White and Asian	0%
B4 Any other mixed background	0%
C1 Indian	0%
C2 Pakistani	2%
C3 Bangladeshi	1%
C4 Any other Asian background	1%
D1 Caribbean	0%
D2 African	1%
D3 Any other Black background	4%
E1 Chinese	0%
E2 Any other Ethnic group	0%
E4 Information not obtained	8%

<b>Young People, by District</b>	<b>%</b>
Lakes Estate	16%
Netherfield	11%
Bletchley	9%
Fishermead	9%
Coffee Hall	5%
Oldbrook	5%
Eaglestone	4%
Pennyland	4%
Bradwells	3%
Hodge Lea	3%
Beanhill	2%
Conniburrow	2%
Galley Hill	2%
Grange Farm	2%
Stantonbury	2%
Tinkers Bridge	2%
Walnut Tree	2%
Bradville	1%
Broughton	1%
Downs Barn	1%
Fullers Slade	1%
Furzton	1%
Great Linford	1%
Greenleys	1%
Haversham	1%
Heelands	1%
New Bradwell	1%
Old Farm Park	1%
Springfield	1%
Wavendon Gate	1%

<b>Presenting Issues, Top 10</b>	<b>%</b>
Domestic Violence	20%
Parenting	16%
Behaviour problems, school	11%
Behaviour problems, home	7%
Poor school attendance	5%
Parental alcohol misuse	4%
Sexual abuse of Young Person	4%
Young Person Criminal Offence	3%
Family Housing	2%
Young Person Inappropriate sexual behaviour	2%
All others	25%

**Appendix Three – DCLG Performance Table  
March 2013**

Area	Total number of Families	Number of families identified at December 2012	% of Target Families identified	Number of families worked with as at December 2012	% of Families worked with	Number Families Identified by March 13	% of Families Identified by March 13	Number of fam worked with by March	% of Families worked with by March 13
Swindon	370	210	56.8%	20	5.4%				
Bedford	245	84	34.3%	26	10.6%				
Trafford	360	110	30.6%	37	10.3%				
Central Bedfordshire	305	65	21.3%	48	15.7%				
Solihull	355	280	78.9%	60	16.9%				
<b>Milton Keynes</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>19.3%</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>15.1%</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>22%</b>
Stockport	565	342	60.5%	190	33.6%				
Hertfordshire	1,350	1,211	89.7%	194	14.4%				
Bury	385	287	74.5%	287	74.5%				
Northamptonshire	1,200	824	68.7%	341	28.4%				
Leeds	2,190	879	40.1%	501	22.9%				
Kent	2,560	1,082	42.3%	506	19.8%				

## Appendix 4 - Troubled Families - Finance Funding Formula

Actuals	425
Subtract the number of families turned around through current provision (based on national guidance)(i)	71
Indicative	354
DCLG estimated cost per family	£10,000
LA and partner costs(ii)	£6,000
DCLG PBR @ 40%	£4,000
<b>Overall total -3 years</b>	
<b>Total Govt contribution 354 x £4k</b>	<b>£1,416,000</b>
<b>LA and partner costs 354 x £6k</b>	<b>£2,124,000</b>

2012/13	Number of families (Indicative)	Number of Families (Actuals)	LA contribution 60%	PBR (DCLG) contribution 40%	80% Upfront fee	20% PBR in arrears
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### Notes:

- i. Figure represents 1/6 of total target estimate families DCLG assume LA already working with through other schemes ie DWP/ESF worklessness agenda;
- ii. Currently there is no prescription for how LA funds 60% contribution. The recommendation is that Local areas explore potential reconfiguration of Early Intervention grant –opportunities for pooled or joint funding adult social Care, Probation, Health Housing, consider payment in kind etc with partners;
- iii Represents 50% scale up of local target for year 2 required by DCLG;
- iv Assume payment 50% (£283,200) in qtr 1 2013/14 for position in Group 2 for DCLG performance, and the remainder in qtr 2 if total year 1 target (actuals) achieved.

## Appendix 5 – Information Trifold

Milton Keynes has a programme to support families who are experiencing difficulties; it's called 'Strengthening Families'.

### **Strengthening Families offers advice and support to those families that:**

- have been out of work or training for a long period of time;
- are struggling to cope with supporting their children to attend school;
- have had conflict with neighbours;
- have children who are, or have been, in trouble with the police;
- experience violence within the home;
- have had support from social care and are still having difficulties;
- have physical and mental health problems affected by life choices.



### **Why are we doing this?**

#### **The Strengthening Families programme aims to:**

- increase the chances of your children passing exams at school and finding work when they leave school;
- reduce the risk of you losing your tenancy through eviction;
- reduce the level of debt that you may have by supporting you in training or to find work;
- improve the situation in your family to the point that agencies and services no longer need to be involved.

### **How does the programme work?**

You will have a dedicated worker who will support you throughout the process. Where necessary, the support worker will signpost you to other services, such as benefits advice, employment and training support and health services. The support worker will keep in contact with you and make sure you are happy with how things are going.



### **How will you be involved?**

We will seek your agreement before we start working with you and offering any support. We will talk to you and listen so that we can help you to make a positive difference in your family.

Your dedicated support worker will meet with you for the first time to get to know you and make sure that you know how to contact them if you should need to. They will also introduce you to anyone else who may be working with you to support your family.

We will work with you intensively for six months, but don't worry; we will do things in stages so that we are not overloading you or your family with information or meetings.

## What will happen at the end?

**After your work with the Strengthening Families programme has finished, you may:**

- be back in employment or training;
- be living a more healthy lifestyle;
- be managing your family's finances more efficiently;
- be getting on better with your neighbours;
- have reduced involvement with the police and the authorities;
- find your children are achieving more at school

## Who will help us?

We can't do this alone so we are working with others to ensure that you are getting the best possible support that is right for you and your family.

**These are some of the organisations we work with:**

- Children and Families Practices
- Schools
- Children's Social Care
- Housing services
- Health services
- Benefits team
- Police
- Voluntary service organisations
- Job Centre Plus

M13044

Strengthening Families is Milton Keynes Council's approach to the Government's Troubled Families initiative, which is a new way of supporting families through collaborative, intensive partnerships with organisations.

## For more information visit:

[www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/sf](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/sf)

# Strengthening Families in Milton Keynes



[www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/sf](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/sf)



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