Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Policy paper

Supporting Families - 2021-22 and beyond

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Ministerial foreword

Supporting Families has been on a journey with families, local authorities and their partners since it began in 2012. It has delivered for families under three different government administrations, while wider society and the way in which local services are delivered look very different today.

The programme has already helped families make extraordinary improvements in their lives with more than 400,000 positive outcomes achieved since 2015. We also know that the reach of this approach has been much broader, with more than 870,000 families worked with in a whole family way between 2015 and 2021.That is why now is the right time to rename the programme, to reflect what it does in principle, and in practice.

It started out as the Troubled Families Programme almost a decade ago and since then, has grown in scope and ambition, evolving through three distinct phases. I am pleased that up to £165m of additional funding for the programme was announced at the 2020 Spending Review. Our 2019 manifesto committed to improving the programme and we are looking to what has changed, what works and how best to deliver outcomes into the next year and beyond.

Now is the time to be even more ambitious in helping families to thrive. Our vision is to ensure that those families who need support so get it at the right point, in the right way, as early as possible. Great things happen when families build on their strengths, call on their support networks and tackle their problems head on and early on. Children, parents and carers are most able to build resilience with services at their side who know them well and can offer trusted guidance. At its heart, the national programme then and now, is about locally delivered early help for families, led by the keyworkers and local partners who know their areas and families best.

As we look towards the future, to national recovery from the global COVID-19 pandemic and to building back better, we are taking stock. While the programme continues to support families experiencing acute problems, the work to connect local systems together is reaching many more. More than ever before, services are working together in schools, children's centres, family hubs and in local communities, to deal with emerging concerns through early help that takes a whole family approach.

Over time, this model has been proven to work, through robust national evaluation examining data sets from across government and the local sector. We know that the programme prevents children in families from entering the care system, reduces the likelihood of involvement in crime and helps families into work.

COVID-19 saw local areas drawing on service level transformations achieved since 2012 to ramp up multi-agency collaboration, data sharing and governance in response to the global pandemic. I am proud that the innovation and agility seen in local areas, who are tackling COVID-19's impact on families, has often been underpinned and accelerated by the programme's work. The programme will continue to support recovery by helping children back to school, helping those who have lost their jobs get back to work, by helping young people avoid crime, protecting mental health and by tackling domestic abuse.

We have shown that we can work together across organisations, professional cultures and silos to support those in need of early help. There is much more to do now, to embed the transformation of services into local systems, to ensure that what has so far been new and innovative becomes 'business as usual' across all local areas delivering the programme.

I look forward to working with Supporting Families services, as we set our sights on the next set of challenges and opportunities in the year ahead and beyond.

Eddie Hughes MP,
Minister for Supporting Families
Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government

Summary

1. Since its launch in 2011, up to £1.533 billion of funding through the Troubled Families Programme has helped families and local areas to achieve a huge amount. The programme supported over 400,000 families to achieve positive outcomes between 2015-2021. Each one of these outcomes means a family's life changed for the better, whether it has meant improving a child's school attendance, so they get the best start in life, supporting a parent to overcome their substance misuse and keep their family together, or supporting victims of domestic abuse so they can build a more positive future for themselves and their family.

2. The programme has also benefitted many more by driving widespread transformation in how family services are delivered in local areas, making them more coordinated, family-centred and data driven. The programme has championed whole family and multi-agency working to support vulnerable families, that is those experiencing multiple disadvantages such as worklessness, domestic abuse, and poor mental health. It proved through a robust impact study, that this approach prevents children in vulnerable families from ending up in the care system, reduces the likelihood of involvement in crime and supports families back towards work and more fulfilling lives.

3. However, there is still more to do, the numbers of children in care continues to rise and there have been worrying increases in some types of youth crime. We also know that the programme cannot resolve every problem, and that there are some families that local partners need to work harder to support. Locally, spending continues to be geared towards acute services to cope with demand for statutory interventions, with less investment going into both universal and targeted preventative approaches. Although the programme has driven service transformation, fully embedding this across local systems takes time and local areas are at different stages along this journey. The challenge of COVID-19 makes it even more important to help families early on, so they can get back on track before issues escalate.

4. Strong multi-agency partnerships locally, underpinned by robust data sharing, is the key to unlocking many of these improvements to local services. We know that services work best together when relationships are strong and intelligence is shared to fully understand the drivers of local trends, identify families that might need support and target their services accordingly. Live data sharing on school attendance between schools and family services, for example, is only happening in 47% of areas. Re-engaging pupils and driving up school attendance post-pandemic is a key priority for government. Further multi-agency collaboration in this area will enable services to identify families needing support early on and work together to ensure children and young people are back in school and supported to get the best start in life.

5. In 2021-22, we want to take the Troubled Families Programme into a new phase, with a refreshed vision, strengthened objectives and an even stronger momentum to tackle barriers and create lasting change. We are launching the next phase of the programme – Supporting Families – which will focus on building the resilience of vulnerable families, and on enabling system change locally and nationally. This means ensuring that every area has joined up, efficient local services, able to identify families in need and provide the right support at the right time.

6. As we do this, we are conscious that local authorities have had to respond to the additional needs created by the pandemic, while at the same time coping with the effect of COVID-19 on their own staff and services. It is therefore important to provide as much stability as possible throughout 2021-22. We are also clear that we want to do with, not to, local areas, families and communities. We will therefore use 2021-22 as a transition year to co-design, test, and iterate future improvements to the programme.

7. Our ambition for vulnerable families remains front and centre of our vision. We want every family not just to avoid poor outcomes, but to thrive. We want to help them to build their resilience and community connections and empower them to find their own solutions to problems. This will involve intensive whole family support from a lead professional where families are experiencing multiple complex problems, but also earlier support from the appropriate local service when a problem is first emerging. All services that support families have a role to play and we want to see the practice of whole family keyworking spread across agencies. This includes forming strong partnerships with specialist services, more involvement from voluntary and community sector organisations, and communities themselves.

8. Ultimately, the aim is for strong multi-agency local partnerships in every area, and mature local and national data systems, which enable partners to identify families in need of extra help, target services more effectively and track family level outcomes over the long term. This will support all local areas to fully embed preventative approaches into their support systems for families, creating more resilient communities for the long term.

9. We are committed to improving the programme to achieve this. Supporting Families will:

- Raise the ambition for vulnerable families, driving local services to work better together to build their resilience and help them to thrive.
- Drive improvements to local partnership working and data use so that vulnerable families receive the right support, at the right time. This means investing more in good practice, overcoming barriers to data-sharing and involving the voice of families in service design and commissioning.
- Update our eligibility and outcomes framework to ensure it continues to reflect the needs of families and provides flexibility for authorities to respond.
- Help local areas to work towards stronger multi-agency, data-driven local partnerships by co-designing a road map to achieving a mature local system of family support services and considering new incentives to help drive progress.
- Using our national voice, alongside local and national networks to champion the case for early help, ensuring families get the support they need as early as possible before their problems escalate into crises and they need statutory support. Because we know that this is the key to making services more sustainable for the future.

Chapter 1: the Troubled Families Programme 2011-21

What the programme has achieved

10. The programme was launched 10 years ago with a simple, but clear principle – effective support for vulnerable families cannot be provided in an uncoordinated, transactional way, which sees only problems rather than people and fails to comprehend the entirety of a family's life. The result is escalating problems, poor outcomes often perpetuated across generations, and unmanageable flows into reactive, statutory systems, which is overwhelming for public services and costly for society as a whole.

11. In 2011, the programme was designed as an innovation to tackle this systemic problem. It committed to ensuring that vulnerable families had a single point of contact, a person who would build a relationship with them, understand the root causes of their problems, and support each member of the family to make positive changes. For families, this has meant someone was there for them at the most challenging point in their lives, helping them make sense of problems, navigate specialist support, and ultimately take action to build a more positive future. This approach is known as "whole family" working and builds on pre-existing successful models of family support.

12. Keyworkers provide a range of practical and emotional support to families. Our most recent survey showed that they provide weekly support with parenting (including for those with pre-school children) and mental health difficulties, getting children to school, managing money, debt and housing needs, managing the impact of domestic abuse and keeping children living in the family home. As well as this direct support, which is often provided in the home, keyworkers help join up specialist support around the family as needed and connect them to a range of local facilities and services. This gives them confidence to navigate those services and helps build their resilience and ability to find solutions to problems themselves in the longer-term.

13. Since then, the programme has gone a long way towards making this innovative approach the established practice in local areas. Between April 2015 and January 2021 over 400,000 families achieved positive outcomes as a result of direct support funded through the programme. Each one of these outcomes means a family's life changed for the better, whether it has meant improving a child's school attendance, so they get the best start in life, supporting a parent to overcome their substance misuse and keep their family together, or supporting victims of domestic abuse so they can build a more positive future for themselves and their family. In the programme's second phase (2015-2021) many more families also benefitted from the programme's wider investment in service transformation, with over 870,000 supported in a whole family way between April 2015 and January 2021.

14. An impact study which tracked the outcomes achieved by families supported by the programme between 2015 and 2018 highlighted its role in preventing high-cost statutory interventions. Compared to families with similar characteristics who had not been on the programme, the study found 19-24 months after starting to receive support the proportion of:

- Children in care was found to have reduced from 2.5% to 1.7%; a 32% decrease;
- Adults receiving custodial sentences fell from 1.6% to 1.2% (25% decrease);
- Juveniles receiving custodial sentences fell from 0.8% to 0.5% (38% decrease);
- Adults claiming Jobseeker's Allowance fell by 11%;
- A cost benefit analysis showed the programme provides £2.28 of savings for every pound invested.
- Staff surveys, family surveys and case study research showed high levels of support from local staff and positive experiences of families. It also sets out detail about how the programme has driven service transformation.

15. To achieve this change in families' experience and have this preventative impact on statutory systems, public services supporting families have changed significantly. There has been major improvement in multi-agency working, and how information is used and shared in local areas, with services pooling data across adult and children's services, education, jobcentres, youth offending teams and police to build a holistic picture of the needs of vulnerable families locally. That information is now used by multi-agency partnerships to systematically identify families showing signs of struggling, and work strategically to ensure they get the right support, at the right time.

16. Local areas have also transformed the way they address the needs of vulnerable families, working together to achieve shared outcomes across services and using data and evidence to track whether that is being achieved with each family. This strategic approach has enabled services to support families earlier, when it can make the most difference to their lives, and at the same time reduce the pressure on costly, reactive systems. This has had significant fiscal and economic benefits, illustrating the strength of the approach not just to change individual lives, but to make a difference to society as a whole.

Case study: A family's journey

Maya and her two children, Mia 9 and Avery 8 had moved home after leaving Maya's controlling partner, who then cut off all contact with his children. Teachers were worried about Mia, who had become aggressive towards her peers in class, and Avery, who was often tearful at school. Maya reported that her ex used to be abusive towards her in front of the children, and that since leaving, Mia and Avery had become more difficult to cope with.

The family were referred by their school to the local authority's Early Help team based at the nearby Children's Centre, where Alex, a family support worker, carried out an assessment of their needs. Alex found that the emotional effects of having witnessed abuse were emerging in the children's behaviour. This was affecting their schooling, development, and life chances and Maya needed help to regain confidence in her parenting.

Alex arranged for a specialist domestic abuse worker to visit, who worked with the family on the effects of violence and discussed with Maya that children may have started to 'act out' negative feelings because it had become safe to do so. Maya agreed to meet with a local Freedom Programme domestic abuse support group, for regular sessions on feelings and on how to respond to her children's needs. Strategies for stronger behavioural boundaries and predictable routines were put in place at home by Maya, with support from Martha.

Alex worked with the local Educational Psychology service to source Avery with an Emotional Literacy Support Teaching Assistant at school. Avery addressed his emotions by making more sense of his life story and learning positive self-esteem techniques. Mia was helped by the local Behaviour Support team, part of the Psychology, Wellbeing and School Support Service. The team helped Mia deal with her angry feelings so that she stopped hitting out and was no longer at risk of being excluded.

The support offered to the children at school has worked well. Mia and Avery now share their feelings instead of showing them through challenging behaviours. Teachers have reported no serious concerns about the children for six months. Maya and the children also report that they are much more settled and calmer in their new home.

Maya also reported feeling good about the support from her group, and that she now feels confident in listening to the children and responding to worries about their father. Maya has gone from being quiet and shy, to running a volunteer-led group at the Children's Centre. Maya now works to support other families within her local community, signposting them to agencies and encouraging them to seek advice.

How the programme achieved it

17. The service transformation brought about in the last decade has relied first and foremost on the leadership and dedication of local authorities and of all the agencies involved, to engage in a new way of working. Where the programme has been most successful, local authorities and their partners have led the way, convening partnerships, breaking down barriers, innovating, and working seamlessly with government to make the most of the strategic investment and central support provided.

18. A total of up to £1.533 billion in government funding from 2012-2022 has enabled local authorities to invest strategically in early help, transforming how they support families. The programme tracks outcomes and emphasises key principles, rather than prescribing specific models, so local authorities and agencies have had flexibility to invest according to local need. The funding was never intended to cover the full cost of providing local services to families, but to act as a strategic investment, enabling local systems to operate in a different way and in doing so, maximise the value of local family services.

19. There is no single model for transforming local services and local areas operate within a range of different local structures, including combined, two tier and single tier authorities. Flexibility has allowed authorities to adapt to local needs, and use the funding in a range of different ways including:

- bolstering, and investing in the training and development of their family support workforce, particularly skilled keyworkers.
- creating or expanding early help "front doors" to enable multi-agency assessments and holistic, coordinated support for families. In some areas, this has included the use of family hub models both to co-locate services and provide a single access point for families.
- re-inventing data systems to enable multi-agency pooling and sharing of information.
- investing in "link workers" to proactively connect different services, for example Job Centre Plus employment and welfare services and local authority family support.
- creating support teams around key services such as schools, encouraging them to adopt a whole family approach.
- where needed, providing additional funding to specialist services to work alongside family support services, for example domestic abuse experts and specialist substance misuse and mental health workers.

20. The programme was specifically designed to provide a mix of upfront funding for investment in services and payment by results when family outcomes are achieved. This approach has enabled local authorities to invest as they saw fit, while creating a robust tool for evidencing and tracking outcomes for families. While payment by results required resource to implement, it created an unrelenting focus on long term outcomes, created a lever for partnership working and has proved a crucial driver to transform data systems as it attached a financial reward to good data systems.

21. In some areas, this has spurred multi-agency partnerships to develop more sophisticated shared case management and data systems, pulling together data from multiple sources, including from health partners, children's services, the police, probation providers, youth offending teams, schools, pupil referral units, Education Welfare Officers, Community Mental Health Services, local GPs, midwives, health visitors, children's centres and family hubs. This means they are not only able to identify families and track outcomes, but predict risk and need, getting ahead of problems as they emerge.

22. Another strength of the programme has been its national team presence providing support and challenge to all local authorities delivering the programme. This has included publishing best practice models such as our recent Early Help System Guide which describes the key features of a mature early help system. These models are not prescriptive, but rather support local multi-agency partnerships to self-assess against key elements of service transformation. Our data maturity model provides a blueprint to help areas progress their local data partnerships. Throughout, the national team worked with local authorities to give feedback and support, acting as partner and critical friend.

23. Nationally, the programme has championed early help and the importance of transforming local family support services. An annual progress report has been laid in Parliament, and there has been a comprehensive impact and process evaluation, including one of the most advanced data linking exercises in government. The national team has worked with local areas to identify and address policy and delivery issues, and to influence the design and delivery of new policies and programmes that affect families.

24. Throughout, the programme has funded innovation at both local and national level. We partnered with DWP to roll out the effective Troubled Families Employment Advisors model. This links job centre staff to children's services in every authority to join up employment support for families. The TFEAs help families with job searches, interview and CV skills, money management and work experience, contributing to a 11% reduction in JSA claims for adults supported by the programme. We worked with authorities to trial innovative practice through the Earned Autonomy model which increases local flexibility by providing all funding upfront. We supported local authorities to develop whole family approaches to tackling youth crime through the Supporting Families Against Youth Crime Fund. The lessons learnt have also galvanised multi-agency, whole person working for other vulnerable groups, including adults facing multiple disadvantages, who are the focus of our new programme Changing Futures.

25. The support families receive now is fundamentally different to 2011 and the programme has played a key role in the achievements of local areas. However, gaps remain, and we are now facing the new, unprecedented challenge of COVID-19. The next two chapters describe these challenges and the role that the next phase of troubled families – Supporting Families – will play in meeting them and in shaping services for families into the future.

Case study: Sheffield: school inclusion

In Sheffield, national programme funding is channelled into the Building Successful Families (BSF) team, which is designed to support education. This funding is received up-front and has helped Sheffield to accelerate multi-agency working across the city. One aim of the BSF team is to empower children and families to engage with the early years and education system, and this has led to local sector leaders coming together to develop the support offered to schools.

The BSF team use data to identify schools which have the highest number of children at risk of exclusion. Sheffield's local leads then build a 'team around the school' which caters for pupils and their families. These teams include family support workers and specialists in autism and children's mental health, who work with teachers, children and parents or carers.

'Teams around the school' look to work with the causes of behaviours linked to exclusion, which may originate from bullying, problems at home or past trauma. This approach aims to reduce schools resorting to crisis measures, such as excluding children to pupil referral units or escalating cases to children's social care.

Professionals across Education, Health and Care come together through BSF's school inclusion meetings, to map the reasons for non-engagement and using their multidisciplinary experience, help schools with higher numbers of vulnerable learners move towards the right evidence-based interventions and teaching support. The BSF team also ensure that there is a multi-agency network around the localities of schools, with specialist officers on hand to help advise on attendance, inclusion, educational access and exclusions.

Sheffield's approach goes beyond the school gates to include parenting and family support at home. Over 400 families are currently supported through 'transition pathways' that ensure whole families are working together to support a child's move from one education setting to another. Routines, boundaries, and sleep support are offered directly to parents with follow on parenting courses, sessions and seminars to strengthen parenting capacity. Adult mental health, and emotional health and wellbeing of children is also supported through commissioned links with adult and children's mental health services.

The teams reach into the classroom and the home of vulnerable learners to offer holistic support, often dealing with whole family issues, such as access to employment, public health and community resources, grants and benefits and housing support.

Through this approach, Sheffield's collaborative power is focused on raising attendance, reducing exclusions, and increasing both access to education and engagement in learning. As a result, more young people are receiving the support they require to be safe, settled, and ready to learn.

Chapter 2: the road ahead

The impact of COVID-19 and the role of early help

26. We know that the pandemic has had a significant impact on the lives of vulnerable families, exacerbating existing problems for those who were already struggling and creating a new set of issues for others. Many of the issues which have emerged over the last year are ones that will be familiar to local partners. Improving family relationships and tackling domestic abuse, keeping children, families and young people healthy and safe, re-engaging pupils in school and driving up school attendance, supporting parents towards employment and helping families access mental health support will be key as we move towards recovery.

27. Local authorities and partner agencies have already faced multiple challenges in responding. This has not just included adapting to home-working or virtual delivery but needing to rapidly understand the evolving need and being able to identify who now needs support, for what and when. Local areas have generally responded with agility and innovation, particularly where they have been able to make best use of the resources and structures developed through the Troubled Families Programme, but there remains a shared concern about responding to growing need in future.

28. This is an unprecedented situation and it is still too early to assess the full impact of the pandemic on families' needs and circumstances. However, early help and whole family working will be more important within this context than it has ever been. As argued by the Early Intervention Foundation, it is likely local areas will need to support new families with a range of challenges, while also addressing the needs of those whose problems may have escalated during this year. For many families, reactive statutory systems will not provide the most appropriate response to their challenges.

29. We know that preventative early help approaches can deliver better outcomes for families. They can also create the space for services to work together proactively, identifying and solving problems rather than reacting to crises. The investment provided over the last 10 years in these approaches has already played a crucial role in the response to COVID-19. The programme has acted as a catalyst for bringing together both universal and targeted support services to deliver a coordinated early help approach in local areas, which has proved hugely valuable during this time.

30. Throughout the pandemic, early help teams have used data and information-sharing to quickly assess emerging need, including in families that were unlikely to know where to access support or feel comfortable reaching out. Local areas continued face to face visits to families struggling the most and used virtual engagement methods to help those less at risk. They also delivered physical support packages to the doorstep to help with issues from remote education to food access. Local early help teams led campaigns and established helplines, drawing in voluntary and community organisations and working in a multi-agency way to ensure the right service provided support at the right time. However, there is a risk that families are only supported when they are at crisis point and services struggle to keep up with the rising flows into statutory services such as children's social care and the criminal justice system. This could delay the recovery in the long run, impacting on our ability to build back better after the pandemic, and resulting in poorer outcomes for families and for society as a whole.

31. The next section sets out our vision for the recovery and beyond, and the commitment we make to local areas, through our Supporting Families vision, to champion this across government.

Case study: Liverpool - COVID-19 data

As the global COVID-19 pandemic began to emerge in early 2020, Liverpool City Council and local NHS organisations quickly realised that an identification system might be needed to detect people and families with health, financial and social vulnerabilities, who may be at risk of tipping into crisis.

This system would need to work under statutory COVID-19 data provisions issued by the Department for Health and Social Care for the purpose of identifying people who may be rendered extremely clinically vulnerable by the pandemic. It would need to go further still, to link relevant health care, economic and domestic abuse data on an individual and family basis. Any system would need to highlight multiple disadvantages and to identify where families were already known to be in need across services.

Liverpool rose to this challenge by using their existing data system, already developed through national programme funding. They built a bespoke COVID-19 data linkage module into it, working at pace to establish the system change ahead of the anticipated peak of the pandemic in May 2020.

Before the height of the pandemic was reached, Liverpool was able to create an essential 'vulnerability index' of individuals and families, to prioritise food, prescription deliveries and care packages. Families in the programme's existing cohort were mapped and keyworkers used both virtual and face-to-face visits and assessments to ensure those already facing multiple disadvantages were supported early on. Liverpool also mapped children and young people who were shielding and overlaid the programme data, to identify and support cohorts of children with significant health conditions who were living in families in need of help.

The combined data was also used strategically by adult mental health services and to deliver targeted health and community provision services such as mobile COVID testing in 'hotspot' areas. The data helped with planning co-ordinated visits, providing additional information for food hubs and identifying those people required to isolate after being identified by Test and Trace services.

Liverpool City Council is considering using these data to identify people most at risk if there is any future pandemic. The data may also be used to develop early intervention and mitigation strategies as local areas up and down the country plan for a potential rise in demand for community, place based and mental health services following the easing of national restrictions.

Liverpool continues to work collaboratively with policy and intelligence, the

University of Liverpool and organisations in the city region to better understand their data and work on a joint COVID-19 recovery plan.

A whole system approach nationally

32. The Troubled Families Programme is designed to bring together multi-agency partners to deliver joined up support for vulnerable families, rather than to provide a standalone specialist service on its own. It provides a framework for working with families in an intensive, whole family way and tracking their outcomes, as well as enabling the long-term service change that we know achieves the most effective support for families. This means it is deeply interlinked with a much wider set of policies and programmes delivering services for families, children and young people.

33. This government has invested considerably in family support, including through the Troubled Families Programme, Violence Reduction Units, the Reducing Parental Conflict Programme, and many others. Policy reviews of the care system and the SEND system are underway, as well as relevant reforms to public health, the NHS long term plan and Integrated Care Systems. There is also increased focus on championing family support across the wider government and public administration. All of these programmes and reviews are part of the same effort to deliver better outcomes for families, recover from COVID-19 and create more sustainable systems for the future. Local partners already have existing governance and accountability infrastructure locally on which they can build, such as Health and Wellbeing Boards and multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

34. We will continue to champion a whole system approach nationally, helping remove barriers and supporting local areas to join up locally. We will also champion whole family working and early help as the model of effective local delivery, and a relentless focus on achieving positive outcomes for families over the medium to long term. We will use opportunities to join up, influence service changes and advocate for a rebalanced system that is sustainable in the longer-term. We will use the refreshed vision set out in this document to make clear what service transformation should look like and to make that a joint vision across government.

Our vision for change

35. Now is the time to be ambitious for families and for our public services. Our vision for the next phase of the programme, and the wider system it interacts with, has two elements:

- We want to see vulnerable families thrive. We will build their resilience by providing effective, whole family support to help prevent escalation into statutory services.
- We will drive system change locally and nationally, creating joined up local services, able to identify families in need, provide the right support at the right time, and track their outcomes in the long term. We want to lead a new approach to the standard of the best.

36. The impact will be felt by individual families, across public services and will also have benefits for the rest of society.

- Families will be empowered to become resilient over time and build connections to their local community. Avoiding poor outcomes such as homelessness, family breakdown and children being cared for, or involved in crime, families will thrive.
- Local services will be joined-up, flexible, responsive to new challenges and sustainable for the long term. Strong multi-agency partnerships will work together to understand local trends, predict emerging need in their local area, identify and respond to those needing extra help.
- The benefits of this approach will be felt across society. The pressure on expensive reactive statutory services will reduce as the system rebalances away from intervening at crisis point. This will free up services to become more sustainable and allow them to intervene much earlier in the cycle, delivering better outcomes for families.

37. This vision is already becoming a reality in local areas, but progress varies. For example, while some areas are successfully achieving positive outcomes with all the families they supported in 2020-21, there is still more work to do to achieve this consistently across local areas. We know that strong local partnerships and data analysis can drive better outcomes for families and communities, but as we cannot be evidenced, areas are often held back by a lack of proper data. For these areas, for example, our self-assessed local data survey found that only 20% of areas are using and sharing data in the most advanced ways. Further, only half of all areas receive the police crime and offending data they need to target support at families becoming involved in crime.

38. Self-assessments against our Early Help System Guide show some consistency in how services have developed. For example most areas report a high degree of confidence that families know who they keyworker is and that whole family assessments are happening. However, there is still much work to do particularly around engaging different workforces in whole family working and growing community capacity at scale.

39. Nationally, we have had success in facilitating partnership-working and data-sharing on the ground in some areas, for example through the Troubled Families Employment Advisors. However, we are keen to see further progress to join up services and data in key areas such as mental health and housing. Some areas have developed solutions to these barriers locally, but there is more to do at national level to support widespread progress.

40. A clear strength of the programme has been its focus on tracking outcomes for families and allowing local areas the flexibility to innovate and to invest according to local need. However, it is difficult to quantitatively evaluate the impact of service transformation, and further work is required to test different approaches and translate that research into actionable best practice. This will drive more effective services and better outcomes with families.

41. While the programme evaluation shows that our approach results in very positive experiences for families, the extent to which this is co-designed directly with families and communities varies across local areas. For some, this has been central to their transformation journey, for others it is a new area of work. We want to see this champion the voice of families and communities within local service transformation.

42. Equally, there is more to do to support the role of, and work in tandem with, voluntary and community sector organisations. In some areas the voluntary and community sector is well engaged. Some local authorities have been working to shift their mindset from the local authority being a provider or purchaser of services to being more of a facilitator working with communities and voluntary sector to jointly meet need earlier and with more creative solutions.

43. Nationally, we also championed the role of the voluntary and community sector in delivering whole family approaches through the Supporting Families Against Youth Crime Fund. We have commissioned evaluations of this programme to learn about the development of new and innovative approaches to diverting young people from crime. We are keen to see local authorities and partner agencies working with VCS organisations to harness their expertise, local knowledge and energy in future.

44. The challenge of COVID-19 has accelerated progress in many of these areas. Throughout the pandemic, local areas have reported that significant progress has been made to overcome barriers to joint working and sharing of information with health services. Equally, the impact of practice and projects between local areas has accelerated, and the VCS have been invaluable partners, helping to identify hidden and emerging needs and supporting the response. We must quickly learn the lessons from this and ensure that we retain them going forward.

Chapter 3: a renewed approach

The first year of a new phase

45. Local authorities have adapted considerably over the past year to respond to the additional needs created by the pandemic, while at the same time coping with the effect of COVID-19 on their own staff and services. We understand that it is important to provide as much stability as possible throughout 2021-22. We will therefore retain the same funding and delivery structure, and authorities will receive their share of the further £165 million funding on the same basis as in previous years.

46. However, we also learn that the programme continues to evolve so that it can adapt to new challenges. This process of evolution in local areas started a long time before the pandemic, with some progressing faster than others to break the mould of local services entirely. We are committed to learning from the achievements of the most ambitious areas. We will drive progress, strivingto bring every local area to the standard of the best. We will do this within and partnership with the most advanced local areas to continue to drive innovation and to shape local services for families into the future.

2021-22 – Building the foundations for long term improvements

47. As a nation we are starting to look beyond the pandemic to put in place what we need to recover. The programme is well positioned to play a key role in supporting families through this difficult period. We want to use the flexibility we have given to every vulnerable family deserves to receive the right support at the right time from services that understand all their needs, and support them in a whole family way.

48. We know that joined up partnerships with a strong data sharing culture have a head start in understanding the vulnerabilities of their local communities. In 2021-22 we will work with these areas to ensure that they have the opportunity to build on their existing strengths and in the future. We want to see this approach extend to families and communities. We will use 2021-22 to co-design, test and iterate future improvements. We will:

- Look at how we can drive the service and system transformation that we know will be needed to meet the challenges responding to local need in future as well as what we could do to incentivise progress.
- Co-produce updates to the framework that local areas use to identify families eligible for support and the outcomes we expect them to achieve. In consultation with local partnerships. This will ensure that areas continue to be incentivised to support the right families at the right time and help them deliver the right outcomes to improve their lives.
- Update the programme's funding formula to ensure that it continues to reflect the latest data on need in local areas.

A focus on the whole system

49. We know that strong local partnerships deliver better outcomes for families. However, every local area is different. There is no single model for a data driven and joined-up local system that is able to provide the right support at the right time for vulnerable families. There is, however, a significant body of evidence build up over the last decade of what works in supporting families and what does not. We will drive progress on this evidence base, we will work with areas to identify key features that underpin a successful local system and map these into a 'transformation road map' for local areas. We will also explore what we can do to incentivise progress against these, including the possibility of financial rewards.

50. As part of this work, we will also explore the potential to monitor key indicators in the early years and support services for children entering care. Involvement in crime and homelessness at the population level is focused on areas to gain a better understanding of how their direct work with families is impacting on the local area as a whole. We will co-design this carefully with local areas and ensure that it does not interfere with other government departments, to ensure we are not adding further data burdens.

51. We know that investment in research and evaluation is also crucial to ensuring that we learn what works to deliver our vision for families. We already have robust impact study research that has proved the programme's approach works to prevent issues from escalating into statutory systems. In 2021-22 we will reinvigorate our national best practice work, including supporting local authorities to share practice and learn from each other, and promoting evidence-based approaches. We will also invest further in our research and evaluation programmes to better understand the ways in which parts of the approach are most effective, including what works to support families and where less progress has been made in achieving long term positive outcomes, so that we can continue to refine services to deliver the best support for families.

52. We will also continue to partner with the Early Intervention Foundation to ensure improvements to the programme are evidence based and local areas can access advice on evidence based practice and interventions. We will also test innovative approaches to improve data systems through our new £7m Data Accelerator Fund.

A fresh approach to family outcomes

53. Families remain front and centre of our new vision for the programme. We believe that better data is the key to delivering services that provide the right support, at the right time, for families. Local areas have made great progress in the past in identifying interacting with statutory systems such as children's social care. However, we do not have a comprehensive view of the needs which, if supported earlier, could avoid the need for interaction with those systems, and the progress made and family level to address other areas of concern, such as school attendance, worklessness and mental health.

54. Our current family outcomes framework, designed in 2014, defines which families are eligible for the programme's support because of their problems and the positive long-term outcomes that meet the threshold for "significant and sustained progress". This approach is also the basis for payment by results funding. Local areas have local flexibility to define specific indicators of need and progress in local. "Troubled Families" indicators of need are: parents and children with a history of crime, anti-social behaviour, or the outcomes they need to flow to many areas. It has become an embedded tool, used across family support services to understand family needs, track their outcomes and allow professionals to make informed judgements about whether families are receiving the right support at the right time.

55. It is important that the framework continues to evolve alongside the needs of families and services, and to incentivise partnerships to focus on what is, and is coming ever to co-design a new family outcomes framework with local authorities and other government departments with the intention to implement in any future years. We want to capture the full range of families' issues and ensure that authorities can continue to target intensive support at those who need it most. We want to focus on supporting families where there are multiple risk factors and avoiding some of the poorest outcomes for families – preventing family breakdown and children entering care, involvement in the criminal justice system or prolonged homelessness.

56. In 2021-22 we also work with authorities to develop and test new ways of collecting data on all families receiving family support and early help services. This will be in addition to continuing to track outcomes for families who meet the programme's current eligibility criteria. This data will help local and national partners to understand family's evolving needs and where the gaps are to inform future policy, service design and practice.

Leading the way locally and nationally

57. We want to offer incentives to drive the most developed local areas to innovate, as well as incentives to drive progress in areas that are further behind. We will explore the benefits that more flexible funding can bring for well-developed local system partnerships. Over the next year we will work with areas to develop a renewed upfront funding offer, in return for consistent family outcomes, a strong local vision for families and progress on partnerships and data. We expect these local areas to lead the way in demonstrating what a partnership-based, data-driven, outcomes focused support approach to supporting vulnerable families looks like, and how this is reflected in the outcomes they are achieving at both service and system levels. For example, whether the local rate of family breakdown and children being taken into care or young people becoming involved with the criminal justice system is decreasing over time.

58. We will also continue to fund and champion innovation nationally, for example by seeking to accelerate local innovation in the private sector of housing and youth offending. This could build on the highly successful Troubled Families Employment Advisors programme, which has helped over 10,000 families move closer to the labour market and contributes to the Supporting Families vision.

59. Finally, we will step up the way we work with local governments across government to make Supporting Families the starting point for a shared vision on using preventative early help approaches to provide support for families. We will regularly bring together officials across government, and with local areas, and will support regular, strategic conversations between local areas and Ministers. We will use the Supporting Families and communications to all agencies working locally to support families and breaking down remaining barriers in information and data sharing between agencies, whilst promoting a smarter, shared use of data to inform government policy.

Case study: Bristol - Reducing criminal exploitation

Bristol has developed Safer Options, their multi-agency partnership response to youth violence, county lines, drug dealing, and children and young people exploited for criminal activities. Safer Options is supported by the national Supporting Families Against Youth Crime Fund which provided funding and a whole family key working approach linked to community safety initiatives in a public health approach to violence prevention.

The Safer Options team identifies children and young people at risk using intelligence from the community, police, statutory partners and predictive risk analysis of known vulnerabilities. Safer Options leads in ensuring joined up working across the city's services, including early help hubs, children's social care, and youth offending teams. Families with multiple needs in the Bristol are allocated a keyworker who takes a whole family approach.

Bristol's Insight Analytical Hub coordinates information held by agencies and in November 2019 a new targeted analytical product went live in addition to their existing family database, developed through national programme funding. This product helps to identify those young people in peer groups who are at risk of becoming more involved in harmful activity.

Testing has confirmed high reliability in the data, with the right young people identified early, including those not previously known to services. This data, alongside police and community intelligence, has also highlighted education providers and hotspot areas of Bristol at higher risk. Regular police and floating youth work support is deployed flexibly and proactively in response to the city's needs.

The recruitment of Education Inclusion Managers as part of the city's violence reduction response has boosted collaborative working in and with schools. The Safer Options team now delivers teacher training, with guidance co-developed between the team, policing, and education partners on offensive weapons on school sites.

Parenting workshops have been run across the city to support families and carers, along with educational workshops delivered to whole school year groups. Parents are offered the opportunity to train as community parent ambassadors. The Safer Options team now leads community meetings, to build trust and to encourage citizens to share concerns.

Keyworkers funded through the national programme are linked into updates on the Safer Options database, to ensure that whole family plans are underpinned by current intelligence about the impact of peers and community challenges on the child and that safety plans are enhanced by contextual interventions in the community.

2019 saw these mechanisms respond rapidly to a sudden rise in the city's serious violent youth crime incidents. The systems in place worked swiftly to identify those involved and implemented preventative, disruptive and diversionary tactics to bring the situation under control. At its heart, Bristol's initiative enables the local system to respond to risks yet goes further. Safer Options principles are intelligence led, evidence based and focused on prevention and whole family working.

Next steps

60. Making this vision set out here a reality is not something that a single government department, local authority or agency can achieve on its own. We look forward to working very closely with other government departments, local authorities, the voluntary sector, partners, and families and communities themselves, to continue to drive improvements, and achieve the outcomes that vulnerable families deserve.

61. A lot has been achieved over the past 10 years, but delivering real change requires a long-term commitment and the support of local authorities and a range of agencies and stakeholders. Through Supporting Families we are committed to bringing together a much broader partnership to help develop and implement these changes. We welcome views from all those working with and for families. We will continue to champion this approach nationally through our various communication platforms, and locally through our network of Supporting Families Coordinators.

62. It has never been more important for us to come together for families and as we look towards recovery from this difficult period, this will be key to building back better and ensuring that all vulnerable families and children and young people have the opportunities they deserve.

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