

Committee: Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Date: 13 January 2015

Agenda Item: 6

Subject: Transforming Families

Lead officer: Paul Angeli, Head of Children's Social Care

Lead member: Councillor Maxi Martin

Contact officer: Curtis Ashton, Service Manager – Family and Adolescent Services

Recommendations:

To update the Panel on developments in relation to the authority's Transforming (Troubled) Families programme including the Phipps Bridge project.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The objective of this report is to provide an update on the performance of Merton's Transforming Families team (otherwise known as the Troubled Families programme), the expanded programme and to give an overview of the progress in relation to the Phipps Bridge project.

2 DETAILS

2.1 TRANSFORMING FAMILIES PERFORMANCE AND EXPANDED PROGRAMME:

- 2.2 Merton's Transforming Families programme continues to perform strongly, despite getting off to a slow start. The performance data published in July 2014 (based on May data) showed that:

- The national average for "Percentage of Total Families Turned around" is **44.8%**. Which means nationally **52,833** of the **118,060** total estimated families are classified as having been 'turned around'.
- The London average for "Percentage of Total Families Turned around" is **42.2%**. Which means in London **9139** of the **21,638** total estimated families have been 'turned around'.
- In total **16** boroughs are performing above the National Average (same number as the last round of results) of which Merton is one of them.

- 2.3 With specific regard to Merton, its programme was ranked 9th in London having identified 100% of families worked with and 'turned around' 221 (61%) of families. Merton's performance is also in the top 50 in the country. A recent

payment by results claim has just been submitted, which has yet to be verified. This will provide extra funding for the local authority.

- 2.4 The Government announced earlier in the year that for those councils who would like to, and where progress on the current programme is very strong, they would have the opportunity to start working with up to 40,000 of the 400,000 families during 2014/15 – and access the upfront funding available to do this. This is indicative of being an ‘early starter’. The first wave of early starters was restricted to those areas that, as at 30th June 2014, had already worked with 90% or more of families and had claimed results for having turned around at least 50% of their families. As Merton had met these targets (100% and 61% respectively) and following negotiations with the FAS Service Manager, the Department for Communities and Local Government confirmed on 24th July 2014 (via a letter to the Council’s Chief Executive from Louise Casey) that Merton had been selected as an ‘early starter’.
- 2.5 In order to be rendered eligible for the expanded programme, each family must have at least two of the following six problems/issues:
1. Parents and children involved in crime or anti-social behaviour;
 2. Children who have not been attending school regularly;
 3. Children who need help;
 4. Adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion and young people at risk of worklessness;
 5. Families affected by domestic violence and abuse;
 6. Parents and children with a range of health problems.
- 2.6 The DCLG has listened to the views of Troubled Families Co-ordinators and has decided to change the method in which success is measured from being focused on three tightly defined national results to allowing local authorities (and members of their partnership) to measure success in three main ways for which funding is available. Firstly, local authorities have to demonstrate either **significant and sustained progress** or continuous employment with families. Each family’s achievement of ‘significant and sustained’ progress will be assessed against a locally defined Troubled Family Outcomes Plan. This will provide a clearer and more flexible approach to results measurement and should allow local authorities to submit their claims more easily (provided that families have indeed been ‘turned around’). The FAS Service Manager is working on this Family Outcomes Plan and intends to consult partners and some of the staff who are working with the families in relation to this.
- 2.7 Funding for this is available for each family who achieves success and will be paid in two parts: an upfront attachment fee of £1,000 per family and a results-based payment of £800 per family. The former represents £177,000 in additional funding for Merton which is due to be paid imminently.
- 2.8 Secondly, local authorities will be expected to provide more detailed data and information pertaining to the families with which they are working. They will have to collate data that assists with the analysis of families’ progress across a broader range of outcomes. This will be achieved during 2014/15 through the collection and publication of **Family Monitoring**. Early starter areas are

obligated to assist the DCLG with the development of the systems and to provide regular and relevant data to them.

- 2.9 Thirdly, all local authorities will be asked to complete the online troubled families **cost savings calculator**. This will assist local governments and central government to ascertain how successful the programme has been in terms of savings to the public purse. This tool will be subject to a process of continual improvement in collaboration with the early starters.

2.10 TRANSFORMING FAMILIES PANEL:

- 2.11 The monthly multi-agency Transforming Families Panel is proving to be successful in terms of bringing together key partners to review cases. Case practitioners, their managers and partners (such as Social Care, Education, Police, Merton Priory Homes/Circle Housing, Job Centre and Commonsides) discuss families known to the scheme on a RAG-basis. Not only does the Panel help with strengthening the partnership and subsequently the support that is provided to families, but it also assists in the evaluating effectiveness of the programme via tracking the success of families.

2.12 TRANSFORMING FAMILIES SERVICE USER BOARD

- 2.13 Service users continue to be consulted about the service that they receive across all of FAS via forums. The most recent Transforming Families forum took place on 4th June and has provided the basis of how service provision can be improved.

2.14 CHRONIC ABSENCE REDUCTION PROGRAMME:

- 2.15 This is a project funded by the Troubled Families programme's funds which aims to reduce the absenteeism of children – mainly in years 5, 6 and 7 – at school. The project is a joint one between Transforming Families and Educational Welfare. A Project Manager has now been appointed to help develop and direct the project and two caseworkers have been recruited on an agency basis to work with families who meet the specified criteria.

2.16 PHIPPS BRIDGE PROJECT

- 2.17 The Community Development worker commenced work in July 2013 and works closely with MVSC and the Transforming Families Team. The worker has been pro-active in getting the programme running in the Phipps Bridge area. Initial work involved profiling the population of the estate and engaging with key stakeholders. Although the post holder is currently on maternity leave, a worker has been seconded to cover this post and work has continued in relation to continuing the establishment of local stakeholder networks such as South Mitcham Community Association, Merton Priory Homes, Friends of Phipps Bridge, Haslemere and Benedict Schools, Mitcham Schools cluster, Wimbledon Guild and Leisure. The worker also continues to work closely with the Transforming Families Team and attends the team meeting on a monthly basis in order to ensure that collaborative work continues.

- 2.18 The target in relation to the project is for a minimum of 12 families to have been worked with throughout each year of the (current) Troubled Families Programme. During the previous financial year, this target was slightly missed as 9 families who met the official national Transforming Families were identified and worked with. However, more families were worked with, but did not fulfil all of elements of the official criteria due to its rigidity. So far this financial year, at least 11 families have been worked with so the target is on course to be exceeded. Due to the broadening of the eligibility criteria (as detailed above), more families will be reached and supported as part of the project.
- 2.19 In addition to the individual casework and family work, community development activity has been strengthened which the PRG funding has contributed to. The project encourages healthy living, gang exit strategies, and help with education, training and employment for vulnerable young people. Networking takes place with other agencies such as police, schools, and housing in order to support young people with issues such as NEET status, sexual health, drugs and alcohol misuse. The project has been successful and some of this work may be extended, by the Transforming Families team, to Pollards Hill.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. None for the purposes of this report.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1 TRANSFORMING FAMILIES SERVICE USER BOARD:

- 4.2 Service users continue to be consulted about the service that they receive across all of FAS via forums. The most recent Transforming Families forum for parents took place in the summer of 2014 and has provided the basis of how service provision can be improved. A forum for Transforming Families cohorts of young people took place more recently.

5 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

None

6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1. None