

BOROUGH OFFICERS' GROUP

Bromley Civic Centre, Room P11
Wednesday 1 February 2012, 8.30 am – 9.30 am

Agenda Item 3: Tackling Troubled Families Programme

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1. CONTEXT

- 1.1 Work with troubled families has become an increasingly important issue for councils and government. Following an internal government review, the Prime Minister set up a new Troubled Families Unit in November 2011, based in the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). It has been tasked with implementing a strategy to turn around the lives of the most troubled families by 2015. The unit is required to work with local councils to *“maintain and wherever possible build upon the momentum already gained”*.¹
- 1.2 The Government defines a ‘troubled family’ as one that
“has serious problems - including parents not working, mental health problems, and children not in school - and causes serious problems, such as crime and anti-social behaviour. All of which costs local services a lot of time and money routinely responding to these problems”.
- 1.3 The DCLG has used specific benchmark criteria which illustrate a ‘Troubled Family’, and in estimating numbers, a family would need to be experiencing at least **five** of the following **seven** characteristics:
- no one in the family is in work;
 - living in poor or overcrowded housing;
 - no parent has any qualifications;
 - mother has mental health problems;
 - at least one parent has a longstanding illness, disability or infirmity;
 - a low income; and
 - an inability to afford a number of food, clothing items.
- 1.4 The Government used previous Family and Children Survey data to identify the numbers of troubled families per local authority. That survey estimated that in England there are 120,000 families facing multiple problems. These estimates have been calculated using population data and indices of deprivation and child well-being. Using this methodology, London has a total of 21,660 (18.5%) of the 117,015 families identified. The full breakdown by borough can be found at **Appendix 1**.²

¹ Letter to Council’s Chief Executives (17.11.11)

² Extract from report to Association of London Directors of Children’s Services (23.01.12)

- 1.5 The DCLG are indicating that Bromley has **490 families** who fulfil the criteria applied through their analysis of data.
- 1.6 Turning troubled families around is defined as:
- Getting children back into the classroom and not wandering the streets
 - Getting parents on to a work programme to stop them from committing crime
 - Reducing the high costs to the tax-payer.
- 1.7 The Government's estimates indicate that £9 billion is being spent annually on the 120,000 most troubled families (based on Government data collected in October and November 2011). A large proportion of this money is being spent on taking children into care (fostering, residential care, adoption and the cost of social workers) and also the significant criminal justice costs of children and adults committing crime. The £9 billion also includes eviction costs and benefit payments, the cost of drug and alcohol dependency, specialist schooling (eg excluded pupils in Pupil Referral Units) and health costs.

2. HOW WILL THE PROGRAMME WORK?

- 2.1 The announcements from Government and DCLG suggest a step change in the way Government and Councils address issues for troubled families. Councils have been asked to identify actual families based on factors such as truancy, anti-social behaviour and costs of intervention to public services.
- 2.2 The programme will run primarily on a payment-by-result basis to incentivise local authorities and key partner agencies to take action to turn around the lives of troubled families in their area by 2015. The Government will offer to pay up to 40% of local authorities' costs of dealing with these families (Payment-by-Results model), payable only when they and their partner agencies achieve evidenced success with families.
- 2.3 The Government will also fund a national network of troubled family 'Trouble-shooters' in each local council to co-ordinate and oversee the programme of action in their area.

3. GRANT FUNDING

- 3.1 In December 2011, it was announced **that £448 million** will be made available over the next 3 years, 2012/13 – 2014/15, together with contributions from 6 Whitehall Departments including: the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Department for Education; the Department of Health; the Department for Work & Pensions, the Home Office; the Ministry of Justice. Each made a contribution to the programme by reprioritising their departmental spend.
- 3.2 This £448m grant is to be spent in 3 main ways:
- (i) funding for Councils of a £100k per year to employ new 'co-ordinators' or 'trouble shooters' who will be responsible for co-ordinating the programme at local level for 3 years;
 - (ii) funding for Councils, at the rate of £20k for the transition period until the 2012/13 financial year, to undertake preparatory work, identifying the troubled families in their areas and making action plans;

- (iii) funding 40% of the estimated cost of the intervention action plan with the troubled families in each area; the majority of this money to be paid as 'results' payments in return for outcomes delivered. Local Authorities are expected to match fund 60%.
- 3.3 Councils interested in participating have to, by the end of March 2012: recruit a Co-ordinator/Trouble Shooter, identify 60% of match funding, draw up an action plan and identify all the troubled families in their area they intend to work with.
- 3.4 Details of how the bulk of the central funding will be distributed are apparently yet to be worked up and announced.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The proposed programme will not only require close co-ordination across a range of Local Authority services, but also and more importantly, across all the relevant other agencies in Bromley to be successful.
- 4.2 This could present a fantastic opportunity to develop a resourced and targeted programme that will deliver real change to children and families in Bromley. The desire for all partner agencies to work together to develop focused, outcome driven interventions to known troubled families in Bromley has already been discussed at our key partnership meetings including the Local Strategic Partnership Board and Children & Young People Partnership Board. This programme potentially gives us the tools and resource to build on and enhance the excellent partnership arrangements that Bromley is known for.
- 4.3 However, the question of match-funding will need to be resolved, given the challenging financial context for the Council and key statutory agencies during the 4-year planning cycle 2012/13 – 2015/16.

London Borough breakdown of the number of identified ‘troubled families’

Source CLG Website

Local Authority Name	Estimated No. of families with multiple problems
Barking and Dagenham	645
Barnet	705
Bexley	400
Brent	810
Bromley	490
Camden	755
City of London	25
Croydon	785
Ealing	880
Enfield	775
Greenwich	790
Hackney	1,000
Hammersmith and Fulham	540
Haringey	850
Harrow	395
Havering	415
Hillingdon	555
Hounslow	585
Islington	815
Kensington and Chelsea	400
Kingston upon Thames	225
Lambeth	1,080
Lewisham	910
Merton	370
Newham	985
Redbridge	550
Richmond upon Thames	190
Southwark	1,085
Sutton	320
Tower Hamlets	1,120
Waltham Forest	760
Wandsworth	660
Westminster	790