



# Case Studies of youth work involvement in the Troubled Families Programme





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## Foreword



**Fiona Blacke**  
Chief Executive, the National Youth Agency

At the National Youth Agency we believe that youth work, and youth services, have a vital role to play in the Troubled Families Programme, both at a local and national level.

Although 'traditional' youth work is often called universal youth work, it never really was. Youth work and youth workers have always targeted the young people in their community in greatest need. This process was happening long before the current debates on referral versus open access provision. When many of the youth services I have spoken to compared the list of young people identified as coming from Troubled Families, against those they are already working with, there was a close match. We are already supporting these young people; the Troubled Families agenda is an extension of what we are doing already and can add to current practice.

I am from a generation of youth workers who trained as youth and community workers. Supporting young people on the journey from childhood to adulthood, through the transition of adolescence, is key to what youth work seeks to achieve. A part of this process is reaching viable independence from their families, and young people whose circumstances are challenging need even more support from us to achieve this.

Government policy has increasingly placed an emphasis on the role of family in young people's lives. Youth services are engaged in difficult discussions about what the changing landscape means for the youth work profession. But this emphasis by policy makers on working with young people within families is not going to go away. In order to ensure that youth work is as relevant now as it always has been it is essential that we demonstrate the impact that good youth work practice can have in achieving the best possible outcomes for these young people.

I hope these case studies of practice will illustrate the extent and variety of ways in which youth services across the country are engaging with this agenda, and hope you will continue to share your practice with us and each other.

**Fiona Blacke**

**Robert McCulloch-Graham**

Troubled Families team, Department of Communities and Local Government

We in the Troubled Families Team welcome this exploration into the role that youth work can play in the Troubled Families Programme. From my conversations up and down the country, I know that youth work can – and does already – play a really vital role.

Despite the best efforts of many of us over the years, in government, in local authorities, in the police and other agencies, troubled families – families who have many problems and indeed often cause many problems – have not been changed. The youth sector has something really important to offer in terms of the upfront, assertive and honest approach that is needed to make an impact with these families and get to the roots causes of what is going wrong for them as a family.

Youth workers can also bring their specific skills as part of multi-disciplinary teams.

This programme is a once in a lifetime opportunity to shift the sense of hopelessness that is often felt about troubled families; that nothing can be done to really help change them, to get them into school, work or stop their crime and anti social behaviour. By working together we can get this right for a generation of children and young people and their families.

**Robert McCulloch-Graham**

## Introduction

The Troubled Families (TF) Programme was announced in December 2011 by the Department for Communities and Local Government, making almost £450 million available in a cross-government drive to turn around the lives of 120,000 of some of the country's most troubled families by the end of this Parliament.

Councils have a long history of working with the most disengaged young people and families. Working with youth services, they are ideally placed to provide innovative solutions in the troubled families agenda. The NYA has delivered this report as part of its Routes to Success programme of work, delivered on behalf of the Local Government Association.

The Programme will run for three years until 2015. Local authorities in England have been given an indicative number of troubled families in their area and each authority is then tasked with identifying families that meet the criteria for the programme.

## What is a 'Troubled Family'?

There are four main criteria for defining a troubled family under the programme (defined by the Department for Communities and Local Government in their Financial Framework, 2012). The criteria include a degree of local discretion so that councils can target the programme at the families in their area that they know need it most.

Any family that meets the first three criteria (crime/anti-social behaviour, education, and work) should automatically be part of the programme. Assessment against criteria 1, 2 and 4 does not need to be conducted in any particular order. Assessment against criteria 3 should only take place once families who meet one or both of criteria 1 and 2 have been identified.

### 1. Crime/anti-social behaviour

- Households with one or more under 18-year-old with a proven offence in the last 12 months and/or
- Households where one or more member has an anti-social behaviour order/injunction/contract or where the family has been subject to a housing related anti-social behaviour intervention, in the last 12 months.

### 2. Education

- Households where a child has been subject to permanent exclusion; three or more fixed school exclusions across the last three consecutive terms and/or
- Is in a Pupil Referral Unit or alternative provision because they have been previously excluded or is not on a school roll and/or
- A child has had 15% unauthorised absences or more from school across the last 3 consecutive terms

### 3. Work

- Households which have an adult on out of work benefits: Employment and Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Carer's Allowance, Income Support and/or Jobseekers Allowance, Severe Disablement Allowance

### 4. Local Discretion

- A local discretion filter is provided to add other families who meet any two of the three criteria above and are a cause for concern, to be considered with local partners. This could include:
  - Families containing a child who is on a Child Protection Plan
  - Families subject to frequent police call-outs or arrests
  - Families with health problems e.g. drug and alcohol misuse, under 18 conceptions, emotional and mental health problems

## The extent of local authority youth service involvement

In summer 2012, the National Youth Agency carried out an online survey to capture intelligence from local authorities on the role of youth work in the TF Programme.

This found that there was widespread involvement by youth services in the TF programme, with the vast majority either actively playing a role or considering how this can be achieved.

However, the nature and depth of involvement does vary at a local level and this may be because, whilst there is evidence of staff secondments and additional resources being allocated, many confirm that it will be based on existing resources.

In the survey, youth services highlighted the need to share good practice and case studies of youth work involvement in meeting the needs of this programme – resulting in this publication.

Full results of the survey are available from the Troubled Families forum within the 'Supporting Services for Young People' group on the Knowledge Hub: an information sharing website available for all involved in delivering services for young people (<https://knowledgehub.local.gov.uk/web/supportingservicesforyoungpeople>).

## How to use this publication

This publication has been produced to meet local authority youth work teams' requests for more practical examples and case studies of current and potential involvement in the TF programme. We hope it will also be of interest to other services and will highlight youth work's role. It contains four case studies of areas who have taken different approaches to this work.

The TF programme is locally based and there is no right or wrong way to approach it, so how you use the examples will be based on your local context.

You can read an overview of the issues in the accompanying document "The role of youth work in supporting Troubled Families".

## Case Study: Suffolk

### Background and context

Suffolk Children and Young People's Services was restructured during 2010/11, and an Integrated Services Operating Model implemented from July 2011. The new Integrated Youth Support Service operates through seven locality based teams covering the 0-19 age range, split into 0-11 and 12-19 (up to 25 for young people with additional needs). It is managed by Stephen Toye, head of integrated youth support and youth offending, under the overall leadership of Allan Cadzow, assistant director, integrated service delivery. The 12-19 teams include professionals from different disciplines, including former youth and Connexions services staff appointed as youth support workers, a new multi-skilled role focusing on supporting vulnerable young people and their families. The service is also 'divesting' itself of open access youth club provision through a phased three-year programme for closing or transferring provision to the voluntary, community and faith sector. Work is currently underway on the development of an overarching adolescent strategy, which is intended to include a vision for youth work in the county.

The 'troubled families' initiative is being taken forward by Suffolk Family Focus (SFF), which offers intensive family-centred support coordinated by a lead professional, potentially coming from various professional backgrounds including youth work. This lead professional, or key worker, will work with all family members to draw up a family plan with jointly agreed outcomes and will coordinate the contribution of different agencies. The plan, and progress against it, will be reviewed every six weeks.

A five-strong Suffolk Family Focus team has been established, also working to assistant director Allan Cadzow. The government estimates that there are 1,150 families in Suffolk which meet the troubled families criteria; using data from different services the team has identified nearly 1,200 families that meet two or three of the criteria, with around 120 of them meeting all three. Delivery of the programme is

beginning in targeted areas starting with Lowestoft, where Waveney District Council's anti-social behaviour team has been offering intensive support to two families since summer 2012.

While the authority was already developing a more coordinated approach to supporting families, particularly through family intervention projects, it sees the troubled families initiative as driving long-term change in its ability to support more families more effectively. It has identified some key principles underpinning its work.

These are:

- Redesigning services to put families first and support them to make sustainable changes to improve their quality of life.
- A strengths-based whole family approach to build resilience in both families and practitioners.
- Ending excessive specialism, which causes overlap and confusion for families, and fetters services and practitioners' ability to respond to needs flexibly and creatively.
- More support to families who do not meet current thresholds for specialist services.
- Increasing the skills of all staff to work with troubled families and ensuring that they have the confidence and ability to use existing skills in different settings and with different age groups.

### Youth work involvement

Managers and staff believe the priorities of the troubled families agenda indicate an important role for youth work. As project manager Nicki Cooper put it, "I think we've missed a trick here so far, we need to recognise that most of the families identified will include teenagers, and think how we can involve youth workers. Their skills in



building relationships and offering support and challenge to help change behaviour are really valuable – and not just for the young people.”

Managers and staff recognise that youth workers may have some concerns about their involvement, including the nature of families’ engagement, where issues such as potential loss of tenancy may result in strong pressure for them to take part in the programme; balancing the needs of young people and their family; and a greater focus on work with individuals rather than groups. However, they believe that many youth workers – particularly those working in integrated youth support including services such as youth offending or education welfare – are familiar with these tensions and are skilled in negotiating support and activities based on young people’s needs and interests, in effect turning ‘have to’ into ‘want to and benefit from’.

They also identified the difficulties in meeting sometimes conflicting needs within families, but again see this as an area where youth workers can use their skills to help young people and parents negotiate their relationships, identify needs and develop appropriate responses. They also suggested that the approach of some family projects, where parents and their children are assigned different key workers, would be worth considering, although this still requires mechanisms for reconciling different perspectives and priorities. While they believe strongly in the whole family approach, they recognise that young people also need access to provision as an individual in their own right, rather than the broader family context.

Practitioners and managers identified various ways in which youth work can help support troubled families, in addition to acting as a lead professional. They include:

- Youth support workers based in schools and youth centres identifying vulnerable young people and preventing issues from escalating, although there are concerns that the reduction in open access provision may result in missed opportunities.
- Youth support workers contributing to specific targets related to education or ASB, including supporting young people with specific needs such as mental

health or substance misuse. Youth support workers should have the skills and confidence to address these issues themselves, to know when more specialist provision is needed, and to continue to support young people who do need such provision.

- Detached, project and group work with young people in ASB ‘hotspot areas’, which are likely to have some overlap with the areas in which identified families live. Working with young people in their peer groups (including older young people aged 16-25) is seen to offer an effective way to change behaviour.
- Community-based provision offering positive activities, both during the period of intensive support and afterwards, as part of the family’s exit plan.

## Current practice

In Lowestoft, a team of frontline professionals now meets regularly to discuss individual families and identify the most appropriate person to offer intensive support. This process is supported by a new system, E-CINS (Empowering – Communities Inclusion and Neighbourhood Management System ) which allows real-time sharing of information by different practitioners. Waveney District Council’s anti-social behaviour unit plays a key role in this team, and its intervention officer Kathryn Charlesworth, supported by manager Rachel Tucker, is acting as a key worker to two families.

In one family, consisting of the mother and six children ranging from 22 to 12, the oldest son had moved back into the family home after two years in prison for GBH, leading to conflict and worsening behaviour among other family members. The intervention officer is using a range of approaches to address the family’s problems. They include finding accommodation and funding for a deposit for the oldest son – identified as a priority; practical and emotional support for the mother following the recent death of her oldest daughter; helping the older family members write

CVs and look for work; and involving the whole family in improving the condition of the house. Work with the two younger children, aged twelve and thirteen, includes developing rewards and sanctions agreements; helping them find positive activities outside school; arranging bereavement counselling; and referring the younger girl to Time2Change – the county prevention team working with children aged eight to twelve – for one-to-one support. Not surprisingly, this has been time-consuming – the officer has spent nearly ninety hours supporting the family between mid-August and mid-October.

She has developed a strong relationship with this family, who now take the initiative in asking for help with issues. The other family, however, has a history of not engaging positively with agencies, and considerable effort has been needed to gain their trust. In particular, she has focused on meeting the mother's individual needs in addition to those related to her parenting: "Previously she's just gone through the motions to get the various agencies off her back, I had to show her that we weren't just telling her what to do, we wanted to work with her to see what she would value", said Kathryn Charlesworth. Her thirteen-year old son had been permanently excluded from school and was engaged in anti-social behaviour, and the intervention officer has offered practical support for his move to a pupil referral unit, for instance through liaising with the head teacher, setting up meetings with other pupils, initially taking him to the new school and ringing each day to check he has arrived, as well as putting a behaviour contract in place. He is now attending school and has not been involved in anti-social behaviour, while the mother has been applying for jobs and is due to start a college course in January, with funding obtained by the ASB team.

The team readily acknowledge that the threat of losing tenancies has offered a powerful 'stick' for both families to take part in the programme. However, they focus on turning this negative into positive reasons for involvement, through working together to help them avoid the loss of their tenancies and more generally to improve the quality of life. They believe strongly that enforcement should be the very last option: "That's the key difference with this work, you exhaust more options than we

would do with cases we deal with, because we're trying every possible way to get the families on board", said Rachel Tucker.

The team identify the key features of their approach, revealing clear parallels with youth work:

- Building a trusting relationship with families, based on taking their views of what they need as their starting point, and then helping them recognise other areas for change: "We look at what we think is most important for that family, but it's critical that we start with what they say they want rather than just doing to them – they are then more likely to accept what you think also needs to be done."
- Helping families understand how they can benefit from support and then working alongside them and motivating them to help make changes.
- Focusing on the positives and countering families' expectations that they will be criticised: "We stress that we're not coming in to have a go, we think they're doing quite well, but we want to find out how we can help them improve things."
- Using informal and hands-on approaches, for instance working with the family to improve the house, and driving families to their reviews – while being clear how this will help achieve the desired outcomes.
- Being approachable, friendly and caring, while retaining clear professional boundaries and being prepared to challenge behaviour.
- Being flexible, both in terms of availability outside traditional working hours, and in being prepared to change plans in response to immediate crises while not losing hold of issues that need addressing in the longer term.
- Giving attention to individuals within the family context, while recognising that individuals may need support from different agencies – and persuasion to engage with them, once they have built up a relationship with the key worker. Being aware of the dynamics within families is also important.
- Using their initiative and networking skills to engage people from a range of agencies to help find solutions to complex problems.

## Workforce issues

Managers and practitioners highlighted the importance of workforce support and development in ensuring a skilled workforce able to work in a family-centred way and step outside familiar professional boundaries. “There’s no point in telling staff to do things differently without thinking about the support, training and back-up they need”, stressed Allan Cadzow. A range of training and workforce development opportunities are planned, including using specialist support to improve the skills of all staff. This approach has been shown to be effective – a recent survey of Youth Offending Service staff found that 95 per cent said they felt able to address substance misuse following training and support from a local specialist service. Specific initiatives include a new psychologically-informed casework management model offering specialist support to practitioners working with families with the most complex needs – if this is successful, it will be rolled out more widely to other staff. There are also arrangements for clinical supervision for key workers not already working in children or family settings, or who need additional support with specific families.

While managers acknowledged the value of specific training and support, they also emphasised the need for practitioners to recognise the relevance and value of their existing skills in different contexts, and to be confident in using them with different groups. Intensive work with families was also seen to demand specific personal attributes, particularly common sense, perseverance, empathy, and ‘not taking any nonsense’.

Youth work skills in building relationships, supporting and challenging young people are seen as equally relevant in working with families to increase their aspirations and achievements. The importance of first line managers in encouraging different ways of working was also stressed. Their role is seen to include supporting staff to work across disciplines and outside their comfort zones; encouraging them to adopt creative approaches and learn from what does and does not work; and ensuring that frontline

staff are able to step back from the families they are supporting.

Managers also recognised that some youth workers may have concerns about working with families – and conversely other staff are wary about working with young people – as well as potentially increased workloads and stress levels. Staff have also recently undergone significant change with the move to integrated teams. However, they also stressed the opportunities offered through SFF; project manager Nicki Cooper urged “we really need to get the message over that this way of working is energising, and offers job satisfaction, professional development, and knowledge that you’re making a difference.”

## Multi-agency partnerships

Partnerships with a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies underpin SFF’s approach to coordinating support for individual families. During the past few months the team has spent considerable time engaging with colleagues across the county, to ensure that the initiative is genuinely multi-agency and builds on existing best practice. It held the first two of a series of stakeholder events in July and September, for those working with children and families in Waveney and Ipswich. Each event brought together over fifty practitioners from a range of services including integrated teams and the voluntary and community sector. Discussion focused on how to keep the views of families central, building on what currently works, and identifying what could be improved.

As the Waveney ASB team has demonstrated, offering intensive support is time-consuming, and key workers may find that other aspects of their work suffer as a result. SFF’s multi-agency steering group is currently looking at funding arrangements for agencies whose practitioners take on the key worker role, but these may be limited in view of the government’s expectation that local authorities and their partners meet 60 per cent of the costs of supporting troubled families. The changing

balance between up-front attachment payments and 'results payments' may also pose a challenge, as by the third year of the initiative, approximately three-quarters of the funding will be based on results. There is also concern that some services which would be keen to engage currently lack capacity and may also be facing further budget reductions. SFF project manager Nicki Cooper acknowledges that there is a major challenge in the short term but "we just have to find the space

somehow. In the long term, using a more coordinated approach will not only benefit families, but will increase capacity in the system over time; while one agency may be working intensively with specific families, many more may be able to withdraw." She also stressed the importance of offering partners different levels of engagement and helping them see how involvement would help them meet their own service's ambitions.

## Case Study: Reading

### Background and context

A significant restructure has taken place at Reading Borough Council, with the merger of Education, Children's Services, Adult Social Care, Housing, Neighbourhoods and Community Services into a single directorate. Kirsten Carr, strategic lead for troubled families and youth services sits within the Directorate of Education, Social Services and Housing. Intensive personal adviser and youth worker posts have been merged, and are based in Youth Work Teams within locality-based Children's Action Teams, multi-disciplinary early intervention teams working across the 0-19 age range. In summer 2012, Cabinet agreed proposals for the 'Transformation of Youth Services', to be phased in over the next two years, to support the most vulnerable young people and their families. This will mean that youth service resources will increasingly focus on targeted work with vulnerable and disengaged young people through street, project and one-to-one work, while building the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to deliver more open access provision. While the need to focus resources on the most vulnerable young people is recognised, officers and elected members are keen to secure open access provision as far as possible in order to provide pathways between open access and targeted services.

Reading's Turnaround Families programme, the title it has adopted for the Troubled Families initiative, aims to work with partners to find more effective and efficient ways to identify and support families to make positive and long term changes in their lives. This includes support at an earlier stage for families who do not meet thresholds for specific services. The programme will be overseen by the Think Family Steering Group.

Various initiatives are already in place which will contribute to Turnaround Families (TF). They include the Family Intervention Programme (FIP) which provides intensive support to families facing multiple complex problems, and Multi-Systemic Therapy

(MST), helping families deal with challenging behaviour of teenagers. The FIP, MST and Family Group Conferencing will be aligned to form an Edge of Care Service from January 2013. Other initiatives include the Family Nurse Partnership – outreach nurse support for young first-time mothers and the Future Families Programme offering targeted support to mothers with chaotic lifestyles. TF lead Kirsten Carr sees the programme as a lever for building on existing best practice as well as redesigning systems where needed in order to deliver services that will best meet the needs of vulnerable families. "What is new is that we are taking a more proactive and coordinated approach to sharing information and identifying families across the wider partnership and building an understanding of their needs, and targeting families rather than relying on referrals. The work is already underway, but we need to pull it together, and be much sharper about who we work with and how we work with them. We're not setting up a new service, but in some respects this is more challenging."

The government estimates that there are 345 families in Reading that meet the troubled families criteria. This figure is in line with government estimates of towns with similar population levels and demographics. The authority is currently identifying and prioritising families. This includes the collation of information about a range of challenges and issues that families may be dealing with such as child protection, adult mental health issues, domestic violence, adult and youth substance misuse, adult crime and other health issues in line with locally agreed priorities. Once this is completed, it will map where identified families live in order to establish whether a community-based response would be an appropriate approach as part of a wider package. The screening process that has been put in place to review families who meet TF criteria is enabling the identification of patterns and issues 'bubbling under' in families, to anticipate potential problems and prevent escalation. An example would be a family where a fifteen- or sixteen-year-old was previously involved in crime and has completed their YOT intervention, but younger siblings are also beginning to show signs of disengaging such as reduced school attendance.

Although Kirsten Carr thinks it would have been helpful if government criteria had included a greater focus on early years/young children, the approach taken in Reading means that systems designed and the approaches developed through the TF work will be applied across preventative services to meet the needs of vulnerable families – regardless of whether they meet the Government’s criteria.

“We are currently working with colleagues across a range of both adult and children’s services – including youth workers – to look at how we best develop further some of the key approaches that will underpin both the Turnaround Families Programme and the Edge of Care strategy. This includes: Team Around the Family Approach; Single Family Assessment; Key-Working model; Child/Family Enablement (Complex Cases) Panel; Family and Community Engagement.”

## Youth work involvement

Kirsten Carr believes that the principles underpinning youth service transformation are clearly aligned to the TF approach, since it aims to increase youth workers’ capacity to deliver more intensive work with young people using a more family-focused approach. This will build on their existing skills and approaches, including developing relationships with vulnerable young people and working with them to raise aspirations and achievement, engaging those who may be reluctant to engage with other services, and delivering services in places and times that suit young people and their families.

While it is early days, she sees youth workers as supporting TF in a range of ways. In some instances, they will be the most appropriate professional to act as a key worker responsible for coordinating a package of support for a family. Initially, the service is seeking to identify those youth workers who are currently most ready for the more intensive key worker role to start work with families in 2012/13, and encourage them to ‘champion’ new approaches that will be rolled out in 2013/14 to a wider

group of youth workers. Other youth workers will build on existing work through the Children’s Action Teams to support young people to help achieve TF outcomes such as increasing school attendance or reducing anti-social behaviour. Youth workers have welcomed the opportunities for more one-to-one work with young people since they see this as having more impact on their lives.

Youth workers are also expected to have an important role in developing the Team Around the Street model described below. The council’s Youth Service is sub-contracted to deliver the 16/17 year old element of the Education Funding Agency Youth Contract, and youth workers will directly deliver this programme. Young people needing support into education, employment or training may also be considered for the ESF Progress Programme. While these young people may not be from ‘troubled families’ and may only need relatively light-touch support, it is important to recognise how different initiatives can make an indirect contribution to TF, and ensure that they dovetail effectively.

Kirsten Carr stresses the importance of being clear about youth workers’ role in supporting families. This includes recognising the range of different skills sets and professional prisms and how these need to adapt – for instance ensuring that workers have the skills and confidence to work with different family members, whilst recognising that at times it may be more appropriate for a youth worker to offer support to young people distinctly separate from their family. “We’re not saying ‘let’s make everyone a key worker and make all key workers do the same thing’ – we need to recognise that one person can’t be all things to all people. It’s about recognising the different needs, and the roles and skills needed to help the family achieve their plan. The challenge is to join them up – to ensure a co-ordinated package of support to the family, keeping the number of professionals involved to a minimum and having one person co-ordinating their input to the plan.”

She acknowledges the need to address the issue that families may be taking part in the programme reluctantly: “We need to be open with them and be clear that they

can disengage, but help them understand the potential consequences of that. We need to help them to see value in taking part, it's about how we tell the story of why we're getting in touch and then how well we listen to their story." TF is also looking at the implications of the forthcoming benefit cap for families who may be struggling generally: "We know families who will be hugely affected, and this could offer a way in, by helping them understand how they will be affected and offering advice and support on managing the changes." Monthly workshops for youth workers and others taking on the key worker role will be run from January 2013 to help them develop confidence and skills in implementing new approaches, and share and review good practice as the work develops. This will include skills in assertive outreach – holding difficult conversations and helping families understand what they can get from involvement.

The FIP has had some success in using Family Intervention Tenancies (providing behavioural support services as a condition of retaining tenancies) where families are likely to be evicted from local authority housing, although youth workers have as yet had limited involvement in this. Using consequences as a lever has to sit alongside support, and a focus on strengths and enablement. Part of respecting families is levelling with them but this has to be tempered. The extent to which levers such as Family Intervention Tenancies can be used more broadly will be explored in coming months.

## Promising Practice: Team Around the Street

One approach that is seen to have potential within TF is Reading's recently developed Team Around the Street (TAS) model. This builds on well-established approaches to anti-social behaviour, through which community safety officers, youth workers and other partners undertake joint work in local ASB hotspots. The TAS model is based on the importance of understanding how the environment in which people live affects their behaviour, relationships and outcomes. It encourages professionals to work

across traditional boundaries to use problem-solving approaches, such as play, sport and mediation, to engage problematic families and their neighbours. The involvement of neighbours is important – while a whole family approach is believed to achieve better outcomes for a family, this can be hindered if the needs of those living close by are not considered. TAS aims to show that working with troubled families within their immediate communities can avoid the need for costly and often invasive interventions such as safeguarding or enforcement. It is seen as potentially highly relevant to the TF programme: "We're interested in testing out how this model can provide a community-based response in localities where a number of families are being identified as 'troubled' – particularly if we find there are three or four families in the same street", said Kirsten Carr. "It's early days, but we believe that having a community-based approach has got to be part of the solution, it isn't enough to work with young people or their families in isolation."

The Family Intervention Project (FIP), in partnership with other services including Positive Futures, housing, community safety, community development workers, and the police, has so far developed three Team Around the Street interventions in streets with a higher than usual number of families needing intensive support, often in circumstances where they risk prosecution or eviction. Residents living near to these families are typically protective of their children because of fears for their safety, but feel they are losing control of adolescents. TAS has primarily focused on offering multi-sports sessions open to all children and young people, led by Positive Futures. There has been a high take-up of activities, with one project now having 60 registered users.

TAS is seen to offer a positive way to start to engage with young people – including those from 'troubled families' and known to the FIP and police – in a non-stigmatising way. There has been a significant reduction in complaints about ASB in the targeted streets. Some young people engaged through TAS have gone on to take part in other positive activities, such as summer programmes, and the model is seen as offering a way into more focused work with young people experiencing difficulties related to

education and attainment. The involvement of detached youth workers and voluntary and community sector projects is seen as critical to further development of TAS.

The model also highlights the importance of understanding residents' perceptions of their area and its needs, through undertaking surveys and ethnographic interviews. These have revealed differences in the perspectives of some agencies and those of residents, and the importance of involving local people in developing responses to identified needs. For instance, some families identified the need for parenting support, but wanted it from each other rather than professionals. The service is now developing a peer volunteer model which the families have been involved in designing.

Initial evaluation of TAS indicates that it has allowed professionals from a range of services to engage with children, young people and residents in new ways and has increased levels of trust, openness and visibility; has offered value for money in engaging families and reducing problematic behaviour; and residents recognise tangible benefits and improvements in their communities. It has, however, highlighted issues related to sustainability, including additional pressures on staff time, and the importance of managers actively encouraging staff to adopt new ways of working which may not match traditional roles.

## Workforce development

Service transformation and the TF approach have significant implications for workforce development. Youth workers have already been trained in casework skills such as assessment, planning and recording. The workforce development needs of professionals, including youth workers, are being identified and addressed. Involving youth workers in the development of key approaches, through for example the key worker workshops described above, will enable some skill development in areas such as 'assertive outreach' – the skills needed to approach families and persuade them

to engage with the programme. Further training needs will be identified through this process for the wider workforce. The authority is also embedding the Signs of Safety Model – an innovative strengths-based, safety-organised approach to child protection casework developed in Western Australia, but with wider applicability. All youth workers, along with other frontline practitioners across a range of partner organisations, are currently attending training in the model.

The service also aims to make more effective use of specialist professionals and agencies, for instance those working in the fields of mental health or drugs and alcohol, to increase the skills of all staff to work with more vulnerable young people and their families. While these specialists should continue to work directly with those with the highest support needs, in future they will have a greater focus on providing consultancy, support and training to other staff to support young people and their families who do not reach thresholds or where specialist capacity is limited. This is building on existing models in Reading, for example the multi-agency approaches to the delivery of Risky Behaviours Training for all practitioners working with young people; the consultancy provided by the Young People's Drug and Alcohol Team and the sex and relationships health co-ordinator.

## Multi-agency partnerships

Kirsten Carr welcomes the TF programme as the work through the programme has already helped to identify and begin to address some existing gaps, particularly around identifying risk to siblings and adult mental health issues. Preventative work with families and children is delivered via multi-agency locality teams (CATs) but the authority and its partners have identified the need to strengthen the link between the CATs and adult services, particularly mental health, drugs and alcohol, and housing. While this has already been happening to some extent, both the formation of the new directorate and the TF programme have provided the momentum to work better across services and agencies, and the authority is setting up a virtual team able to provide



consultancy, support and help with the assessment of adults who do not meet social care thresholds. Both youth and adult services are committed to this approach.

The Think Family Steering Group includes representation from the police, Probation, schools, Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care, Housing, ASB, CATS and FIP as well as two representatives from RVA (Reading Voluntary Action) – Reading's umbrella organisation for the voluntary and community sector (VCS). Partners are involved in developing the key approaches and it is recognised that the VCS are already delivering services that help to support families with complex needs. A piece of work is in progress to map the range and levels of family support services offered across the statutory and voluntary sectors, and identify and respond to gaps. The VCS are engaged both strategically and operationally with the development of the programme and are participating in Task Groups as well as the Steering Group.

## Information sharing and outcomes

Arrangements for information-sharing are covered by protocol and agreements as appropriate and Youth Services have contributed information to help identify families who will be eligible for the Turnaround Families Programme.

Youth workers recognise the need to be more systematic about recording. One of the

key challenges is the number of systems that are being used to record information about families and the services they are accessing. This is a challenge across agencies and even within Youth Services a number of systems are being used. Children's Social Care are planning to move across to a new management information system in 2013/14, and it is intended that all services including Youth Services will use the same system in the longer-term..

The authority has developed a model, the 'Risk Enablement Panel', to develop support packages for adults with complex needs. It is developing this model further to identify appropriate support for families with complex needs. Kirsten Carr believes that it will be important to ensure that youth work contributes to this panel, particularly to maintain a focus on a young person's needs within their family, bring knowledge of what activities and support are available, and use this to help pull together appropriate packages of support.

The TF performance framework will include outcomes relating to education, employment, crime and ASB, housing, health and well-being. IYDS has recently developed a revised outcomes framework (with support from the NYA) which takes the TF agenda into account; this will help youth workers see how their work contributes to the overarching TF targets – and more importantly, to tangible and sustainable outcomes for a young person and their family.

## Case Study: Solihull

### Background and context

The Troubled Families initiative in Solihull is being coordinated by Melanie Lockey (Head of Partnership Commissioning) located in the Transformation Directorate, which is headed up by Phil Mayhew, the strategic lead for this area of work.

The programme is known locally as the 'Families First programme'. The programme has been informed by work previously carried out under the Family Intervention Programme (FIP).

Work began on the programme in February 2012, by bringing together key partners (Children's Services, Young People's Services, police, health) for a design week, which looked at developing key principles to inform the Families First approach. These principles have been identified as:

- family focus
- neutrality
- intelligence-led approaches
- engagement based on trust

The design week also included the development of a costed service proposal, organisational structure and processes. The purpose of the design week was to focus on bringing about cultural change, a 'hearts and minds' approach that will lead to a sustainable, shared partnership commitment to the Families First programme across Solihull.

At the end of the design week the results and proposals were shared with strategic leads and heads of service from partner organisations as well as elected members, with the response from the meeting being unanimous support for the proposals.

The design group have continued to be actively involved in taking the initiative forward and are now Families First champions within the borough. The group now has two active sub-groups: the information sub-group and the engagement sub-group.

The work of the information sub-group is currently focussing on information governance and sharing information and shared systems.

The work of the engagement sub-group is focussing on family engagement, triage, the identification of future families and identifying and embedding the learning from direct work with five families in the borough (including group-based reflective supervision).

These five families were identified by asking partners who were the five families they were currently working with that they were most concerned about. This produced a list of 87 families with the five families appearing on everyone's radar. These were then cross-referenced against the list of families identified as meeting the troubled families' criteria and already known to all partners. The learning from this direct work with families has been used to develop structures, processes and responses to family work across the borough.

The work is now being scaled up through the appointment of an implementation manager, Adrian Bowers and four family coordinators (two who are currently in post and two who will be in post after Christmas) whose role is to intelligence gather, develop assessment processes (using FIP and CAF as the basis) and to coordinate case work with families. These posts are to be further supported through the appointment of five family workers drawn from a range of professional backgrounds. The work of this team is to build work across agencies with a 'build as we go' approach. Once the team are in place they will be co-located in a newly refurbished premises in the north of the Borough, the initial development work will then be scaled up. Scaling up the work will also be focussed on:

- managing expectations
- ensuring safeguarding protocols are in place
- building relationships and trust
- adding value to, not replacing, existing provision

Solihull is very clear that this work should be family focussed, whilst acknowledging that individuals in families have different needs. They see a 'personalisation' approach that brings about individual solutions for family members and the family as a whole as key to the successful development of this initiative.

## Youth work involvement

The Youth Service is located in the Children and Young People's Directorate under the strategic lead of Vanessa Bishop (director of children's services). The service is currently led by Shelley Ward who is also the head of service for the Youth Offending Service. The Youth Service in Solihull is being reviewed, carried out and supported by a cross-party Youth Advisory Group, chaired by Councillor Joe Tildesley (cabinet member for children and young people).

Recommendations from the review went to Scrutiny in November and have now been endorsed. The broad recommendations are:

- To recognise the important role the youth service has within the Borough.
- There will be a more targeted approach to youth work delivery, with a focus upon young people who are vulnerable, hard to reach and engage.
- Utilise current resources more effectively, and map the range of provision available across the borough provided by both the local authority and the voluntary sector.
- Explore the potential for increasing the use of other community venues, and work in partnership with others to deliver provision.
- Current mobile provision will be developed along with the deployment of more

detached and outreach services.

During this review process the service has also been working on the development of an outcomes framework (using 'A Framework of Outcomes for Young People', Young Foundation, 2012) and a reporting framework which includes the youth work contribution to partners' outcomes, the Corporate Plan outcomes and the Children's Services Business Plan. Work is also underway on tracking young people's journey, identifying key interventions and their impact on development, through a 'scorecard' approach with indicators for social and emotional capability and risk-taking behaviours.

The youth service is also currently leading on some work around child sexual exploitation. The work has involved identifying and making contact with young people across the borough who are involved in groups of young people who associate with a particular identity and are involved in criminal or inappropriate/risk-taking behaviour and have links with older groups of young people/adults. This work has resulted in young people being identified as at risk, which wasn't evident through other processes.

Denise Lewis (youth service manager – prevention) has been an active member of the Families First design group and has provided the link between Families First and the youth service. Denise continues to play an active role in the engagement sub-group. In Denise's words, "I have sought to ensure that the strong ethos and value base of youth work has helped shape and inform the work of the design group. A needs-led and person centred approach that focuses on what's 'right' for the person, accompanied by a plan-do-review cycle that focuses on developing resilience and helps change cycles of behaviour."

There was an acknowledgement by all those interviewed that many of the families on the Families First 'list' had young people in them who were in need of targeted support and this was seen as a key area of work where youth work and the youth

service had a significant role to play. It was also acknowledged that youth workers provide key skills needed to both reach and engage young people that are at risk or vulnerable. It is envisaged that youth workers will be involved in:

- assessments
- identifying young people at risk early on
- taking on a lead professional role where appropriate
- providing interventions and development programmes to engage and involve young people at risk

## Multi-Agency Partnerships

The approach in Solihull is based very firmly in a partnership approach to developing an integrated service delivery model. Partner contributions are seen as key to the success of the initiative. The design approach has been built on building both a groundswell of support as well as securing strategic buy-in. This 'pincer' action was also identified by Melanie Lockey as key to securing long term sustainability for the initiative. The Families First initiative has generally been well received by partners. All those interviewed said they felt it was easier for partners to work together due to the size of the authority. Partners are known to one another both by organisation or directorate and through strong working relationships between named individuals which was seen as a real asset for partnership working.

## Workforce

The approach in Solihull is one that recognises the workforce is disparate and spread across many departments and organisations, no one organisation can achieve 'success' on its own and that unless all partners are engaged and involved in supporting the initiative it is unlikely to succeed. There is also an acknowledgment that families will need a range of different approaches and skills that no one agency

can provide all of this, therefore a shared approach to service delivery is seen as vital. All those interviewed identified the need for the workforce to be resilient, persistent and person and family centred in their approach.

## Information Sharing

This work is still in its early stages. The local authority has an information sharing protocol in place with its key partners, and are developing the detail data schedule of information that will be shared, which will sit underneath the protocol. Key partners (Police, Housing, Social Care, Young People's Services and Adult Mental Health) have seconded members of staff into the Solihull Families First team which will support the operational access to individual databases so information and intelligence can be cross-referenced (supported by a memorandum of understanding). The information sub-group is also working alongside directly employed staff in the Families First team to progress the development of a single database to support the initiative.

## Outcomes

- A range of outcomes for the initiative was identified by those interviewed including:
- Transforming services: integrated service delivery model established including families involvement in informing changes needed and families as key partners in the change agenda.
  - Family perspective: families are seen as key to identifying their own outcomes to ensure life has improved as a result of the interventions.
  - Family learning: families are able to move on with their lives.
  - Behaviour Change: families are able to sustain changes.
  - Families moving out of Families First.
  - Vulnerable children and young people are protected and able to secure

- early help.
- Young people's satisfaction with their lives.

## Impact measures

A range of impact measures have also been identified to help support the identification of success in achieving outcomes, these include:

- improved school attendance
- improved educational attainment
- young people achieving success
- decrease in numbers of young people not in education, employment and training
- reduction in ASB/numbers of young people entering the criminal justice system
- youth service: number of young people participating in personal and social development activities, numbers of young people involved in active citizenship activities

## Future developments

Solihull is currently engaged with the national research initiative known as LARC 5, with eight other local authorities. The initiative is to be supported by 'Research in Practice' with a focus on neglect. The initiative will work with five families (from Solihull) to get an understanding on the 'willingness' to access support, which will

support the development of more early intervention approaches. In addition, there is a local element to the research, which the other local authorities in the region have signed up to. This will take a community based research approach to gain an understanding of the perceptions of neglect. The research will focus on 'how do you define neglect, how do you recognise it, and what do you do if you see it?' The research will help support a social marketing approach to safeguarding across communities in the borough.

## Key messages

- Location and partnerships are key to success – shared vision, shared ownership: 'Our children, Our families'.
- The initiative has helped bring together key groups of staff and a range of disparate developments under a single heading.
- People are beginning to be able to see 'the fit'.
- People are developing a new mindset to working with families'.
- The initiative provides staff and managers with new frames of reference.
- Community and family perspective is vital to the success of the initiative, giving families and young people a voice.
- The initiative is founded on a 'helping myself' mentality with support from agencies and services – co-production in improvement.
- The ability for services to be adaptable, personalised as well as targeted is paramount for family success.

## Case Study: Luton

### Background and context

The Troubled Families initiative in Luton is known as the 'Stronger Families' programme, and is led by Marg Harris who was appointed in June 2012. Marg is responsible for leading the work at both corporate and departmental level.

The post is located in the Children's Service's Prevention & Early intervention Service led by Nick Chamberlain (integrated service manager, Prevention & Early Intervention Service).

The vision for the Stronger Families programme is to transform and re-design the way services are delivered to families 'in need' and to ensure sustainability. Luton has been given a target of working with 525 families over three years: 175 this year with a 50 per cent increase for next year.

60 per cent of Luton's funding comes from central government (much higher than some other areas where it is 20-25 per cent). Their priority is to reduce the cost of children going into care or the need for more specialist services through targeted preventative work.

### Stronger Families delivery model

The delivery model for the programme has a three-pronged approach:

1. The CAF process led by the internal CAF team. The team is responsible for carrying out initial assessments and allocating cases (lower end) to a key worker. Each family will have a single action plan with a single worker responsible for coordinating this. There has been additional investment in this team for the staffing required.

2. The Early Intervention team works with families requiring higher support, and there has also been additional investment in this team for staffing. Other agencies are also brought in to work alongside them.
3. The commissioning process. This will commission services both internally and from the voluntary sector for specialists or specific services. Recent developments include work on domestic violence, and additional support for Targeted Youth Support Workers and Education Welfare Officers (as 75 per cent of the current cohort have educational issues around attendance or are in alternative provision).

A suite of interventions is currently being developed to help further support this work.

Sian Peer, programme development & performance manager (part of the Stronger Families Team), reported that what the programme is trying to do at present is "to get a plan on a practical level of what needs to happen. At the moment we are mirroring most other local authorities in two areas: concentrating on mobilising staff on the ground and developing systems, but at the same time already thinking about the cohort for next year."

### Use of CAF

When the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) was first introduced there was a small CAF team in place to help support the process. A larger team is now been put in place in place. Since April 2012 the manager has been Kerrie Virgo and the team is part of the Prevention and Early Intervention Service.

The Team have changed the way the CAF is now conducted and viewed in Luton, and have worked up a process to promote the more effective use of the CAF. They allocate

each CAF that comes in to practitioners, and rate every case using local thresholds, monitored and mediated by an independent reviewing officer (IRO). They previously used the national version of the CAF, but have changed it (following consultation) to incorporate the Stronger Families' criteria which include parents' education and care background amongst others. They are now getting the information they want and need. There has been some good feedback on the revised CAF with satisfaction that it is shorter, looks at only complex cases, and addresses which services need to get involved. A Multi-Agency Family Panel (MAF) now meets on a monthly basis. At this panel they also have representation from a Commissioning Manager to address any gaps in provision.

They are looking at a more joined up process (CAF → Team Around the Family (TAF) → MAF) and have seen some progress.

## Youth work involvement

The youth service is also located in the Early Intervention and Prevention Service under Nick Chamberlain, with integrated service responsibilities which cover youth work, Connexions, education welfare, family support, and children in need social work.

All services are increasingly providing targeted services. Luton will not be providing universal services in the future but are developing increased partnerships with the voluntary sector to provide these services.

Youth work in Luton is moving towards becoming purely outcomes-focused, with a targeted approach. The service recognises the need to intervene early to keep teenagers in their families, wherever possible.

Connexions will purely focus on young people not in education, employment or training, and on children in care (unless they receive extra funding).

According to Nick "the Prevention and Early Intervention Service has to do what it says on the tin: prevent the need for high cost specialist services further down the line. Youth workers' daily lives will change and are changing. They are starting to get used to having a caseload and doing family work."

One example of the impact this work is making is a young woman from Jamaica who asked to be taken into care. When this didn't happen she engaged in a series of increasing anti-social/criminal acts to the extent that she eventually got arrested and was finally taken into care and ended up in specialist care. No professional involved in her case had been able to establish a relationship with the young woman to get to the bottom of her actions and behaviour. A youth worker was appointed to work in a targeted one-to-one relationship with her and became the only individual who could talk to her and she would talk to. This led to the youth worker leading mediation between her and her father. She is now back living in a positive relationship with her father. Nick reported "this is the kind of model of working we are now talking about. Case working is being tightened up and we are planning to move away from open access youth work. We will have to spend the next year developing the local market and get their buy-in, we have to try and find a balance.

However our local politicians are quite rightly concerned about maintaining the balance between targeted and open access services and we are exploring alternative funding opportunities to help maintain open access youth work".

Current case assignment comes through a 'Team around the Family' meeting where tasks are allocated (the priority is non-school attendance). Youth workers are being allocated lead worker roles, and are increasingly understanding this and taking this on.

Changes to job descriptions will happen but are currently generic enough to support this approach. One example was a CAF which came through recently for a young male (who is on the Stronger Families' list) with behaviour issues, ADHD, out of school, in 'bedroom heaven,' moody, dietary issues and so on. They held a TAF for him,

and he was assigned a youth worker to work with him. Through the youth worker support and interventions the young man is now linked up with a training provider and 'out of the bedroom.' The youth worker has also introduced him to golf which he thoroughly enjoys and he has recently joined his local golf club. His mother is feeling much better and now feels that she may be able to go back into work (she had to give up her job to care for her son). It is important to recognise the intensity of the work required: a lot of resources are required to support this way of working.

There has recently been the recognition that most of the stronger families cohort have family members who are aged 13 and over and this will require a lot of input from youth work staff.

## Multi-Agency Partnerships

Multi-agency partnerships are seen as key to the programme's success.

Partnership working has been established and supported at strategic level. The work sits under the Children's Trust Board, chaired by the director of children's services. There is also an operational board made up of strategic practitioners. Getting buy-in from partners is vital; health sits in the same building but it is still early days with regards to full partnership working. A multi-agency panel has been established which meets each month. Nick's view is that "some agencies buy in more than others, but it is increasing and we are noticing that more VCS agencies are saying 'we can do this'. It is a rapidly changing landscape."

The programme development and performance manager's view is that "in practice, the work aligns with child poverty, family poverty, but Children's Services have quite a battle to get it out into other services. They don't 'own' the troubled families work, it is seen as an 'agenda' and a 'Children's Services' agenda." A meeting has been set up to involve Adult Services and other organisations.

## Workforce

Investment has been made in existing teams through internal commissioning (additional posts to augment existing teams with a requirement to specify additionality for the use of the funding) and external commissioning to increase service and skills availability.

There is an acknowledgement in Luton that workers need to be resilient and persistent in order to achieve success. Luton recently held a practitioner workshop to discuss vision and approach. The approach is built on Maslow's hierarchy of need, using this to help inform the ways that families can be supported to move forward.

Luton recognises the need to have flexibility and adaptability across the workforce so that it can respond to changing needs across the borough, taking into account, for example, gangs/gang culture.

The CAF team has recently provided training on carrying out assessments, and have put on roadshows across the borough to support this.

They have also spent an afternoon looking at the lead professional role and noted that Team Around the Family (TAF) training can be transferred across to the Stronger Families programme.

## Data Sharing

At the current time there is a cooperative approach to data sharing supported by a memorandum of agreement. Discussions have taken place about access to the aggregated list. The agreement at present is access only to disaggregated data on a family by family basis. According to the programme development and performance manager "we don't have robust enough data sharing protocols at present and there



are ethical concerns about what it means for families to be this list: it doesn't currently appear as a positive thing to be named on the list". This has the potential to jeopardise practitioners' relationships with families and there can be some real tensions.

If there are problems identifying families, there are then difficulties getting to the families and then difficulty in securing their engagement. A briefing sheet has now been produced and a performance hub is also now in place which brings together the staff member responsible from each organisation to look at the issues. It is acknowledged this will take some time, but some positive work has now begun.

A team has now been employed to look specifically at the Stronger Families cohort, including looking at who's involved with the family, where people are known. The team has a database of addresses and referrals and uses a system called 'Carefirst.' The team are currently waiting for the worklessness data, but have been using the red-amber-green (RAG rating) process.

Luton has also set two local discretion filters for inclusion in the programme: the number of police call outs and children on the edge of care.

## Outcomes

There is a database in place which serves as a tracker against families, family interventions and outcomes. Luton is in the process of developing this work, under the leadership of the programme performance and development manager, Sian Peer. It was acknowledged that a more sophisticated model needs to be developed. She said "We plan to carry out case analysis to look at outcomes. We are also looking at risk and resilience factors (we did a big piece of work on this last year) to see if there is any evidence of the issues being addressed".

There is also some discussion taking place about how these issues could be weighted. Sian added "when we looked at (risk and resilience factors) before, we noticed that we were particularly poor at identifying resilience factors – we are good at identifying problems but not always what worked. It is often the relationship that does it – feedback from young people demonstrates this: 'If I can talk to them, they can help me....' It's the person and continuity of care that is important and it's about someone who is not prepared to give up."

More detailed work is in the process of being developed.

## Thank you to our contributors

- Suffolk:** Allan Cadzow (Assistant Director, Integrated Service Delivery), Nicki Cooper (Suffolk Family Focus Project Manager), Stephen Toye (Head of Integrated Youth Support and Youth Offending Services), Rachel Tucker (Waveney District Council Anti Social Behaviour Officer), Kathryn Charlesworth (Waveney District Council Anti Social Behaviour Intervention Officer).
- Reading:** Kirsten Carr (Strategic Lead for Troubled Families and Youth Services).
- Solihull:** Shelley Ward (Head of Youth Offending Service and Youth Service), Denise Lewis (Youth service manager – prevention), Councillor Joe Tildesley (Cabinet member for children and young people), Melanie Lockett (Head of Partnership Commissioning and project lead for Troubled Families), Vanessa Bishop (Director of Children's Services).
- Luton:** Nick Chamberlain (Integrated Service Manager, Prevention & Early Intervention Service), Sian Peer (Programme Development & Performance Manager Troubled Families), Marg Harris (Strategic Coordinator for Luton's Stronger Families Programme), CAF Team: Dawn Crowhurst (CAF Coordinator), Jenny Kitchener (Early Intervention Coordinator), Alison Ladley (CAF Administrator), Samantha Mugabi (Early Intervention Coordinator), Humara Suleman (Early Intervention Coordinator).





## About the National Youth Agency

The National Youth Agency works in partnership with a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations to support and improve services for young people. Our particular focus is on youth work and we believe strongly that by investing in young people's personal and social development, young people are better able to live more active and fulfilling lives.

Working with young people, we advocate for more youth-friendly services and policies. We have four themes:

- Developing quality standards in work with young people
- Supporting services for young people
- Developing the youth workforce
- Promoting positive public perceptions of young people.

We deliver our work through training and consultancy, campaigning, publishing and online communications. Through our activities we want to ensure that young people have a strong voice and positive influence in our society.

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