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[Department for Education](#)



[Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities](#)

Guidance

Chapter 1: Introduction and objectives

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Applies to England

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Supporting Families programme guidance 2022 to 2025

What does this document cover?

Guidance relating to the delivery of Supporting Families in 2022-25.

Who is it for?

Intended for use by local authority Supporting Families teams and their partners, auditors and analysts.

How to Use this guidance

This guidance sets out the objectives of Supporting Families in 2022-25. It also provides a guide for local authorities and their partners delivering Supporting Families.

This guidance is made up of six chapters and two annexes, whilst each covers a different element of Supporting Families each chapter should not be taken in isolation but read as a whole.

Chapter 1: Introduction and objectives

This chapter includes a summary of the Supporting Families objectives including the continued focus on providing support for vulnerable families and driving wider reforms in the way public services are delivered.

Chapter 2: Delivering Supporting Families

This chapter sets out the key commitments local authorities must sign up to as part of Supporting Families. It also details the key delivery mechanisms for these commitments. This includes:

- The outcomes that must be achieved with families before a results payment can be claimed
- The purpose for which upfront funding is provided, including investment in data and system transformation

Detail is also provided regarding the commitments that are made by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to local authorities delivering Supporting Families.

Chapter 3: National Supporting Families Outcome Framework

This chapter provides detailed information about the new, National Supporting Families Outcome Framework including the timeline which local authorities must follow when implementing the new framework.

Chapter 4: Identifying and working with Families

Whilst all families who require support will benefit from the Supporting Families approach there are some specific requirements regarding the payment of funding for successful outcomes. This chapter provides details regarding how to identify and work with families where a result payment will be claimed for successful family outcomes achieved.

Chapter 5: Evidencing outcomes

When a successful family outcome is achieved local authorities may make a claim for payment by results funding. This chapter details the evidence that is required to make a claim for successful family outcomes achieved by families who have been

supported by the programme.

Chapter 6: Checks and balances

This chapter sets out the risk based approach to assurance visits in 2022-25 and the audit requirements of Supporting Families.

Annex A: The National Supporting Families Outcome Framework

Annex B: Early Intervention Foundation guidebook to evidence based programmes

Introduction

Supporting Families launched in March 2021 and builds on the previous Troubled Families programme. As set out in [‘Supporting Families 2021 to 2022 and beyond’](#), its focus is on building the resilience of vulnerable families, and on driving system change so that every area has joined up, efficient local services which are able to identify families in need and provide the right support at the right time.

Supporting Families is committed to strong multi-agency local partnerships in every area with mature local and national data systems. This means investing more in good practice, overcoming barriers to data-sharing, and involving the voice of families in service design and commissioning.

Since 2015, over 470,000 vulnerable families have received direct support through Supporting Families (previously Troubled Families) to build a brighter future and the positive ripple effect of that has been much larger with over a million families having benefitted from the programme’s ‘whole family’ approach. There is also evidence which shows that the programme reduces the number of children who need to be taken into care. The Supporting Families programme now aims build on this success and to find ways to support families in need of help, especially as they recover from the impact of Covid-19 and in light of the government’s commitment to levelling up across the country.

Supporting Families will continue to focus on providing targeted interventions for families with complex interconnected problems. These problems include unemployment and financial instability, poor school attendance, mental and physical health problems, involvement in crime and antisocial behaviour, domestic abuse and poor family relationships, children who are at risk of abuse and exploitation, substance misuse and insecure housing. The four key principles of Supporting Families remain early intervention, whole family working, multi-agency working and measuring outcomes and data.

At the [2021 Budget and Spending Round](#) the Chancellor announced an additional £200 million investment to expand the programme. This represents around a 40% real-terms uplift in funding for the programme by 2024-25, taking total planned investment across the next three years to £695 million. This funding will enable the programme to continue to deliver until March 2025. The investment is part of a wider

package to deliver more early help support for families and improve outcomes for children and families. The combined Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), the Department for Education (DfE), and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) £500 million package announced at the Budget and Spending Round includes investment in family hubs and funding to transform 'Start for Life' services in half of local authorities in England.

As we reach the tenth anniversary of Supporting Families, the 40% expansion of the programme is a significant milestone and is a testament to the huge amount already achieved by local areas. This funding will enable local authorities and their partners to build on successes to date, providing help earlier and securing better outcomes for up to 300,000 families across all aspects of their lives. Additionally, funding allows areas to invest in the development of an effective early help system, supported by mature data systems that facilitate efficient joined up working, providing a better experience for families.

The new investment in the programme follows a robust national evaluation showing that the programme was successful in reducing the number of children needing to be taken into care. The DLUHC and DfE will work together closely on the new programme with joint governance across the two departments. Both Departments share a strong objective to help even more families, prevent high-cost statutory interventions such as children going into care and deliver savings for children's social care over this three-year period.

Supporting Families objectives

The next phase of the programme has two key ambitions:

- To see vulnerable families thrive, building their resilience by providing effective, whole family support to help prevent escalation into statutory services.
- To drive system change locally and nationally, working with local authorities and their partners to create 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.

The programme aims to have a positive impact for individual families, across public services and 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 entering care, or involvement 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 begins to rebalance away from intervening at crisis point. This will help services to become more sustainable and allow them to intervene much earlier in the cycle, delivering better outcomes for families.

National programme developments

To help local authorities and their partners achieve these objectives, we have co-designed programme developments, including a new outcomes framework, an updated funding formula, an improved Early Help System Guide and a refreshed

approach to Earned Autonomy.

This programme guidance, and additional documents published alongside, set out more detail on how these developments will be implemented. In brief:

The new **outcomes framework** includes ten headline outcomes rather than the previous six. This will enable more detailed reporting on the problems families are facing, clarify what good looks like for these outcomes, and what levels of evidence would be expected when measuring these outcomes. This new framework will help build consistency of outcome measurement across the country and give clearer guidance to local authorities on what is expected, but also what is possible.

The **funding formula** for the programme has been updated and is now using the latest deprivation data and more recent population data. The formula now includes the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation which provides a better reflection of current need and supports levelling up by ensuring funding is distributed fairly.

A new process for local authorities to apply for **Earned Autonomy status** has been launched. A prospectus sets out the level of maturity local authorities and their partners will need to demonstrate to move to Earned Autonomy status.

A refreshed **Early Help System guide** has been published following collaboration with local authorities and other government departments. The refreshed version improves on the content and clarity of the self-assessments and works to encourage local transformation in line with the descriptors.

In addition to the above programme improvements there will continue to be a focus on understanding the impact of Supporting Families. This includes how further insight can support areas to provide better and more sustainable services as well as supporting families to achieve successful outcomes.

Building on the comprehensive evaluation of the programme between 2015-2022, **evaluation and research** will focus on three distinct areas. Assessing overall impact of the Supporting Families programme on children's social care will be carried out through in-depth studies with a number of local authorities. What works research will focus on assessing the impact of different practice and delivery approaches, and a process evaluation carried out through surveys and case study research will enable DLUHC and DfE to gather information about how the programme is being delivered including variation between local authorities.

Work will continue on the **collection of all early help data**. Building on the pilot data collection project carried out during 2021-22, the collection of data on all early help cases will provide insight into the support families receive, the complex problems that they are facing and the outcomes that they achieve.

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