

Family Pathfinders

This note describes the 15 Family Pathfinders set up to develop good practice and support the wider role out of *Think Family*. A description and contact details for each of the Pathfinders are provided.

1. *Aiming High for Children: Supporting Families* announced £13 million over the current Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) period for a pathfinder programme led by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to test ways to provide more effective support for families at risk.
2. Fifteen Family Pathfinders were established to develop new ways of delivering intensive support to families at risk and to ensure that adults' and children's services work more effectively together. Family Pathfinders are at the heart of driving sustained and improved outcomes for disadvantaged families and will help to identify and disseminate good practice to support the wider roll-out of *Think Family* reforms from April 2009.
3. The aims of the Family Pathfinder Programme are to:
 - improve outcomes for families caught in a cycle of low achievement, including those who are not being effectively engaged and supported by existing services. Pathfinder areas are focusing on families experiencing multiple problems or who are at risk of these in the future;
 - encourage greater co-operation with Children's Trusts and adults' services, including social care, employment, housing, adult mental health and adult skills, and third sector providers;
 - develop learning on how systems change across adults' and children's services can improve support for vulnerable families; and
 - embed early intervention and prevention of inter-generational transmission of disadvantage within the system of support.
4. **The 15 Family Pathfinder projects areas are:** Bolton, Gateshead, Islington, Leeds, Somerset, Sunderland, Brighton and Hove, Westminster, Salford, Southampton, Blackpool, Walsall, Warrington, Southend, and Durham.

Pathfinder projects

Blackpool

Summary: Blackpool is embedding the *Think Family* approach across the borough. This has involved extending the work of the Family Intervention Project into a number of target areas and linking these to the delivery of a Local Area Agreement with priorities including: support for parents with learning difficulties; families experiencing domestic abuse; parents who are misusing drugs and alcohol; and vulnerable young people in the transition between children's and adults' services. Key workers are based in both adults' services and a new Domestic Abuse Team and targeted work is being undertaken with substance-misusing parents of children under 5 years in partnership with adults' substance misusing services. Blackpool is planning to target vulnerable Year 11 pupils and where necessary support their transition to adults' services.

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Bolton

Summary: Bolton is aiming to improve the outcomes for the most challenging families in the Bolton area. The Pathfinder has established a co-located multi-agency team of specialist professionals from a range of agencies and backgrounds and is now developing an evidence-based holistic intervention for each family they are in contact with. Support workers and fund-holding lead professionals are encouraged to use assertive, persistent and consistent approaches to develop a shared understanding (a 'clear story') about the family's needs and the way everyone who has contact with the family can help to meet these.

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Brighton and Hove

Summary: The Brighton Pathfinder is working with a 'Team Around the Family' approach to support young parents aged 25 and under who are 'caught' in a cycle of disadvantage. They are using these young parents' experiences to identify the barriers and hurdles to achieving better outcomes and work to 'unblock' these through whole system change across a wide range of local services. By doing this they intend to improve outcomes for a much larger cohort of young families in East Brighton, and roll out learning and change within all services supporting families in disadvantaged circumstances across the city.

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Durham

Summary: Durham had already identified a gap in services for families at risk that were below the threshold for statutory intervention. They focus on families where drugs and alcohol problems, mental ill-health, domestic violence and learning difficulties are affecting parenting and therefore children's outcomes. They have found that these problems are often closely linked to other factors such as housing and financial need. The Durham Pathfinder has established three multi-disciplinary Family Pathfinder teams. The Family Pathfinder teams are now in high demand and are developing very effective local professional networks. They use a solution-focused approach to build family strengths and draw on the expertise and support of a wide range of partner agencies from adults', children's and health services to develop co-ordinated multi-agency family assessments and 'Team Around the Family' care plans.

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Gateshead

Summary: The Gateshead Pathfinder is supporting the development of closer links with adults' and children's services, and delivering training in the use of *Think Family* approaches. A 'personalisation fund' has been created to enable frontline workers to respond flexibly to the needs of families and 'buy' additional services as part of an agreed family support plan. This follows a Common Assessment Framework and wider family assessment. The pathfinder is fully aligned with a robust parenting strategy which is being rolled out across Gateshead and provides co-ordinated responses to families identified as having multiple risk factors.

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Islington

Summary: The Islington Pathfinder has recruited a multi-agency *Think Family* team to target families where there is a parent or carer with mental ill health or dual diagnosis (mental health and substance misuse) where this affects parenting capacity and children. The eligibility criteria for support are deliberately broad so that parents or carers who are already supported by a community mental health team as well as those who do not meet their threshold can be included. Intensive and persistent outreach support is provided to families where there is an unmet need and joint working is encouraged across adults' and children's services. The team also provides consultancy advice to other teams in adults' and children's services, drawing on the expertise of its adult, children and health professionals.

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Leeds

Summary: The Leeds Pathfinder targets families at risk of breakdown due to child welfare, safeguarding concerns or offending with a particular emphasis on families with parents in contact with probation, adult social care and mental health services. Intensive, tailored, long-term support is provided to help improve the outcomes and life chances of family members. Families are involved in the design, delivery and review of the support.

The Pathfinder is also acting as a catalyst to help embed a *Think Family* approach across the city, creating more coherence between children, adult and community safety systems and structures, and developing better working arrangements between statutory and voluntary sector organisations.

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Salford

Summary: The Salford Pathfinder Service is targeted at families with complex issues and compromised parenting who have come to the attention of agencies on a regular basis and which services have found difficult to engage. Referrals are made from families already known to children's social care professionals as well as from agencies that have identified families at an earlier stage. The service is delivered by *Think Family* Practitioners using assertive outreach 'Family Intervention Project-style' working, intensive parenting and family support, and solution-focused approaches. Adults' services are involved through Salford's 'Family Action' meetings or by arranging a Family Group Conference.

The new Pathfinder service is integral to the 'Locality Model' of working agreed by Salford City Council and its partners. Strategic objectives for the Pathfinder service include increasing the number of parents in effective drug and alcohol treatment; decreasing the level of domestic violence in households with children; improving the mental health of parents; and increasing the support to families of offenders, where there are children present, thus reducing re-offending.

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Somerset

Summary: Somerset aims to improve outcomes for children, young people, their families and carers by developing integrated approaches to supporting families between different agencies. Locally deployed multi-agency teams are already in place, and these are now extending their practice to work with a wider range of agencies in contact with families. Families with complex and intractable problems that have previously resisted interventions are prioritised. Assertive and persistent interventions are being used by all of the partners involved. Particular emphasis has been placed on lead professionals, the co-ordination and consistency of the support provided, and commissioning and brokering engagement from the voluntary sector. Strategic objectives include supporting community cohesion and reducing child poverty, disaffection and low aspirations.

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Southampton

Summary: The Southampton Pathfinder focuses on families with adults who have alcohol or debt problems, links with the criminal justice system, or behaviour which has acted as a trigger for action. The Pathfinder team tries to intervene as early as possible to prevent problems escalating. The Pathfinder has a multi-disciplinary casework team which works closely with adults' and children's services, third sector agencies, probation, Jobcentre Plus and health.

The Pathfinder is managed and led by a Safer Communities team which also operates a Youth Crime Family Intervention Project, Parenting Experts and Challenge & Support Teams, all working with families and young people. The Pathfinder is also trying to develop a 'joined-up' approach to all the operational aspects of family-focused work within the city. A 'Systems Re-Design Group' has been set up to review and re-shape the city-wide approach to families using the learning points from the case-holding team to influence the new ways of working.

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Southend

Summary: The Southend Pathfinder works with families with complex needs, many of whom will have been known to a range of services for a long period of time. Families may be involved for up to a year and the support provided is tailored to family need rather than established services.

All family members are included in the assessment and planning processes so that all of their needs can be identified and included in a single plan. Families are listened to and their strengths built upon to empower and challenge them to make meaningful change. Additional areas of support which are considered for families in developing these plans include: intense family support through a keyworker focusing on building routines around mealtimes; motivational training to help build positive attitudes and thinking; and support back into employment, education or training.

Using this approach Southend plan to reduce family needs and help family access support from universal services. The Pathfinder has support from all key agencies in Southend.

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Sunderland

Summary: The Sunderland Pathfinder identifies and engages families with multiple risk factors at an early stage to prevent them entering specialist services, and remedial services for families already accessing them. Strong partnership-working based on a 'lead professional' model and personalised budgets have meant that intensive interventions can be delivered and these are achieving real and sustainable change.

Parenting advice is a central component of whole family delivery (Social Work Plus Model). All practitioners are trained in accredited parenting programmes and Pathfinder parents have access to group delivery through Barnardo's Sungate Parenting Service. Pathfinder Practitioners have been trained in Mellow Parenting and are also piloting the multi-agency delivery of this in Sunderland.

Strategic objectives for the pathfinder include improving mental health and emotional resilience and promoting earlier intervention through universal services, for example, with families where children are at risk of becoming looked after or where there are safeguarding concerns.

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Walsall

Summary: The Pathfinder supports families at risk of social and economic exclusion. The 'Child Concern' model is used to broaden family assessments and increase engagement with partners and provide coherent and tailored care planned interventions. The Pathfinder aims to build a family's capacity to find a voice, maintain their independence and self reliance, and overcome cycles of social exclusion and underachievement. Children and adults from families experiencing multiple deprivation are prioritised.

The project forms a part of Walsall's 'Family Matters' Programme which links various DCSF projects (Family Intervention Projects, Intensive Intervention Programme, Youth Crime Action Plan and Parenting Early Intervention Programme) into a co-ordinated programme of family interventions. It is also involved in the redesign and development of Walsall Borough Council structures, systems and models of governance.

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Warrington

Summary: The Warrington Family Pathfinder is reforming local systems and services to work with the whole family; use whole family assessments; and share knowledge and information about the assessments between specialist services. The Pathfinder aims to ensure all agencies (adult and child-focused) are equipped to act as lead professionals for the whole family and raise the profile of parenting knowledge, skills and support across the authority area. The Pathfinder also has a focus on 'fathers' and creative ways of engaging young men and ensuring parents/carers/families have access to advice and support through universal settings. A new governance structure is now in place based on the Family Pathfinder Steering Group but now taking on a wider *Think Family* agenda.

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Westminster

Summary: Westminster's Pathfinder, known as the Family Recovery Project (FRP), has helped improve school attendance and achieved real reductions in anti-social behaviour and tenancies under threat. Intensive Outreach Workers have delivered parenting support to families and are supporting them in using educational support and health (children, adults and young people) and seeking assessment for adult mental health needs. FRP has also developed worked with voluntary sector services to support and plan the families' exit from their services.

Westminster is also implementing a whole family approach for all of Westminster's core children's services; has improved systems to identify families at risk; and is seeking to break down traditional service boundaries between services for adults, children, youth, housing, health, education, community protection, and benefits.

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