



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

# Supporting Families Programme Guidance 2021-22

## Chapter 3 Identifying and Working with Families

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 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.

**This guidance comes into effect from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 and covers the period up to and including March 2022**

# Identifying Families

Supporting Families led the way in the first systematic identification of families with multiple high cost problems across England who could benefit from earlier and better coordinated support.

Although all families who require support will benefit from the Supporting Families approach a number of requirements must be met if payment funding is to be claimed for successful family outcomes.

**To be eligible for a results payment under Supporting Families, each family must include dependent children<sup>1</sup> and/or expectant parents and have at least two of the following six problems:**

1. Staying safe in the community: Parents or children involved in crime or anti-social behaviour
2. Getting a good education and skills for life: Children who have not been attending school regularly
3. Improving children's life chances: children who need additional support, from the earliest years to adulthood
4. Improving living standards: families experiencing or at risk of worklessness, homelessness or financial difficulties
5. Staying safe in relationships: families affected by domestic abuse
6. Living well, improving physical and mental health and wellbeing: Parents and children with a range of health needs

Below these problems sits a basket of indicators, suggested referral routes and information sources, which should be used to identify families with these problems. Evidence that at least two headline problems are present will need to be demonstrated to make a claim and during assurance reviews and visits.

## Interlinked Problems

Many problems that a family face will not stand alone but will be part of a number of wider interlinked problems that will impact each family member differently.

For example domestic violence and abuse in a family will be an indicator for problem five (families affected by domestic abuse), but may also impact the mental health of a child in the family and therefore indicator six (parents and children with

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of a dependent child for the purposes of Supporting Families can be found on page 8 under the heading: 'Age Thresholds for Eligibility and Measuring Results'

a range of health needs) will also be present. To make a claim and during assurance reviews and visits evidence must be provided to demonstrate how all members of the family have been supported to address these problems.

However, where a single issue relates to an individual family member this cannot be evidence of more than one headline problem and there would need to be evidence of another headline problem affecting family members for the eligibility criteria to be met.

For example, a child with a disability will be identified as a child 'in need' under section 17, Children Act 1989, an indicator for problem three (children who need additional support, from the earliest years to adulthood), but this single issue should not also be used as evidence of problem six (parents and children with a range of health needs) if the child's needs are being met and there is no evidence of a wider impact on other family members.

While families may be identified as eligible for Supporting Families on the basis of two problems, the information available at the point of identification may not reflect the entirety of each family's complex problems. Some problems, such as domestic abuse or mental illness, may be hidden until work begins with the family and the full extent of their needs are uncovered. In the first phase of Supporting Families, families who met three eligibility criteria were found, on average, to have nine significant problems at identification.<sup>2</sup>

The formula for identifying families allows for a level of discretion which should be exercised reasonably. Local authorities should identify families across all six problems and ensure resources are being used to best effect. Local authorities are expected to be using Supporting Families to drive new ways of working across a broad and complex cohort of families so their approach to identification should reflect this ambition.

### **Timeframe for identifying families**

A claim for results funding due to a successful family outcome can only be made if a family demonstrated the required headline problems on or after the date a local authority joined the second phase of Supporting Families.

As part of the roll out of the 2015-2020 programme, a group of 51 early starter authorities began delivery from September 2014 and a further group of 62 began delivery from January 2015. The rest of the country joined the programme from April 2015, with four making a late start in September 2015

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-troubled-families>

## **Families with no recourse to public funds**

Local authorities have reported that some families they identify have no recourse to public funds. These families would not necessarily be prevented from receiving support from Supporting Families but further detail on the rules that apply are provided at **Annex A**.

## **Refugee Resettlement Programme**

If a family has been part of the resettlement programme we would not expect them to be included within the families claimed for through Supporting Families. Public funding has already been made available for these families via the resettlement programme.

Although these families are not eligible for a results payment under Supporting Families, this should not have a bearing on the service that the family receive, which should be tailored to their needs.

# Age Thresholds for Eligibility and Measuring Results

Supporting Families aims to provide earlier support to families experiencing difficulties and improve outcomes for children; all eligible families must include dependent children. For the purposes of Supporting Families, a dependent child is a person aged 0-15 or aged 16-18 and in full-time education and/or training and/or unemployed and living with their family.

Family Problem	Age Threshold
If a child is involved in crime or anti-social behaviour...	...the relevant family member should be between 10 <sup>3</sup> and 18 years old. If 18 or over, the family member is considered an adult for these purposes.
If a child or young person has not been attending school regularly...	...the relevant family member should be in suitable <i>full-time</i> education, if the child is under 16 years old. <sup>4</sup>  This rises to 25 years old if the child or young person has an Education, Health and Care plan or currently has a statement of special educational needs.
If a young person is not in education, training or employment...	...the relevant family member should be 16-18 years old.
If a child has been identified / assessed as needing early help; or is a child in need under section 17, Children Act 1989; or is a child who has been subject to enquiry under section 47, Children Act 1989...	...the relevant family member should be under 18 years old. <sup>5</sup>  This rises to 25 years old if the child or young person has an Education, Health and Care plan or currently has a statement of special educational needs.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/age-of-criminal-responsibility>

<sup>4</sup> or last Friday in June if they will turn 16 by the end of the school holidays.

<sup>5</sup> Working Together to Safeguard Children defines a child as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday (see:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/779401/Working\\_Together\\_to\\_Safeguard-Children.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Working_Together_to_Safeguard-Children.pdf)



If an adult is in receipt of out of work benefits; or an adult is claiming Universal Credit ...	...the relevant family member should be 18 years or over. However, there are a small number of exceptions whereby 16 and 17 year olds can claim the following benefits under specific circumstances: Universal Credit, Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support allowance and Carer's Allowance.
If a person is experiencing or perpetrating domestic violence ...	...the relevant family member should be 16 years old or over. If under 16 years old, violence or abuse should be captured as part of youth crime or children who need help indicators.

## Working with Families

Supporting Families encourages local authorities and their partners to take an integrated, whole family approach when working with families.

There is no simple template for working with families as each family will need a different approach depending on their circumstances. Every local authority and their partners will also choose to deliver their services differently to suit their local context. However, the following four principles capture what the national Supporting Families Team mean by 'working with a family as part of Supporting Families'.

These principles must apply to all families declared as worked with and for whom a claim is made:

- there will have been an assessment that takes into account the needs and voice of the whole family;
- there is an action plan that takes account of all (relevant) family members;
- there is a lead / key worker for the family that is recognised by the family and other professionals involved with the family; and
- the objectives in the family action plan are aligned to those in the local authority's Supporting Families Outcome Plan.

When a family no longer requires the same level of support and a practitioner is closing their case, they should reflect on the significant progress of the whole family against all their problems, ideally through a closure statement. A closure statement is not a requirement for a Payment by Results claim, but a good closure statement

provides assurance that significant and sustained progress has been made. It should:

- look at all family members;
- look at all identified needs;
- summarise what work happened with the family;
- summarise the improvements made; and
- quantifies the problems and outcomes achieved with families
- confirms that, in the practitioners and supervising manager's judgement, the progress made is significant.

All Payment by Results claims need to evidence the outcomes are both achieved and sustained. A closure statement which provides details of the outcomes achieved can reduce the amount of retrospective checking required when submitting a claim at a later date. Areas will still need to check that outcomes have been sustained since the family's case was closed.

# Annex A - Families with No Recourse to Public Funds

A family with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) would not – subject to the guidance below – necessarily be prevented from receiving support through Supporting Families. This includes employment support for NRPF families with leave to remain in the UK and permission to work here. But the employment and other support offered by Supporting Families is unlikely to be appropriate where the family with NRPF is here unlawfully and should be leaving the UK.

Any employment support provided by Supporting Families Employment Advisors, will be in line with the principles followed by Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches. That is, to advise those with NRPF, with permission to work in the UK, what employment networks, help and further support is available in their area. Employment support is distinct from any benefit payments in respect of welfare and housing.

Local authorities are reminded that any support provided to NRPF families through Supporting Families:

1. Must not be in breach of any immigration conditions imposed on them (e.g. in respect of work).
2. Must be in accordance with Schedule 3 to the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, which restricts access to local authority support for families without immigration status.

Under Schedule 3 to the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, the following categories are prevented from receiving local authority support or assistance:

- A person with refugee status granted by a European Economic Area (EEA) country and any dependants;
- EEA nationals and any dependants;
- Refused asylum seekers who have failed to comply with removal directions and any dependants;
- A person unlawfully present in the UK (including visa overstayers, illegal entrants and refused asylum seekers who claimed asylum in country, rather than at port of entry); and
- A refused asylum seeking family the Home Office has issued with certification confirming that they have failed to take steps to leave the UK voluntarily.

Local authorities are not prevented from providing support and assistance to the categories listed above where this is necessary to avoid a breach of human rights. However, given the intensive and complex forms of support offered by Supporting Families, it is not anticipated that Supporting Families resources will be required for this purpose.

Local authorities with access to the NRPF Connect database, a secure web-based database, can use this system to contact the Home Office. To gain access to this system, local authorities can contact the NRPF network on the following email address: [nrpf@islington.gov.uk](mailto:nrpf@islington.gov.uk). Local authorities without access to this system can contact the Home Office directly via the Status, Verification, Enquires and Checking email address: [ICESSVECWorkflow@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ICESSVECWorkflow@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk). Both methods can be used to seek advice and information in respect of a person's immigration status and local authorities are encouraged to do so if there is any uncertainty.

Immigration Enforcement can provide access to a chargeable enhanced service to support local authority decision making. The Checking and Advice service offers on-site assistance, training sessions and access to a real-time immigration status check telephone line. To find out more, please contact the team on the following email address: [IEChecking&AdviceService@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:IEChecking&AdviceService@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk).

The Home Office is able to provide assistance to families who wish to return to their home country through the Voluntary Returns Service. Families are eligible to receive up to £2000 per person in reintegration funds. Funds are given in cash or a combination of cash and reintegration support in kind on return, depending on the destination country. The Service can provide bespoke packages to meet complex family needs as well as assisting with obtaining travel documents. Local authorities and families can contact the Voluntary Returns Service on 0300 004 0202.