

## Why is it important?

A small number of families require additional support. In the case of families facing multiple challenges, they often receive services from several separate agencies in response to a range of needs. Think Family focuses specifically on the needs of these families.

Think Family is an approach which requires all agencies to consider the needs of the whole family when working with individual members of it. It encourages a broader view of need than that normally adopted. To 'Think Family' is to understand that children's problems do not sit in isolation from their parents, and that parents' problems impact on their children. This approach ensures that all family members are able to get the support they need, at the right time, to help children achieve good outcomes. All agencies are encouraged to 'Think Family' and to coordinate their efforts. This means making sure that families receive integrated, coordinated, multi-agency, solution-focused support. By identifying problems early, all services can work closely together to help prevent a family's needs escalating and requiring more intensive intervention.

Families receive help and support through a 'Think Family' multi-agency approach, coordinated by a Lead Professional and a Team around the Family, utilising a single multi-agency family plan in order to reduce duplication and maximise impact.

For many families, their complex needs can result in offending behaviour or victimisation and so it is important that Think Family is embedded and integrated into the service models used by the Safe Durham Partnership. Equally, this approach can have a significant impact on crime and disorder outcomes and presents an opportunity to improve performance.

The 'Think Family' approach is intrinsically linked to the council's Stronger Families programme known nationally as 'The Troubled Families Programme'. In Phase 1 of the programme 2012-2015, County Durham turned around 1,320 'Troubled Families' with a range of multiple and complex needs. These are not new families but families who have been known to services, often for many years and, despite numerous interventions, their problems persist and are in many cases intergenerational, leading to cycles of disadvantage for such families.

Phase 2 of the national programme has been extended by the current government until 2020 and will work with and 'turn around' the lives of 4,360 families.

## Durham data – the local picture and how we compare

### Stronger Families programme – Outcomes analysis

The Phase 1 programme was delivered between April 2012 and March 2015, focusing on the core themes of crime, anti-social behaviour, education and worklessness. The nationally set target for families 'turned around' by May 2015 was 1,320 for County Durham.

At the end of May 2015, the programme successfully claimed results for 1,320 families, achieving the target set by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). This equates to a reward grant of £1,435,200. Table 1 below shows the percentage of families 'turned around' by core criteria.

**Table 1: Percentage of families ‘turned around’ by core criteria**

<b>Core criteria</b>	<b>% of families ‘turned around’ of those identified</b>
Education	73.7% (629 out of 853)
Crime – Anti-Social Behaviour	64.5% (483 out of 749)
Youth crime only	84.8% (296 out of 349)
Anti-Social Behaviour only	53.1% (270 out of 508)

### **Family Monitoring Data (FMD)**

FMD captures information about the wider characteristics of family members being supported by the Troubled Families Programme. This information is based on an approximate 10% of randomly selected families. In County Durham, this equates to a total of 143 sampled families.

Reports made available by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) provide a “direction of travel” against the measures in the monitoring dataset by comparing characteristics of the family before and after intervention, such as the amount of rent arrears owed, number of evictions or homelessness applications, number of A&E admissions. Durham County Council shows a positive direction of travel across all indicators.

FMD uses the characteristics outlined above to provide an understanding of troubled families and the scale of problems faced by such families. In July 2014, DCLG published ‘Understanding Troubled Families’. The findings show that, on entry to the programme up to December 2013, the sample of troubled families had the following characteristics:

- 40% had 3 or more children, compared to 16% nationally
- 49% were lone parent households, compared to 16% nationally
- 82% of families had a problem related to education – such as persistent unauthorised absence, exclusion from school or being out of mainstream education
- 71% of families had a health problem
- 54% of families were involved in crime or anti-social behaviour
- 42% had police called out to their address in the previous six months
- 29% of troubled families were experiencing domestic violence or abuse on entry to the programme - national estimates put the level of domestic violence among individuals at around 7% in a year
- 35% of families had a child who was either a Child in Need, subject to child protection arrangements or where a child had been taken into care
- 21% had been at risk of eviction in the previous six months
- In 74% of families there was no one in work, compared to 17% of households nationally
- In 83% of families, an adult was receiving an out-of-work benefit – compared to around 11% of the population nationally
- 70% were living in social housing compared to 18% of the population nationally.

Analysis of data from a sample of 6,577 families (County Durham sample is 143 families) shows that families have multiple problems:

- 53% of households with one or more young people with a recent proven offence also had a child with school behavioural problems
- 62% of families experiencing domestic violence had a truanting child
- 39% of families experiencing domestic violence also had a young offender
- 60% of families experiencing domestic violence included an adult with a mental health problem

- 41% of families where there was domestic violence included a child with a mental health problem
- Households with an adult offender were more likely to include a youth offender, compared to households with no adult offender - the findings were the same for anti-social behaviour and substance misuse
- The risks of domestic violence increase with the number of children and there was also a statistically significant association between having more than three children and there being an adult with a recent criminal conviction.

### **Expanded Phase 2 Stronger Families programme**

The Phase 2 programme commenced in County Durham in September 2014 and will run until 2020. This expanded programme will work with and 'turn around' the lives of 4,360 families. The core themes of the programme have been expanded to six areas which are:

- Crime and anti-social behaviour
- Education
- Children who need help
- Worklessness and financial exclusion
- Domestic abuse / violence
- Health

The programme has developed a local Family Outcome Framework which describes the programme criteria, as well as the significant and sustainable outcomes we want all families to achieve.

As at the end of September 2016, County Durham has identified and claimed results for 315 families. Whilst no comparative information has been released by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), feedback from local authorities suggests that this is an above average number of results compared with neighbouring authorities. The rate of families 'turned around' will continue to increase as the programme develops.

The Stronger Families programme has informed the development of the Children's Services Innovation Project. Stronger Families will cease to be identifiable as a separate programme and will become the core of new Families First Teams. This will make best use of the learning and expertise built during the programme, as well as the resources generated through the programme, in order to achieve improved outcomes for all vulnerable families in County Durham.

### **Groups most at risk**

To qualify for help under Phase 1 of the Troubled Families programme, families will have at least three problems related to children not being in school, youth crime or anti-social behaviour, worklessness, or being high cost to public services locally. Analysis of the programme shows that families have many more problems than this, with on average nine different problems within each family. Therefore, in addition to the expected problems such as crime, truancy or exclusion from school and unemployment, families are also living with a very high incidence of health problems, both in adults and children. There are also significant problems relating to the parenting of children, as well as considerable child protection concerns.

As well as expanding from working with school-age children to those under 5, Phase 2 of the programme also has a particular focus on improving poor health. The expanded programme will apply to a larger group of families with a wider set of problems including domestic violence, debt and children at risk of being taken into care.

## How does this topic link to our strategies and plans?

Further information can be found in the following strategies and plans:

- [Safe Durham Partnership Plan](#)
- [Sustainable Community Strategy for County Durham](#)
- [Children, Young People and Families Plan](#)

**Author:**

**Approver:**

**Published:** October 2016

**Review:** September 2017

### **Data sources:**

Understanding Troubled Families: July 2014

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

National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme: Interim Report Family Monitoring Data – July 2014

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/335261/National\\_Evaluation\\_of\\_report\\_web\\_copy-ecorys.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335261/National_Evaluation_of_report_web_copy-ecorys.pdf)

Durham Constabulary

Durham County Council