

Annex B4: Terms of reference for the Review of High Cost, High Harm Families

Key Questions

Who are these families? How can we define them and how many of them are there?

Low educational achievement, unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, mental health difficulties, exclusion and poverty characterize these families. The children of these parents are often;

Children in need of protection
Children at risk of being Looked After
Looked After Children
Persistent young offenders
Children in Secure Accommodation
Children who do not attend school.
Children placed in Kent by other Local Authorities

What progress has already been made in addressing the needs of high cost, high harm families?

Kent has identified clear strategic objectives underpinned by policy and permission to be creative. Reference PSA 1, PSA2/LAA, Towards 2010, Supporting Independence, Children and Young People's Plan. Regeneration and education are key. Thanet and Swale provide good local examples of this whole system approach.

It is not possible to list everything. Some examples of specific Children and Families initiatives

- Kent has reduced its numbers of Looked After Children by 23% from 1537 LAC to 1175 over a 5 year period by reinvesting savings from care costs to preventative services. 50% of Personal Social Services budget is spent on family support compared to our comparator group average of 37%. Effective services and policy initiatives,
Kinship Care
Mandatory Family Group Conferencing,
Staying Together 2,
Concurrent Planning,
Increased adoption and adoption time scales,
Family support projects supporting children and parents within the community
- Investment in high quality foster care and treatment foster care projects designed to address children's social and emotional behaviour and long term outcomes. This type of initiative is expensive for the Local Authority. Outcomes are long term. Savings are likely to be felt elsewhere i.e. adult health services, criminal justice system, district councils.

- Developed improved support for high harm children who are out of mainstream school. Effective initiatives; Adolescent Resource Centres. A multi agency approach to education and social care with input from Education, Social Services, YOS, Drug and Alcohol Services, Health and Connexions. Warm Stone, for children excluded from special schools, is evidencing extremely promising results in terms of attendance and reduced aggression Three in a Boat. A scheme providing intensive personal support. Family Group Conferencing for excluded children
- Created a raft of school based multi agency emotional well being services. Recruited a Children's Commissioning Director for Health to join its Children, Families and Education strategic management team.
- Developed a number of YOS services. Effective schemes: Multi-agency identification of young offenders for targeted programmes – the Youth Inclusion Programme is an excellent example. Joint YOS and Children, Families and Education Parenting Support Service Police Joint Family Management Programmes and Behaviour Agreements

Can we better align local services to improve identification of these families earlier on and before they become high cost high harm?

Kent's multi-agency joint planning and commissioning forums target areas of high need. A number of initiatives around the county use early intervention tools for assessment on individual children. CAF and the development of the lead professional role should improve early identification. Kent's emerging local trust arrangements for planning, commissioning and service delivery will support early identification, joined up approaches and outcome focussed services.

Are current incentives and levers adequate to deliver co-ordinated responses for families across relevant services such as health, education, housing, social services and the police at local level?

The Kent CYPP identifies shared outcomes for all partners. The direction of travel within ECM and NSF for children is clear. However;

- Short term funding streams remains a difficulty
- Preventive services for this needs group are usually expensive. Savings in one part of the system incur expenditure elsewhere. They are not a cheap option.
- There is a gap in the funding of services to address the needs of adolescents.
- Effective work within YOS is often delivered by small voluntary organisations not bound by statutory requirements. Funding for the voluntary sector is experienced as difficult to access and short term.

What interventions here and abroad have been shown to work in reducing the harm caused by these families and supporting them to exit the cycle of low achievement?

Refer to the Thanet Enquiry, which gives an analysis of what prevents effective interventions within communities. The report researches outcomes in relation to high harm families in a specific geographical area of Kent generating massive referral rates to all statutory agencies. The report summarizes a number of major findings. Key themes are:

- The impact of housing policy on 'high cost, high harm families',
- Extensive mobility is a major barrier to the effectiveness of preventative services
- Children and families placed outside of their communities and family networks increase risk factors associated with poor outcomes.

These themes are recurring factors in wider research relating to positive outcomes for children.