

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PROFORMA**

Cabinet Meeting .....17th July 2014

1. Title of Item/Report

Year Two of the 'Troubled Families' Programme

2. Record of the Decision

This report provides an outline of the progress achieved during the second year (April 2013 to March 2014) of delivering the 'Troubled Families' programme in Stockton, and provides an update on the future of the programme.

Members were reminded that the Council, along with all other principal local authorities in England, agreed to take part in the Government's 'Troubled Families' programme over the three year period April 2012 – March 2015, and that the programme was targeted on families identified through a set of national criteria which included juvenile offending, involvement of any family member in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), exclusion from school or unauthorised absence levels of 15% or more, and receipt of a range of worklessness benefits.

Contracts were set up with Tees Valley Housing (i.e. the existing Family Intervention Project – 'FIP') for 60% of the programme, which started on 1 August 2012 and with the VCS Synergy Consortium, supported by Catalyst, for the other 40%, which started on 1 October 2012, and the Consortium nominated A Way Out, the Children's Society, Corner House Youth Project/KnowHow North East, and Eastern Ravens Trust as its four lead organisations for this work. It was noted that there would be a formal change of name on the contract with Tees Valley Housing to 'Thirteen Care and Support', reflecting the formation of the Thirteen Group, as a result of the merger of the Vela and Fabrick Groups.

The profiles of family numbers to be allocated for the three years were detailed within the report.

A breakdown by Ward was attached to the report. Although these were the formal start years for the purposes of claiming 'attachment fees' from the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) there was considerable 'smoothing' of workload, due to staggered starts during Year 2 and the accumulation of non-responsive cases from the first two

years.

Based on these projections, the revised budget projections for the programme were attached to the report. It was noted that there was still a significant projected surplus over the three years, and that it was agreed by Cabinet on 13 June 2013 to use part of this to support a fourth year of programme delivery.

CLG classified a family as having been 'turned around' when either the education, ASB and youth offending success conditions or the 'continuous employment' success conditions had been achieved. In brief, the success conditions require, in the first case, that every child in the family has had fewer than three fixed term exclusions from school and less than 15% unauthorised absence in the last three school terms, that there had been a 60% reduction in ASB across the family in the last six months, and that the offending rate across all juveniles in the family had reduced by at least 33% in the last six months. In the second case, at least one adult in the family must have moved off out-of-work benefits into continuous employment in the last six months. Based on the definition of families 'turned around' and on figures published by CLG up to and including the October 2013 round of success claims, Stockton was ranked ninth of the 152 participating local authorities in terms of percentage of families 'turned around'.

It was anticipated that the Council would slip down the rankings to some extent when the next set of figures, including the February 2014 claims window, were published, as ninth position reflected the relatively rapid progress in Year One (2012/13), and other authorities were catching up. The level of difficulty in achieving the employment outcomes varies across the country. However, it was anticipated that Stockton Council would maintain 'top quartile' performance to the end of the programme. Louise Casey, the Director General of 'Troubled Families' at CLG, wrote to the Chief Executive on 11 November 2013 expressing appreciation of Stockton's performance as "really strong" and "well above the average". Following the May 2014 claims window, the Council had claimed successes in the cases of 229 families, of which 211 met the CLG 'turned around' definition, i.e. a success rate of 46% to that point.

An independent evaluation of the work undertaken by Thirteen Care & Support (ranging across a mix of 'Troubled Families' and Family Intervention Project cases) had been commissioned from Durham University. Baseline studies had been undertaken with a sample of 22 families and, at the time of writing, follow up interviews had been carried out with three of these families. On the basis of this very limited follow up sample to date, the interim findings were positive, but a fuller picture was needed before any conclusions can be drawn.

The national evaluation programme commissioned by CLG was underway, and the Council had supplied data on a 10% sample of our 'Year One' families for this purpose. The Council was participating in this as a 'Level 3' authority (there are four levels of participation, with Level 1 the most intense and detailed, and Level 4 the least).

On 24 June 2013 CLG announced a five year extension of the national programme from 2015/16 to 2019/20, likely to be funded at the level of £200 million per year i.e. £1 billion in total. The original three years, 2012/13 to 2014/15, were referred to as 'Phase One', with the extra five being referred to as 'Phase Two' or 'the Expanded Programme'. The level of funding per family becomes less generous in Phase Two and was summarised within the report.

Civil servants from CLG had said that they hoped to secure Ministerial approval for the details of Phase Two by the end of July 2014.

CLG invited comments on the design of Phase Two. The issues that were raised as part of the response to that consultation were detailed within the report.

The February 2014 success claim was randomly selected by CLG for a 'spot check'. All queries raised by CLG were resolved promptly and the overall comment from CLG was "strong return showing a good handle on the data", with no further action needed, and no need to spot check again. In addition, the Council's own Internal Audit team had carried out an audit of the programme in Stockton resulting in a judgement of 'Full Assurance' and two recommendations to clarify record-keeping arrangements, both of which had been agreed and implemented.

A new feature of the programme was incentivisation of families to join Tees Credit Union. Any adult in a family engaged with the programme who opened a TCU account and makes at least two deposits within the first eight weeks totalling at least £20 would receive an extra £20 paid into their account from 'TF' funds. A limit of 250 adults (i.e. £5k) had been placed on this, but it was unlikely that take-up would get anywhere near this. This approach was based on a model developed by the national Illegal Money Lending Team and promoted – albeit with no success – to local taxi drivers, as a high risk group in terms of vulnerability to 'loan sharks'. Only one person had taken advantage of this offer.

In March 2014 CLG asked all participating local authorities to provide case studies, and the four local case studies submitted were placed in the Members' library.

For Year 3 of the Programme the former Head of Community Protection would be continuing to provide overall programme co-ordination and liaising with colleagues in the Children, Education and Social Care service group with a view to CESC leading on the delivery of Phase Two.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The report be noted, including the intention to extend the current contracts with Tees Valley Housing (to be re-named Thirteen Care and Support) and the Synergy VCS Consortium by a further 12 months each, to 31 July 2015 and 30 September 2015 respectively, subject to continued satisfactory performance.

2. The previous decision to prepare a further report examining in more detail the case for continued funding from the Council's 'Invest to Save' budget for a continuation of the programme beyond 2015/16 now be replaced by a further report on the future of the programme in the context of the national 'Phase Two' of the programme, the decision of Cabinet on 13 June 2013 to extend the programme in Stockton for a further year, and the size of the 'Phase One' surplus.

3. Reasons for the Decision

1. To maintain political oversight of programme delivery.

2. To ensure that a properly informed decision is made about the costs and benefits of continued delivery of the programme in a timely manner, before skills and expertise are dissipated.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Beall declared a personal prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 17 - Year Two of the Troubled Families Programme as he was the Chair of Eastern Ravens. Councillor Beall withdrew from the meeting and left the room during consideration of the item.

Councillor Nelson declared a personal prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 17 - Year Two of the Troubled Families Programme as he was a member of Tristar Board. Councillor Nelson withdrew from the

meeting and left the room during consideration of the item.

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight on Friday, 25th July 2014

Proper Officer  
21 July 2014