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Guidance

Strengthening families, protecting children (SFPC) programme

Information for local authorities about joining the SFPC programme to help safely reduce the number of children entering care.

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Through this programme, we will invest £84 million over 5 years to support up to 20 local authorities to improve work with families and safely reduce the number of children entering care.

The programme will support selected local authorities to adapt and adopt one of 3 [children's social care innovation programme](#) projects in their own area.

These projects aim to improve the safety and stability of vulnerable children and to reduce the need for families to access services.

They will do this by:

- strengthening local practice systems
- developing services that build resilience in families
- facilitating a confident social work ethos that manages risk safely within the home

We will be working with the [What Works Centre for children's social care](#) on evaluating the impact of this programme.

SFPC projects

Local authorities who join the programme will be fully supported to help implement their chosen model in their areas. They will receive funding and on-the-ground support to do this from the local authorities who designed the projects (Leeds, Hertfordshire or North Yorkshire).

Leeds family valued

This programme supports a whole-scale shift to restorative practice, changing service-wide ways of working with children and families so that support is done 'with' them, not 'to' them. The programme involves:

- training on restorative practice for all levels of staff in the service and their partners
- expanding family group conferencing and newly-commissioned restorative services

Hertfordshire family safeguarding

This programme supports a whole-system change to a local authority's child protection approach, focusing on promoting children being brought up in their families, by meeting the needs of both the children and the adults around them. This includes:

- developing multi-disciplinary teams including adult care workers
- use of motivational interviewing
- implementing the Hertfordshire 'workbook', a single data tool for all professionals

North Yorkshire's no wrong door

This is an integrated service and approach to supporting adolescents with complex needs. Working in hubs, it brings together a range of housing options, services and outreach support under one management team. This means local authorities can address a young person's needs within a single team.

How to get involved with the programme

We are looking for up to 20 local authorities with high or rising numbers of looked after children to take part in the programme.

Three local authorities (Darlington, Cambridgeshire and Middlesbrough) will start the programme in the spring.

Local authorities are eligible to join the programme if they have:

- an Ofsted rating of 'requires improvement to be good'
- high rates of looked after children compared to their local authority statistical neighbour median over for the last 3 years, and/or rising rates of looked after children in each of the last 3 years

We will select local authorities to join the programme based on their need, suitability and commitment to make a whole-system change such as this. These criteria will be assessed over the summer, with local authorities announced from September.

We will contact local authorities that are eligible to join the programme with further information and detail on how they can register their interest to get involved.

Contact us

For more information about the strengthening families, protecting children programme, email strengthening.families@education.gov.uk.

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