



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Supporting Families Programme Guidance 2021-22

Chapter 1 Introduction and Objectives

April 2021

What does this document cover?

Guidance relating to the delivery of Supporting Families in 2021-22

Who is it for?

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



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How to Use this Guidance

This guidance (previously referred to as the financial framework) sets out the objectives of Supporting Families in 2021-22. It also provides a guide for local authorities and their partners delivering Supporting Families.

This guidance is made up of five chapters and 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. This chapter also includes information on evaluation and research in 2021-22.

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 Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to local authorities delivering Supporting Families.

Chapter 3: 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 4: 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 including the requirement to develop a Supporting Families Outcome Plan that sets out the progress that must be made by a family.

Chapter 5: Checks and Balances

This chapter sets out the risk based approach to assurance visits in 2021-22 and the audit requirements of Supporting Families.

This guidance comes into effect from April 1st 2021 and covers the period up to and including March 2022

Programme Guidance Timeline

Timeline		
2012-2015	First Troubled Families Programme	
2015-2021	Troubled Families Programme	
	September 2014	1st Financial Framework issued as an interim version for 51 early starter areas.
	November 2014	2nd Financial Framework issued. Revised in the light of learning from early starter areas.
	March 2015	3rd Financial Framework issued for national roll out of the current programme in April 2015.
	January 2018	4th Financial Framework takes effect. Updated for the period up to March 2020.
	April 2020	5th Financial Framework issued to cover an additional year of the programme.
2021-22	April 2021	Supporting Families Programme Guidance takes effect. Updated for the period up to March 2022.

Introduction

Since the Troubled Families Programme was launched in 2011 it has maintained a focus on supporting families with multiple and complex problems to change lives. The programme was launched because families had been failed by services which responded to the one problem that presented itself at the time, whether it was truancy, domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour or worklessness. Services were not designed to deal with the many and inter-related problems that a family might have been facing, and as such the success of any intervention was often limited.

The programme's funding and support provided a catalyst for local services to transform and work together in a more effective and cost-efficient way to achieve better outcomes for families. The programme did not mandate how services should 'transform'. Instead, through programme guidance and latterly the Early Help System Guide, the programme aimed to incentivise a re-configuration of services around families and to encourage innovative, multi-agency practice that best fits the local context.

Local authorities and their partners have already achieved a huge amount. Services are coming together across organisational boundaries, overcoming operational and cultural barriers to achieve sustainable change for the most disadvantaged families in their communities. The impact of this service transformation can be seen in the steep increase in the numbers of families across the country receiving a 'whole family approach' and achieving significant and sustained progress against the problems they face. However, there is still much left to do. Particularly, as we help families recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over time the scope of the programme has grown. As we enter the next phase, we want to be ambitious for vulnerable families and see them thrive. We want to build their resilience by providing effective, whole family support at the earliest possible point, and to help prevent escalation into statutory services. We also want to drive system change locally and nationally, so that joined up local services are able to identify families in need and provide them with the right support at the right time, tracking their outcomes in the long term as the norm.

To mark this next iteration of the programme we will call this new phase **Supporting Families**.

Supporting Families Objectives 2021-22

Delivering for Families

Supporting vulnerable families to thrive remains at the centre of Supporting Families. Every family should be empowered to build their resilience and connections to their communities over time. Receiving this right support at the right time will help avoid poor outcomes.

Service Transformation

Supporting Families seeks to not only incentivise the delivery of whole family support to families with some of the most complex needs but to drive wider reforms to the way public services are delivered and create a sustainable early help system.

To enable local authorities and their partners to assess their progress against this key programme goal, MHCLG produced the Early Help System Guide (EHS) including a Data Maturity Model. This is designed to be a practical tool to help local authorities and their partners direct their focus and activity, embedding whole family working, family practice and a mature data infrastructure to support early help. It is based on national learning from local areas about the activity that makes the most difference in driving whole system change to establish a strong and sustainable early help offer.

In the Early Help System Guide, MHCLG defines **early help as the total support that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse**. It therefore encompasses all services delivering support for children, young people and families including the police, the voluntary and community sector, schools and health visitors, in addition to the council's own services including housing, social care and wider children's services.

The EHS is expected to inform the development, refinement and implementation of early help and data strategies (or equivalent) in every local area. It also helps MHCLG identify good practice and regional variations which we use to aid national policy development and to inform the support and challenge they provide to different organisations working within the early help system.

Seeing more services working in a co-ordinated and whole family way has always been an aim of Supporting Families, and many areas have progressed in their work on this and embraced the milestones set out in the Early Help System Guide. This year we want to be clearer with areas around what transformation is expected and to test new and different ways to incentivise this, to ensure all areas are progressing this work. There are three main ways we will do this:

- Setting clearer expectations around data transformation in 2021-22.
- Developing a proposal for a refreshed approach to Earned Autonomy (100% upfront funding) for any subsequent years of the programme
- Working with a focus group of areas to consider how the Early Help System Guide could be strengthened to better incentivise change at the local level including potentially attaching funding to milestones.

Evaluation and Research

National evaluation 2015-20

The national evaluation of the programme 2015-2020 provided robust evidence that the programme is effective in improving families lives. An impact evaluation found a 30% reduction in looked after children two years after joining the programme. A cost benefit analysis found £2.28 of benefits for every pound invested. Staff surveys, family surveys and case study research showed in detail how the programme is being delivered. They found that staff were adopting the model, families were positive about the help they received and that the programme was driving service improvements. This evaluation is now largely complete. We're working on using the evaluation data to report back to local authority level data to local areas. This will be in the form of local dashboards.

Future direction of research

Following the national evaluation, research work will now focus on which approaches are most effective for different families. There is significant variation in approaches in different local areas. First, we aim to give local areas improved guidance on what the current evidence says about what's most effective. Then, we will look for opportunities to improve the evidence by testing different approaches. This is part of a test and learn approach to provide evidence for continuous improvement of services. Research will consider:

1. Personal interactions – methods of individual engagement with families such as how to build a trusting relationship and the most effective ways of encouraging engagement and change.
2. Specific interventions/programmes – interventions for specific problems that make up an early help support package such as parenting support, domestic abuse interventions or personal budgeting support.
3. System wide approaches – the way services are organised in an area and system wide approaches to practice such as family hubs or community asset-based approaches.

In 2021-22 there will be:

- **New guidance on what works** – Working with our research partner the Early Intervention Foundation, we will provide local areas with new guidance on what works following a review of evidence on the programme.
- **Qualitative research into what works** - MHCLG has commissioned Kantar research to carry out new deep dive research into what works. Kantar will work with local areas to better understand what the most effective practice is for working with families. Kantar will be working with local areas on this research. Participation is voluntary but much appreciated. It is an important step towards improving the programme.
- **Data Survey** – Data improvement will be an increasing priority for the programme and we require research to inform this work. We intend to continue to run the annual data survey with you again in 2021-22. These results are invaluable in helping us to support you, informing our policy discussions with other government departments and identifying and sharing good practice.