

# North East Surrey Family Support Programme

## Briefing Update for Community Wellbeing Committee 29<sup>th</sup> June 2021

### 1. Introduction

1.1 Following the 2011 riots in some parts of England, the then Prime Minister David Cameron set out plans to invest £448 million over the course of the Parliament to turn around the lives of around 120,000 'troubled families' in England. In his speech announcing the programme he cited an estimate that, over the previous year, £9 billion had been spent on these families, due to the multiple interventions they received from different parts of the State. The programme aims to reduce the cost to the public purse and improve outcomes for families with complex needs and to reduce costs through multi-agency engagement with families and the application of a preventative approach to working with these families.

1.2 The Surrey Family Support Programme (SFSP) is Surrey County Council's (SCC) delivery of the Government's Troubled Families Programme, operating across all 11 Boroughs and Districts. The North East Surrey Family Support Team (NESFST), sometimes to as the Family Support Programme (FSP), covers the Boroughs of Elmbridge, Epsom and Ewell, and Spelthorne. The first stage of implementation for the North East Team began in the Spring of 2013, with Elmbridge and Spelthorne becoming operational in June 2013. The programme was then expanded in October 2013 to encompass Epsom and Ewell and has covered the three boroughs since.

**In its first phase**, the Troubled Families Programme supported families meeting three of four criteria. Three criteria set by the Government included: crime/ASB; children not in school, training or employment, adults on out of work benefits and discretionary criteria set by Surrey which included families where there were mental health issues, domestic abuse, substance misuse and risk of homelessness.

1.3 The national Troubled Families Programme was extended after the 2013 Spending Round announced a target to reach an additional 400,000 families, for which £200 million would be allocated in the first year (2015/16). It was later confirmed that the programme would run until 2020, with an additional £720 million allocated for the remaining four years. The principal change in **this second phase of the programme** was around the expanded scope to include a wider range of families, facing a broader range of complex issues. The extended inclusion criteria meant any family qualifying for support had to be experiencing problems in any two of the six areas below:

1. Parents or children involved in crime or anti-social behaviour.
2. Children who have not been attending school regularly.
3. Children who need help: children of all ages, who need help, are identified as in need or are subject to a Child Protection Plan.
4. Adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion or young people at risk of worklessness.
5. Families affected by domestic violence and abuse.
6. Parents or children with a range of health problems

1.4 In preparation for a planned end to Troubled Families funding in March 2020, Surrey County Council remodelled the Family Support Programme in line with wider changes to the provision of services to children and families, integrating the programme into their Family Resilience vision. The programme can be considered to be in phase 3.

## 2. Aims and objectives

- 2.1 The programme provides targeted help with referrals coming via the Surrey County Council Early Help Hub. By providing early intervention and support, the idea is that most families will have good enough parents who will continue to care for their children, avoiding children becoming subject to child protection or public care.
- 2.2 Working together with everyone who supports children, young people 5 – 18 yrs. and their families, Family Support will promote the upbringing of children within their birth families and work with partners and families to ensure that children can thrive whilst remaining safely at home.
- 2.3 To do this, family support will focus their work on improving outcomes for children aged 5 – 18 years needing additional help. This includes:
  - Children whose needs are complex and enduring (Specialist).
  - Children whose needs are more complex with more than one service involved as part of a co-ordinated multi-disciplinary assessment and plan (Targeted Help).

## 3. The delivery model

- 3.1 Families referred to the NESFST **receive intensive family support towards change and transformation**. This consists of up to eighteen weeks of intensive support from a Family Support Coordinator and then continued support from a local Team Around the Family (TAF). The TAF consists of professionals and extended family members and friends. The programme recognises the importance of contributions from family members in supporting and sustaining change.
- 3.2 Family Support Coordinators (FSCs) hold a caseload of 8-10 families (increased from 5 in 2016), providing an intensive and persistent approach, **engaging families for up to 18 weeks**. During this time, FSCs undertake a holistic, whole family assessment and bring together a single plan, developed at a multi-agency TAF meeting. **The initial TAF takes place after 6 weeks followed by TAF review** at 6-week intervals. The FSC will withdraw by the second or third TAF, handing over to the remaining TAF and a designated Lead Professional.
- 3.3 The service has been flexible in delivering the model, respectful of families' needs and offering intensive support beyond 18 weeks where it is clear that this is necessary and will benefit the family's long-term ability to manage independently. **As such, a handful of families have received in excess of 30 weeks**.
- 3.4 The evidence base for a whole family approach in meeting the needs of families with complex needs is now well established and underpins the expected practice in the Troubled Families programmes. The NESFST will undertake a whole **family assessment that will inform a single, multi-agency action plan**.
- 3.5 Utilising a strengths-based approach, the TAF works in partnership with the family to enable them to address key challenges that negatively affect daily life in order to secure more effective family functioning. **The TAF offers ongoing monitoring and support to achieve the best possible outcomes for the family**. Ongoing work is coordinated by an agreed Lead Professional who monitors progress.
- 3.6 The team were originally funded by Government grant passported by Surrey County Council and now are funded by Surrey County Council, who recognising the benefit of the

Family Support approach have mainstreamed the funding into the County Council Budget.

#### 4. Referrals

- 4.1 Since Phase 3 started, referrals into the service have come via the Early Help Hub. **As of 15 June 2021, referrals are received via Surrey's Early Help Module (EHM)**, an online case management system.
- 4.2 Of the three Boroughs and Districts, referrals are highest in Spelthorne but only slightly higher than for Elmbridge.
- 4.3 Schools have consistently made the highest number of referrals into the service.
- 4.4 Since 1 April 2020, the team have supported 123 families **of which 51 have been Spelthorne families.**

#### 5. Evidence of outcomes

Outcomes are measured using the Family Outcomes Star which tracks distance travelled for families from entry into the service to exit. In the NEFST progress can be seen across all areas when comparing first and last readings. Increases range from average of 0.67 to 1.64. This compares favourably with other Family Support Teams in Surrey and should be seen in the context of 18 weeks involvement.

#### 6. Impact of COVID-19

- 6.1 During periods of lockdown, work with families took place online with a few exceptions where risks in the family were considered high and child protection proceedings were put in place.
- 6.2 There has been evidence of increased domestic abuse and increased parental conflict. The team have seen a significant increase in the numbers of children, some as young as age 10, self-harming and attempting suicide. Young people have been at increased risk of online abuse and exploitation. This appears to be a national picture as highlighted in early reports by Barnardos and NSPCC.
- 6.3 TAF meetings have been conducted online with some advantages in terms of attendance. Very few meetings have been cancelled and professionals who have historically not attended, have been able to do so.
- 6.4 It has been more difficult to engage young people on some of the traditional online platforms, but they have participated in 'walk and talk' visits or telephone calls.

#### 7. Other areas of work within the service

- 7.1 Since 2013, the service has expanded to incorporate a number of projects servicing a more diverse user group.
- 7.2 Epsom and Ewell and Elmbridge Borough Councils have committed to resettling 10 and 15 families respectively, under the Government's **Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS)**. We are currently supporting 9 families across the two areas.

7.3 Between October 2013 we have supported around 60 successful social work student placements across the Surrey wide Family Support Programme