

Somerset County Council  
Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee  
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## **Troubled Families update report**

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### **1. Summary**

- 1.1.** This report aims to give the committee an overview about how the Troubled Families programme has been delivered in Somerset and its current performance. The September 2019 Spending Review has confirmed an additional years funding.

The Somerset Troubled Families (TF) Programme (2015 – 2020) is run from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and managed by Somerset County Council and is working to achieve significant and sustained progress with up to 3000 Somerset families, who meet at least two of the six of the Troubled Families headline problems, addressing worklessness, poor school attendance, health problems, crime and anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse and children who need help.

The outcomes are measured against a Troubled Family Outcomes Framework using the Somerset Families Outcomes Framework<sup>1</sup>

The delivery of the TF programme in Somerset, is through its partners, with families being supported by a Lead Practitioner, a whole family assessment and a whole family action plan.

The TF programme in Somerset has secured £2m in Payment by Results claims and additional funding for ‘transformation’ and attachments fees, this has been invested in Early Help and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

The TF programme in Somerset has strengthened partnership working, supporting partners to work with a ‘whole family’ approach, which led to the codeveloped Think Family Strategy<sup>2</sup>. ‘Thinking Family’ means taking a broader view by ensuring that all members of the household and their wider community can get the support they need, at the right time, to enable them to achieve positive changes and improve their lives. It means making sure that families receive integrated, coordinated, multi-agency, solution focused support.

The Local Authority has developed a TF database – Transform, which enables practitioners (currently internal) to have a holistic view of the family’s complexities by drawing together information from different systems to provide a snapshot of the family. Additionally, this database provides information for the the Early help Strategic Commissioning Board and provides insight into the effectiveness of Early Help arrangements.

**1.2.** The TF programme links to the County Councils County Plan by:

- Supporting families to improve their lives
- Supporting families to build resilience
- Strengthening partnership working
- Using data to target support to those who need it most

**2. Issues for consideration**

**2.1.** The TF programme was due to conclude on 31 March 2020, however in the September 2019 spending review a further year of the funding for the programme was announced. There is currently no confirmation of a ‘successor’ programme from March 2021. Plans for 2020/21 include:

- I. Continue to maintain Transform (TF database) and enable selected partner access through a secure portal.  
One of the TF programmes key analytical assets is Transform. This data warehouse draws together information from over thirty data sets, approximately 14,000 families in the Somerset local authority area and has enabled internal partners to have a holistic view of the family’s vulnerabilities. This is currently a work stream in the SCC Digital Transformation programme. Ongoing commitment by partner agencies will be needed to maintain Transform and ensure data is fully available.
- II. To enable partners to continue to work with a whole family approach. The Think Family strategy will be refreshed by the multiagency partnership
- III. Continue to make work an ambition for all families. The current commitment from the DWP is to support the hardest to reach families back into work with two FTE Troubled Families Employment Advisors (TFEA) collocated to the Local Authority, the certainty of the continuation of this arrangement is not known. The upskilling of Practitioners around benefits advice and employment support is ongoing, but there is no commitment from the DWP that the role of the TFEA will continue beyond March 2020.

**2.2.** Scrutiny’s views about the programme for the next year are sought and their endorsement and support to continue to take forward this multi-agency approach to supporting Somerset’s most vulnerable families.

**3. Background**

**3.1.** The Troubled Families Programme (henceforth the ‘TF Programme’ or ‘Programme’) is a programme of targeted intervention for families with multiple problems, including crime, anti-social behaviour, truancy, unemployment, health problems and domestic abuse. One aim of the Programme is to tackle issues before they require costlier interventions. The Government also hopes to drive wider system change at the local level, including improved multi-agency working, the adoption of a ‘whole family approach’

The delivery of the TF programme in Somerset is through its partnerships, with families being supported using the Troubled Families methodology: a Lead Practitioner, a whole family assessment and a whole family action plan Families who meet at least two of the six of the below Troubled Families

headline problems are included in the programme and are identified through both referrals and data.

1. worklessness
2. poor school attendance
3. mental and physical health problems
4. crime and anti-social behaviour
5. domestic violence and abuse
6. children who are classified as in need of help

### **3.2. Numbers of families**

Somerset has been given a maximum of 3000 families to work with to achieve significant and sustainable outcomes. Somerset has set their ambition high in their Somerset Family Outcomes Framework and is working on a ratio of one in four families achieving the required significant and sustained outcomes. Although many more families will make positive change, these will not meet the specific requirements of the MHCLG outcomes to generate the Payment by Results (PbR) payment. Somerset wants to maximise the funding available through the TF programme, so is intending to work with 12,000 families to achieve its 3000 PbR funding. Currently 10,405 families have been / are being worked with under the programme.

### **3.3. Service Transformation**

The TF programme encourages and incentivises services to work in a new way for families with multiple problems, taking an integrated, 'whole family' approach that recognises and deals with their overlapping and interconnected problems and histories.

Transforming services means families should experience a reduction in single agency assessments, thresholds, appointments and measures with a more connected and holistic approach being provided. The effect of this transformation should be a reduction in the demand placed on costly reactive services to pick up the pieces when a family's problems aren't gripped and addressed head on.

In order for Somerset to understand its current position, it undertook a Maturity Model self-assessment in Autumn 2017 which was refreshed in January 2019. The Somerset's maturity model self-assessment has worked across all partners and has helped to understand how the Local Authority was performing in transforming services across Somerset in areas such as information and data sharing.

The impact of this service transformation is being reflected in the data collected by the programme's national evaluation<sup>3</sup>

### **3.4. Measuring Success**

The expanded Troubled Families Programme has ambitious service transformation goals and so has been designed to measure and pay for success differently. Rather than the previous programme's focus on a small number of relatively tightly defined national results per family, the expanded programme asks local authorities and their partners to measure success in three main ways and makes funding available for each of these:

By demonstrating either significant and sustained progress or continuous

employment. Each family's achievement of 'significant and sustained' progress is assessed against a locally defined in the Somerset Family Outcome Framework<sup>1</sup>. The Family Outcome Framework is a dynamic document with outcomes changing over time. It was created with the help of our partners in police, health, early help and domestic violence services and was approved by the Strategic Early Help Commissioning Board. By capturing a much richer understanding of the progress achieved with a representative sample of families across a broader range of outcomes. This will be achieved through the collection and publication of Family Progress Data by developing a much better understanding of the financial benefits achieved through the programme. Local authorities have been asked to complete the online troubled families cost savings calculator.

- 3.5.** Qualitative data from staff involved in the Programme suggests that the second phase has been effective in initiating change at a local level. According to feedback, participant families see the benefit of the initiative. Somerset was part of the Research amongst Families. This report presents findings from research among families as they enrolled on the TF Programme and was conducted on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The families were asked questions relating to the key programme themes and is one element of the national evaluation of the programme, alongside a series of annual surveys of delivery staff, qualitative case studies, and monitoring via data collected as part of the National Impact Study and Family Progress Data. (Report available on request)

### **3.6. Outcome for Families**

2,254 families in Somerset have achieved 'significant and sustained' outcomes (August 2019), as detailed in pages 4 to 10 of the Somerset Families Outcomes Framework. Of these 92% achieved outcomes under the 'Children that Need Help' criteria and 65% have achieved outcomes under the 'Crime and Anti-social Behaviour' outcome. Many more make positive changes for their families but do not reach the ambitious outcomes set out in the Somerset Family Outcomes Framework. (Report available on request)

## **4. Consultations undertaken**

- 4.1** A public consultation exercise was carried out from November 2018 and ran for 8 weeks, the purpose of which was to understand the impact of the Council no longer providing getset level 2 services for children with additional needs (as detailed in the Effective Support for Children and Families in Somerset guidance) and how best the Council, as the lead agency, ensures effective early help across the partnership in the future. The consultation was aimed at service users, partners and staff who work with children and their families across Somerset

The public consultation reflects the views of over seven hundred people through a questionnaire.

In addition, over 110 people attended public drop in sessions or were engaged via parenting support groups across the County. A wide range of partners and professionals who work with children and families

were also engaged through existing forums and meetings.

The full consultation report can be found on page 515 of the February 2019 Cabinet Report

<http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/documents/g732/Public%20reports%20pack%2011th-Feb-2019%2010.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>

## **5. Background papers**

### **5.1. [Somerset Family Outcomes Framework](#)<sup>1</sup>**

[Think Family Strategy 2018/19](#)<sup>2</sup>

[Troubled Families \(2015 - 2019\) National Evaluation](#)<sup>3</sup>

Above reports available on request

**Note:** For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author.