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The Troubled Families programme (England)

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Summary

Troubled Families is a programme of targeted intervention for families with multiple problems, including crime, anti-social behaviour, truancy, unemployment, mental health problems and domestic abuse.

Local authorities identify 'troubled families' in their area and usually assign a key worker to act as a single point of contact. Central Government pays local authorities by results for each family that meet set criteria or move into continuous employment.

£448 million was allocated to the first phase of the programme, which ran from 2012 to 2015. Local authorities worked with around 120,000 families, and 'turned around' 99%. However the independent evaluation of the programme found no evidence that the programme had made any significant impact across its key objectives.

The second phase of the Troubled Families programme was launched in 2015, with £920 million allocated to help an additional 400,000 families. The second phase will run until 2020, with annual progress reporting until 2022.

The programme was championed in part as a way to reduce public spending on families who require support from multiple parts of the state. No formal analysis has yet been published on the extent of any savings from the programme as a whole.

The Troubled Families programme is administered by the Department for Communities and Local Government, and covers England only.

1. The Troubled Families programme

Summary

- The first phase of the Troubled Families programme ran from 2012 to 2015
- It set a target to work with, and 'turn around', families with multiple problems, or help them move into continuous employment
- Problems included crime, anti-social behaviour, truancy and unemployment
- Local authorities ran the programme and received payment-by-results from central Government
- Programme was expanded for 2015-2020 to work with 400,000 additional families
- Second phase targeted additional problems, including domestic violence, health, drug abuse, mental health and children at risk

1.1 Pilot programme

The 2010 Spending Review announced a new Community Budgets programme to be trialled in 16 English local authority areas that would:

> Help turn around the lives of families with multiple problems, improving outcomes and reducing costs to welfare and public services. The campaign will be underpinned by local Community Budgets focused on family intervention –enabling a more flexible and integrated approach to delivering the help these families need.[1]

More details were announced in a subsequent press release. The programme, overseen by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), would give council areas direct control over several strands of central Government funding from 2011/12, free of the usual conditionality attached to the funding streams. This would then be spent on tackling social problems around families with complex needs.[2]

The 16 council areas chosen to pilot the programme were: Birmingham, Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Bradford, Essex, Greater Manchester (a group of 10 councils), Hull, Kent, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Barnet, Croydon, Islington, Lewisham, Swindon, and a grouped area of Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea and Wandsworth.[3]

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1 HM Treasury, *Spending Review 2010*, October 2010
2 More information on the community budget model can be found in the Commons Library briefing paper, *Local government: alternative models of service delivery*
3 '16 areas get 'community budgets' to help the vulnerable', *DCLG press release*, 22 October 2010

1.2 Phase One (2012-2015)

Launched in 2012, the programme initially targeted 120,000 families with multiple problems

Following the 2011 riots in some parts of England, the then Prime Minister David Cameron set out plans to invest £448 million over the course of the Parliament to turn around the lives of around 120,000 troubled families in England.[4] In his speech he cited an estimate that, over the previous year, £9 billion had been spent on these approximately 120,000 families, due to the multiple interventions they received from different parts of the state.[5]

Although the new programme would continue to target families with multiple problems, the administration and funding of the new Troubled Families programme was different to that of the Community Budgets pilot, moving instead to a payment-by-results model.

Given the cross-cutting nature of the programme, to target families with multiple problems, DCLG provided 39% of the central Government funding, with five other departments providing the rest (Department for Work & Pensions, Ministry of Justice, Department for Education, Home Office and Department of Health).[6]

Identifying troubled families

Troubled families were defined as those facing problems with crime, anti-social behaviour, truancy and/ or unemployment

The figure of approximately 120,000 troubled families was an estimated number based on a 2005 survey. DCLG then provided all upper-tier local authorities in England with an indicative number of troubled families in their area, based on population estimates and indices of deprivation and child well-being.

Local authorities were then responsible for identifying their assigned troubled families, based on criteria set out in the financial framework document (see below).

In order to help local authorities identify some of their troubled families, regulations were passed allowing the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to share data on families receiving out-of-work benefits, without informed consent.[7]

Definitions

The definition of 'troubled families' is set out in the financial framework document. This defined 'troubled families' as households who:

- Are involved in crime and anti-social behaviour
  - Households with 1 or more under 18-year-old with a proven offence in the last 12 months; AND/ OR

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4 The 120,000 figure is based on research from 2005. Further details were published in the Cabinet Office's, *Troubled Families Estimates Explanatory Note*

5 Prime Minister's Office, *Troubled families speech*, 15 December 2011

6 National Audit Office, *Programmes to help families facing multiple challenges*, 3 December 2013, HC 878 2013-14

7 The *Social Security (Information-sharing in relation to Welfare Services etc.) Regulations 2012*, SI 2012/1483

  - Households where 1 or more member has an anti-social behaviour order, anti-social behaviour injunction, anti-social behaviour contract, or where the family has been subject to a housing-related anti-social behaviour intervention in the last 12 months.
- Have children not in school
  - Has been subject to permanent exclusion; three or more fixed school exclusions across the last 3 consecutive terms; OR
  - Is in a Pupil Referral Unit or alternative provision because they have previously been 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.
- Have an adult on out-of-work benefits
- Cause high costs to the public purse
  - Local discretion… to add other families.[8]

Families meeting all three of the crime & anti-social behaviour, truancy and unemployment criteria were to be included automatically

Families meeting all three of the non-discretionary criteria (crime and anti-social behaviour, truancy and unemployment) were to be included in the programme automatically. Those that met two of the three criteria could be included where they met discretionary criteria set by the local authority, causing high costs to the public purse.

According to the independent evaluation of phase one, the most common discretionary criteria applied by local authorities were: domestic violence/abuse, child protection, drug/alcohol/substance misuse and mental health problems.[9]

The aim of the programme was to 'turn around' the lives of these families. This would be achieved either when:

- They achieve all 3 of the education and crime/anti-social behaviour measures set out below where relevant:
  - Each child in the family has had fewer than 3 fixed exclusions and less than 15% of unauthorised absences in the last 3 school terms; and
  - A 60% reduction in anti-social behaviour across the family in the last 6 months; and
  - Offending rate by all minors in the family reduced by at least 33% in the last 6 months.; OR
- At least one adult in the family has moved off out-of-work benefits into continuous employment in the last 6 months

These outcomes would lead to payment under the payment-by-results system (see below). There was also some payment if families achieved 'progress to work' (volunteering for the Work Programme or attached

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8 DCLG, *Financial framework for the Troubled Families programme's payment-by-results scheme for local authorities*, 28 March 2012

9 DCLG, *National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme: Final Synthesis Report*, October 2016, p30

to European Social Fund provision), but this was not a measure of 'turning around' a family.

Payment-by-results

DCLG estimated that the cost of intensive intervention with a family was around £10,000. As part of the Troubled Families programme, it would pay 40% of this (£4,000), in a payment-by-results model, when a family was 'turned around' (see above).

Local authorities received up to £4,000 for each family 'turned around' under the programme

The framework document referenced DCLG analysis that existing programmes would have 'turned around' one in six families eligible for support, even without the Troubled Families programme, and therefore this 40% would only be paid for five out of every six families helped.

Part of the £4,000 would be paid up-front as an 'attachment fee', with the rest paid when a family was defined as having been 'turned around'. The proportion paid up-front would decrease year on year, to reflect the higher initial set-up costs. The up-front fee made up 80% of payment in 2012/13, 60% in 2013/14 and 40% in 2014/15. **Figure 1** shows the payment model for 2012/13.

Figure 1: Troubled Families payment-by-results model, 2012/13

Result	Attachment fee	Results payment	Total
They achieve all 3 of the education and crime/ anti-social behaviour measures set out below where relevant: 1. Each child in the family has had fewer than 3 fixed exclusions and less than 15% of unauthorised absences in the last 3 school terms; **and** 2. A 60% reduction in anti-social behaviour across the family in the last 6 months; **and** 3. Offending rate by all minors in the family reduced by at least a 33% in the last 6 months.	£3,200 per family	£700 per family	£4,000 per family
If they do not enter work, but achieve the 'progress to work' (one adult in the family has either volunteered for the Work Programme or attached to the European Social Fund provision in the last 6 months).		£100 per family	
OR			
At least one adult in the family has moved off out-of-work benefits into continuous employment in the last 6 months (and is not on the European Social Fund Provision or Work Programme to avoid double-payment).	£3,200 per family	£800 per family	£4,000 per family

Results for payment would be self-declared by local authorities' Troubled Families teams. However, DCLG would also carry out 'spot checks' to ensure accurate reporting.

How the programme worked in practice

The financial framework did not set out any centrally mandated way in which the Troubled Families programme should be implemented, instead emphasising flexibility for local authorities.

In December 2012, DCLG published *Working with Troubled Families: a guide to the evidence and good practice*. Looking at what practitioners and families said had worked for them, the guide noted five key factors:

1. A dedicated worker, dedicated to a family
2. Practical 'hands-on' support
3. A persistent, assertive and challenging approach
4. Considering the family as a whole – gathering the intelligence
5. Common purpose and agreed action.[10]

Examples throughout the guide showed that many practitioners based interventions around having a key worker as a single point of contact for the family.

The DWP also provided 150 JobCentre Plus advisers to 94 local authority Troubled Families teams, to offer help in finding work.[11]

1.3 Phase Two (2015-2020)

2015-2020 will see the programme expanded to target an additional 400,000 families

The 2013 Spending Round announced that the Troubled Families programme would be expanded to reach an additional 400,000 families, for which £200 million would be allocated in the first year (2015/16).[12] It was later confirmed that the programme would run until 2020, with an additional £720 million allocated for the remaining four years.[13]

Stephen Crossley of the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (CCJS) criticised the expanded 400,000 figure as a move away from the programme's initially stated aims:

> The new figure of 400,000 more 'troubled families' equates to around 6.5 per cent of all families in England, and the substantial discretion offered to local authorities in interpreting and applying the criteria, means that almost any family who comes into contact with, or is referred to, a non-universal service could fall into the category of 'troubled'.[14]

Although the programme did not fully start until 2015/16, 113 local authorities signed up as 'early starters' in 2014/15 for the expanded programme.

Under measures brought in under the *Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016*, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government is required to report annually to Parliament on the progress of the Troubled Families programme.

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10 DCLG, *Working with Troubled Families: a guide to the evidence and good practice*, December 2012
11 HC Deb 10 March 2015 c158
12 HM Treasury, *Spending Round 2013*, Cm 8639, 26 June 2013
13 PQ 28956 [on Families: Disadvantaged], 3 March 2016
14 CCJS, *The Troubled Families Programme: the perfect social policy?*, November 2015

Changes from phase one

The significant increase in the number of troubled families identified is due to wider inclusion criteria than in phase one. A new financial framework for phase two, *Financial framework for the expanded Troubled Families programme*, set out the following criteria:

> **To be eligible for the expanded programme, each family must have at least two of the following six problems:**
>
> 1. Parents or children involved in crime or anti-social behaviour.
> 2. Children who have not been attending school regularly.
> 3. Children who need help: children of all ages, who need help, are identified as in need or are subject to a Child Protection Plan.
> 4. Adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion or young people at risk of worklessness.
> 5. Families affected by domestic violence and abuse.
> 6. Parents or children with a range of health problems.[15]

Each of these criteria were more broadly defined than in the first phase of the programme. Local authorities can claim funding for a family when they have:

> 1. Achieved significant and sustained progress, compared with all their problems at the point of engagement , OR
> 2. An adult in the family has moved off benefits and into continuous employment.

The terminology of 'significant and sustained progress or continuous employment' replaces the 'turned around' terminology of phase one (see section 2.2).

Families' success is measured on the basis of "significant or sustained progress (against their identified problems) or continuous employment"

Where a local authority, in its work with a family, identifies more problems than were initially suspected, progress must be made against all of these problems to qualify for payment-by-results.

What counts as significant and sustained progress is agreed locally and set out in a Troubled Family Outcome Plan. These plans should follow the 10 principles set out in Annex D of the 2015 framework. Principle 9 looks at ensuring that progress is sustained over a period of time, which was not built into the framework of phase one:

> The periods of sustainment for outcomes should be meaningful. These may vary between areas, reflecting local priorities and evidence. However, most areas have set a minimum of six months and the school attendance outcome should be demonstrated across at least three consecutive terms.[16]

In October 2016, DCLG produced an overview of the first phase of the programme, which looked at what had been learned for phase two.

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[15] DCLG, *Financial framework for the expanded Troubled Families programme*, March 2015

[16] DCLG, *Financial framework for the expanded Troubled Families programme*, March 2015, Annex D

This included the following information on the payment-by-results model for phase two:

> The new programme retains a payment by results element. This is a more modest reward than that offered by the first programme in recognition of there being a broader range of needs likely to be captured through the eligibility criteria for this larger cohort. Local authorities receive an upfront £1,000 attachment fee for each family with whom they agree to work and an £800 results payment for each family with whom they achieved an outcome.
>
> Each authority receives an annual Service Transformation Grant (most local authorities receive £200,000 each year) to support local delivery of the programme.[17]

As with phase one of the programme, results are self-reported by local authorities' Troubled Families teams. However, the Government's response to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) report on the programme noted that additional checks would take place for phase two, compared to previously:

> Each local authority is now subject to two spot checks during the lifetime of the programme. The spot checks now include a visit by a Department expert, as well as scrutiny of local authority data systems, and these visits include an interview of local authority keyworkers to assess local practice.[18]

Focus on worklessness and review of payment-by-results, 2017

DCLG's first progress report for the 2015-2020 phase included plans to review the payment-by-results model, so that it could drive service transformation, and also so that it could allow for a greater focus on parental unemployment than at present.

Although the entry criteria for the programme would not be changed, the review proposed asking local authorities to prioritise families experiencing worklessness, as well as parental conflict and serious personal debt. The progress report argued that conflict and debt were two of the main disadvantages associated with worklessness.[19]

DCLG is looking to prioritise families experiencing worklessness, family conflict or serious personal debt

The review was launched alongside the DWP policy paper, *Improving Lives: Helping Workless Families*, which set out an evidence base for the impact of worklessness and conflict on children. As part of the launch, the DWP announced £30 million of funding over three years for relationship support for families experiencing worklessness, which would be delivered through the troubled families programme.[20]

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17 DCLG, *The first Troubled Families Programme 2012 to 2015: An overview*, October 2016, p19

18 HM Treasury, *Treasury Minutes: Government responses on the Committee of Public Accounts on the Twenty Sixth, the Twenty Seventh and the Twenty Ninth to the Thirty Fourth reports from Session 2016-17*, March 2017, para 3.2

19 DCLG, *Supporting disadvantaged families – Troubled Families Programme 2015-2020: progress so far*, 4 April 2017, p23-25

20 'Government to fund relationship support for unemployed families', *The Guardian*, 4 April 2017

Gingerbread, a charity for single parents, criticised the increased focus on worklessness as the root of family problems:

> While Gingerbread welcomes the promise of better relationship support across family types, it questions the emphasis on 'worklessness' as an overriding obstacle to financial stability. While two-thirds of single parents work, the risk of working single parent families being in poverty sharply increased over the last year, emphasising that employment alone is not a solution to improving life chances. Today's policy paper doesn't address structural obstacles facing single parents out of work, such as lack of access to childcare, flexible work and training.[21]

The 'Earned Autonomy' financial model

In January 2018, the Government announced that a new funding model for the TF programme would be piloted as an alternative to payment-by-results.

> […] some local authorities told us that earlier up-front investment could help them generate system change more quickly. We are therefore offering an alternative funding model: 'Earned Autonomy' that will permit some local authorities and their partners to move away from the PbR arrangement, allowing them to use more up-front investment to embed better ways of working. However, PbR will continue as the most common method of payment, reflecting the success of the model in driving a focus on outcomes for families.[22]

In the 2018 annual report, it was revealed that 11 local authorities will move to the Earned Autonomy model in April that year, following "a rigorous selection process". According to the Government, these authorities "put forward a strong case that upfront investment will help them achieve their ambitious service transformation plans and positive outcomes for families."[23] The areas selected to pilot this are:

- Barking and Dagenham
- Brighton and Hove
- Bristol
- Camden
- Cheshire West and Chester
- Durham
- Islington
- Kent
- Leeds
- Liverpool
- Staffordshire

Details of how each authority will use this upfront payment can be found in Annex C of the 2018 annual report.

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21 'Gingerbread queries "muddled thinking" behind new government programme', *Gingerbread press release*, 4 April 2017

22 Financial Framework for the Troubled Families Programme, DCLG, January 2018

23 Supporting disadvantaged families: Annual report of the Troubled Families Programme 2017-18, DCLG, March 2018, p.21

2. Impact and outcomes – phase one

Summary

- DCLG figures in May 2015 showed that 99% of the families identified were 'turned around'
- Government originally estimated the programme saved £1.2 billion of public money
- Some commentators raised concerns about the accuracy of this figure, and about the impact the programme had on the families it 'turned around'
- Independent evaluation of Troubled Families found that it had no significant impact across the programme's key objectives, and could not calculate estimates of savings

2.1 How 'troubled' were the identified families?

The first phase of the Troubled Families programme set out to identify 117,910 families to 'turn around' by the end of the Parliament, a figure usually rounded up to 120,000 in DCLG publications. Figures for May 2015 indicated that all 117,910 troubled families had been identified.

Some commentators, such as Ruth Levitas from the Poverty and Social Exclusion research project (PSE), criticised the use of the term 'troubled families', noting that the families identified for help by the programme were not necessarily the "neighbours from hell" referred to in David Cameron's 2011 speech:

> The '120,000 families' identified in the original SETF (Social Exclusion Task Force) report do indeed have troubles: physical and mental ill-health, poor housing, income poverty, material deprivation. And, as Ogden Nash said, 'a trouble is a trouble is a trouble, and it's twice the trouble when a person is poor'. The leap to treating them as 'troublesome families', bears little relation to the original criteria of multiple disadvantage on which the figure is based.[24]

Critics argued that the so-called 'troubled families' had little in common besides economic disadvantage

The CCJS's analysis of the families helped under the programme also raised concerns about the term 'troubled families':

> In contrast to the image of 'troubled families' as 'neighbours from hell' where drug and alcohol addictions, crime and irresponsibility 'cascade through generations'… the only characteristics shared by the majority of 'troubled families' are that they are white, not in work, live in social housing and have at least one household member experiencing poor health, illness and/or a disability. Crime, anti-social behaviour and substance abuse, even at relatively low levels, are all characteristics which relate to small minorities of official 'troubled families'.[25]

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24 PSE, *There may be 'trouble' ahead: what we know about those 120,000 'troubled' families*, 21 April 2012, Policy response series no. 3

25 CCJS, *The Troubled Families Programme: the perfect social policy?*, November 2015

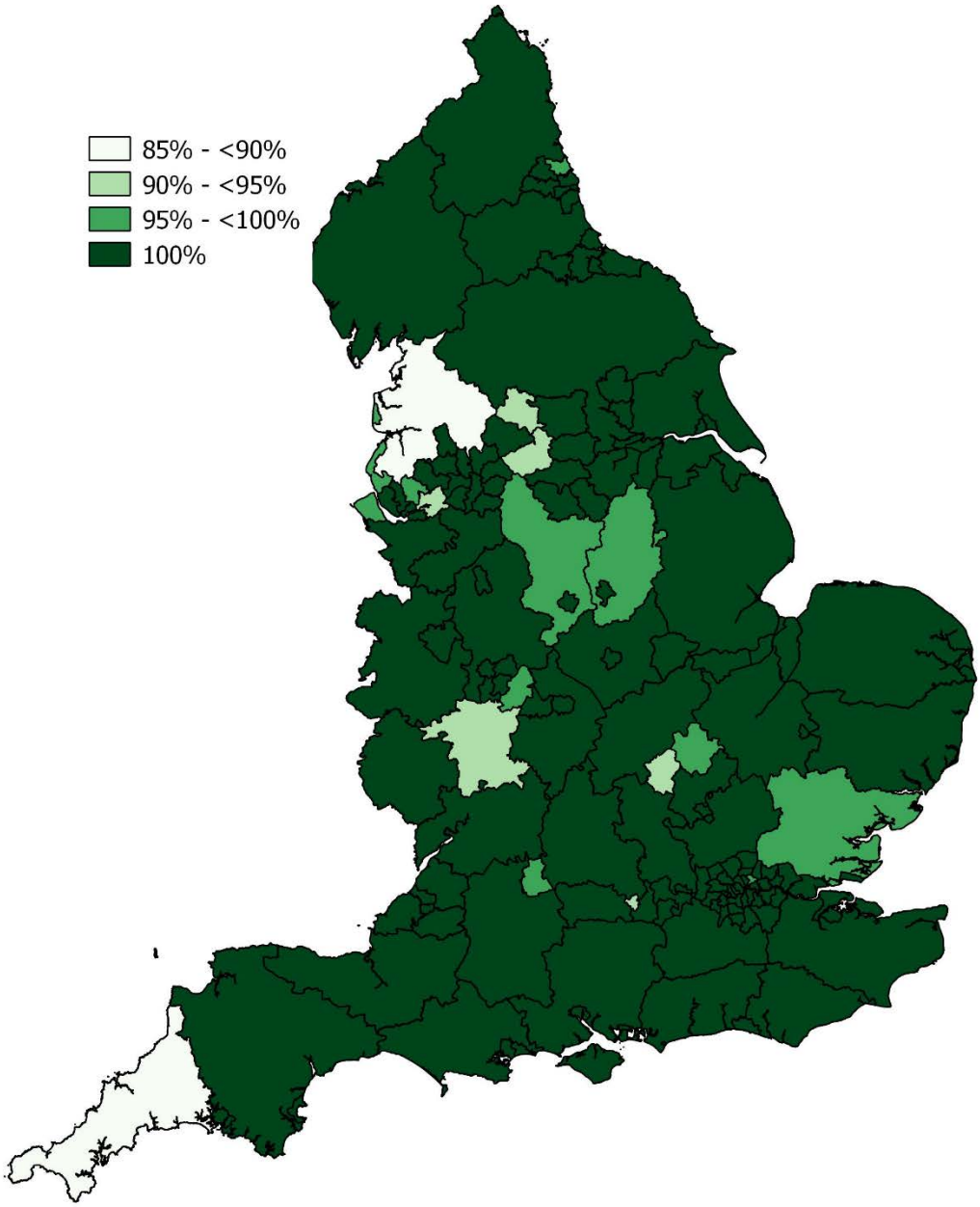
2.2 How many families were 'turned around'?

The Government's target, at the launch of phase one of the Troubled Families programme in 2012, was that 117,910 families would be 'turned around' by the end of the 2010-2015 Parliament.

Statistics as of May 2015 showed that of the 117,910 families identified, 116,654, or 99%, had been 'turned around'. Of the 152 local authorities in England, only two, Cornwall and Lancashire, had a success rate of below 90%, whilst 132 had a success rate of 100%.

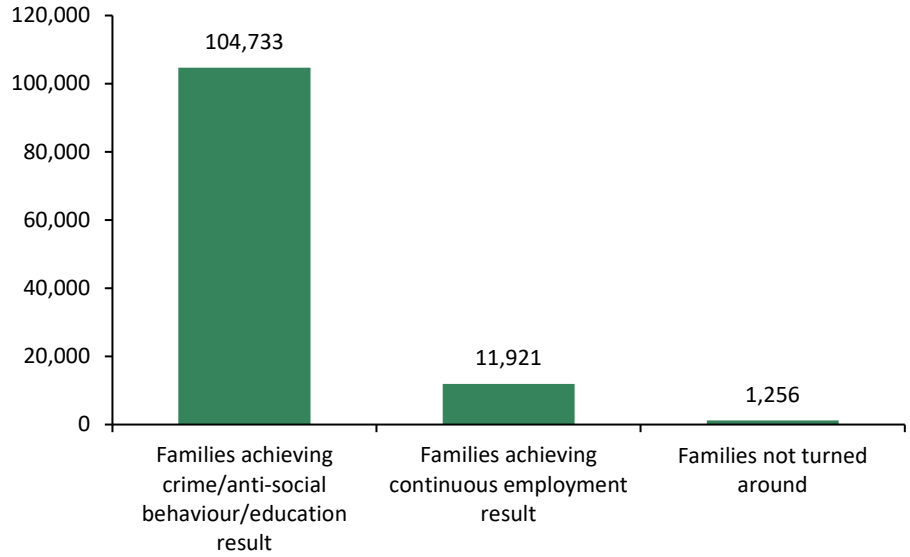
132 out of 152 local authorities had a success rate of 100% for families they had 'turned around'

Figure 1: Percentage of families 'turned around' by local authority, to May 2015



The significant majority of families that were 'turned around' by the programme were defined as such because of a crime, anti-social behaviour or education outcome, rather than an 'achieving continuous employment' outcome (see Chart 1 below).

Chart 1: Outcomes for identified 'troubled families', to May 2015



Source: DCLG, *Troubled Families: progress information by December 2014 and families turned around by May 2015*

The then Communities Secretary Eric Pickles welcomed these results in a statement to the House of Commons in March 2015:

> I am genuinely honoured to have led this remarkable, life-changing programme for the Government, and why I am delighted that it is being expanded to help more troubled families across the country[26]

In response, the then Shadow Communities Secretary Hilary Benn offered some support for the programme:

> We know that intensive support really can help families transform their lives. Raising children can be challenging and we can all do with help and advice at times. We support the programme precisely because the local authorities that are implementing it on the ground are convinced that it makes a difference.[27]

The results from phase one of the programme were welcomed by the Government and the Labour opposition

However, a number of commentators have criticised these results. Jonathan Portes from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) argued that the success rates were so high that they lacked credibility:

> CLG told Manchester that it had precisely 2,385 troubled families, and that it was expected to find them and "turn them around"; in return, it would be paid £4,000 per family for doing so. Amazingly, Manchester did precisely that. Ditto Leeds. And Liverpool. And so on. And CLG is publishing these figures as fact.

[26] HC Deb 10 March 2015, c159
[27] HC Deb 10 March 2015, c160

> I doubt the North Korean Statistical Office would have the cheek.[28]

In her evidence to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), the former Director General of the Troubled Families programme Dame Louise Casey, admitted that the number of families worked with may have been higher than 117,910, in order for local authorities to meet their targets:

> It was suggested in the financial framework that local authorities reached more families, although we would not pay them for them, in order both to reach that and as part of a system change. I don't think they did masses more, but our sense around the country is that people did more in order to meet that.[29]

Depending on how many more families were worked with, this would have an impact on the reported 99% success rate.

Other commentators, including Lyn Brown MP, argued that in many cases families had been classed as having been 'turned around' but had in fact never engaged with the programme in their area, with many still facing problems of crime, unemployment and truancy.[30]

Critics argued that some of the families who had been 'turned around' had received little actual assistance from the programme

Stephen Crossley from the CCJS also raised concerns about the use of the term 'turned around', particularly that it may not reflect the experience of those actually targeted by the Troubled Families programme:

> We do not know how many 'turned around' families are still experiencing domestic violence, poor mental health or other issues such as poor quality or overcrowded housing, poverty or material deprivation, because this information has not been reported by the government.
>
> At present, we are also not aware of whether the families consider their lives to have been 'turned around' by their involvement with the programme, or whether their lives remained 'turned around' after the intensive support was withdrawn. It should also be noted that many families will not know that they have been labelled as 'troubled families' because many local authorities choose not to inform them of this and use different names for their local programmes.[31]

The 2016 PAC report, *Troubled families: progress review*, was also critical of the terminology:

> The implication of 'turned around' was misleading, as the term was only indicative of achieving short-term outcomes under the programme rather than representing long-term, sustainable change in families' lives. While there was some success, by claiming that an outcome achieved meant that a family had been "turned around", the Department's use of the term overstated the impact of the Troubled Families programme.
>
> The use of this term suggested that long term social problems could be fixed within a few months or years, and risks

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28 'A troubling attitude to statistics', *NIESR policy blog*, 15 March 2015
29 Committee of Public Accounts, *Troubled families: progress review*, 20 December 2016, HC 711 2016-17, Q104
30 HC Deb 30 June 2014, c582
31 CCJS, *The Troubled Families Programme: the perfect social policy?*, November 2015

> undermining the entire concept of this work. The Department should not have used such misleading terminology.[32]

PAC recommended that DCLG should change the terminology to give "an accurate depiction of how disadvantaged families make progress."[33] The Government's response noted that this had already been implemented, with a change in terminology for phase two from 'turned around' to 'significant and sustained progress':

> The current programme recognises that families with multiple problems, some of the hardest to help in the country, will not have their problems resolved overnight and refers to "significant and sustained progress" being achieved.[34]

2.3 How much money did the programme save?

David Cameron's 2011 speech highlighted the benefits, not only to those families who would take part in the programme, but also to the public purse:

> We've always known that these families cost an extraordinary amount of money…
>
> …but now we've come up the actual figures.
>
> Last year the state spent an estimated £9 billion on just 120,000 families…
>
> …that is around £75,000 per family.[35]

Of this £9 billion, Government figures estimated that £8 billion was spent "purely reacting to their (the approximately 120,000 families) problems".[36]

Analysis of subsequent DCLG publications by Stephen Crossley of the CCJS raised concerns about the accuracy of this figure. Crossley argued that the £9 billion had been extrapolated from a smaller sample of families with at least five disadvantages *and* a child with multiple behaviour problems, and that this may not be the case amongst the whole population of the approximately 120,000 families.[37] However, a 2014 written statement from the then Communities Secretary Eric Pickles noted that each of the families worked with by that point had an average of nine serious problems.[38]

DCLG estimated phase one of the programme saved £1.2 billion of public spending on the identified families

Although no target was set for how much money the programme intended to save, DCLG's original business case estimated a saving of

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32 Committee of Public Accounts, *Troubled families: progress review*, 20 December 2016, HC 711 2016-17, recommendation 5
33 *Ibid.*
34 HM Treasury, *Treasury Minutes: Government responses on the Committee of Public Accounts on the Twenty Sixth, the Twenty Seventh and the Twenty Ninth to the Thirty Fourth reports from Session 2016-17*, March 2017, para 4.3
35 Prime Minister's Office, *Troubled families speech*, 15 December 2011
36 PQ 7919 [on Families: Disadvantaged], 7 September 2015
37 CCJS, *The Troubled Families Programme: the perfect social policy?*, November 2015
38 HC Deb 1 September 2014, c5WS

£2.9 billion (later revised down to £2.7 billion).[39] Figures were published in March 2015, estimating that £1.2 billion had been saved to date.[40]

This figure was based on extrapolation of results from seven local authorities, including Manchester, for which it was estimated that for every £1 invested in the programme, £2.20 in benefits were realised.[41]

When questioned on the difference between the announced £1.2 billion and the initial cost estimate of £9 billion, the then Communities Secretary Eric Pickles gave the following response:

> The right hon. Gentleman made a number of points on how we can demonstrate success and square the £1.2 billion with the £9 billion. He knows as well as anybody that this is notoriously difficult territory, because Governments of all types are absolutely terrible at measuring outcomes. We have made a start—he might have had an opportunity to look at the research—by looking at seven exemplar authorities and extrapolating the findings to produce some financial analysis. To answer his questions, I think that it is only fair to have that audited independently. As he will know, we are due to have a very comprehensive audit of the programme.[42]

In their analysis of the £1.2 billion, Full Fact raised concerns about the quality of the figure:

> The £1.2 billion figure doesn't count the cost of the intervention, and it's based on a sample of families from just seven of the 152 local authorities taking part in the scheme.
>
> Most of the seven areas saved about £6,000 to £10,000 per family, but Salford saved £18,000 per family while Staffordshire saved £49,000 per family in the first year of the programme.
>
> If the other 145 local authorities are more like the £6,000 or £10,000 regions than Salford or Staffordshire, then the total savings will be much lower than the £1.2 billion figure.
>
> The department says that it thinks the estimate for savings is on the low side. Not all of the savings made are included (for example, they don't have an agreed cost for police call outs), and the councils reporting back didn't collect information on all the services where they could make savings.
>
> Some areas actually ended up spending more per family on things like social services and housing, so some of the services that they didn't have information on might have seen an increase in spending.[43]

The NAO raised concerns about how the figure of £1.2 billion of savings figure was calculated

The National Audit Office (NAO) also noted that the estimated figure did not take into account the non-intervention rate (that is, those who would have been 'turned around' anyway without the programme).[44]

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39 National Audit Office, *Programmes to help families facing multiple challenges*, 3 December 2013, HC 878 2013-14

40 'More than 105,000 troubled families turned around saving taxpayers an estimated £1.2bn', *DCLG press release*, 10 March 2015

41 DCLG, *The Benefits of the Troubled Families Programme to the Taxpayer*, March 2015

42 HC Deb 10 March 2015, c161

43 '£1.2 billion saved? The troubled families programme', *Full Fact*, 23 June 2015

44 National Audit Office, *Programmes to help families facing multiple challenges*, 3 December 2013, HC 878 2013-14

2.4 Independent evaluation of the programme

An independent, national evaluation of the first phase of the Troubled Families programme was published on 17 October 2016.

The report was originally intended to be published in late 2015, and the 2016 PAC report into the Troubled Families programme was very critical of this delay:

> **The Department for Communities and Local Government's delayed publication of the evaluation of the Troubled Families programme was unacceptable.**
>
> The Department for Communities and Local Government (the Department)'s evaluation of Troubled Families was originally due to be published in late 2015. However, the Department did not publish it until 17 October 2016, a year later. We requested the evaluation reports on 5 October 2016, but the Department did not provide them to us until they were published on 17 October, just two days before the evidence session. These delays and obfuscation have given a bad impression about the Department's willingness to be open.[45]

Impact evaluation

Through analysis of data from 56 local authorities, encompassing around 25% of the 117,910 participants, and through interviews with 495 families, the evaluation found little in the way of significant impact that could be attributed to the programme:

> Across a wide range of outcomes, covering the key objectives of the programme - employment, benefit receipt, school attendance, safeguarding and child welfare - we were unable to find consistent evidence that the Troubled Families Programme had any significant or systematic impact.
>
> That is to say, our analysis found no impact on these outcomes attributable to the programme 12 to 18 months after families joined the programme. The vast majority of impact estimates were statistically insignificant, with a very small number of positive or negative results.[46]

The evaluation found no consistent evidence that the Troubled Families programme had had any significant impact across its core objectives.

The only short-term outcome with statistically significant improvements attributable to the programme related to families reporting that they were managing well financially, or managing better than a year ago. However, there were no significant impacts on their self-reported levels of debt.[47]

Families which had taken part in the programme were also more likely to report knowing how to keep on the right track, being confident that their worst problems were behind them, and feeling positive about the future, when compared with a matched comparison group.[48]

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45 Committee of Public Accounts, *Troubled families: progress review*, 20 December 2016, HC 711 2016-17, recommendation 1

46 DCLG, *National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme: Final Synthesis Report*, October 2016, p49

47 *Ibid.*, p68

48 *Ibid.*, p68

The evaluation noted that the lack of any significant impact was not necessarily a contradiction with the figures showing 99% of families 'turned around' (see section 2.2). This is because the 99% of families are those who achieved set outcomes, whilst the evaluation analysed whether families would have achieved these outcomes in the absence of the Troubled Families programme existing. That is, above and beyond achieving them by themselves or through existing interventions by local authorities.

Concerns were raised in the evaluation about how the payment-by-results model failed to take this into account:

> Of course, deadweight is a normal feature of almost all social policy interventions, so in itself this is not a concern. However, the financial framework of the Troubled Families Programme had only limited mechanisms to avoid paying for results not attributable to the programme.
>
> […]
>
> The financial framework could have been significantly improved if it had followed the model of other programmes, which included a requirement to demonstrate that results were attributable to the programme.[49]

The evaluation did concede the possibility that the 12 and 18 month evaluation periods were too soon to provide firm conclusions, and recommended repeated analysis after 24 or 36 months.[50]

Differences in how the programme was implemented by different local authorities were also highlighted, and it was conceded that the programme may have had statistically significant impacts in some areas, balanced out by negative impacts in other areas:

> Averaging effects between local areas may therefore have influenced the impact results at a programme level - that is, in principle it is possible that positive impacts in some areas were obscured by negative impacts elsewhere, so average impacts were not significantly different from zero.[51]

The evaluation did find evidence of the programme transforming local authority services and system

Although there was no evidence of significant impact across the Troubled Families programme's core objectives, the evaluation did note other positives. These included:

- Raising the profile of family intervention nationally;
- Boosting local capacity for family intervention;
- Transforming local services and systems, at a time when most local authority budgets were undergoing retraction;
- Improving joint working with Jobcentre Plus at a local level.[52]

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49 *Ibid.*, p75
50 *Ibid.*, p83
51 *Ibid.*, p77
52 *Ibid.*, p68

Economic evaluation

Despite earlier claims by the Government that the programme had saved £1.2 billion (see section 2.3), the evaluation stated that it had not been possible to undertake a full Cost Benefit Analysis.[53]

The evaluation was unable to undertake any Cost Benefit Analysis of the Troubled Families programme

The report calculated an estimated fiscal benefit due to the gross reduction in services of around £7,050 per family per year (around £2.11 for every £1 spent). However, this did not consider what the results would have been in the absence of the programme, so fiscal benefits cannot necessarily be attributed to the programme.[54]

On 19 October 2016, in her evidence to PAC's inquiry into the programme, DCLG's Permanent Secretary Melanie Dawes, stated that "we are certainly not claiming any definitive cost savings from the programme."[55]

The final PAC report noted that there had been difficulties in building the cost savings calculator, as it had not always been possible to convince other agencies to release data needed by the DCLG, such as the number of police or ambulance callouts.[56]

Leaked final report, August 2016

On 8 August 2016, BBC Newsnight reported that it had seen a leaked copy of the final evaluation report, and claimed that the Government had had the final report since autumn 2015.

The copy seen by the BBC reportedly contained similar results to those in the final, published evaluation. Their report quoted a civil service source, which claimed that had the report been positive, it would have already been published. DCLG denied that the report had been suppressed, stating that:

> There were several strands to the evaluation work commissioned by the last government and there is not yet a final report. [57]

Melanie Dawes' subsequent evidence to the PAC inquiry in October 2016 stated that issues with the data provided and difficulties with the data analysis had delayed the publication from its original 2015 target, and the report had been published as soon as had been possible.[58]

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53 *Ibid.*, p10
54 DCLG, *Local Authority Data on the Cost and Potential Fiscal Benefits of the Troubled Families Programme*, October 2016, p4
55 Committee of Public Accounts, *Troubled families: progress review*, 20 December 2016, HC 711 2016-17, Q107
56 *Ibid.*, para 24
57 'Troubled Families report 'suppressed'', *BBC News*, 8 August 2016
58 Committee of Public Accounts, *Troubled families: progress review*, 20 December 2016, HC 711 2016-17, Qq37-48

3. Impact and outcomes – phase two

Summary

- DHCLG are required to report annually on the progress of the second phase of the programme and have committed to releasing additional data on a six-monthly basis.
- Phase two has a more longitudinal evaluation methodology than phase one. It will attempt to establish control groups in order to understand the net impact of the Troubled Families programme, although work in this area is not complete. Similarly, DHCLG hope to be able to provide a cost-benefit economic analysis by 2019-20.
- The first annual report (April 2017) showed 46% of the 400,000 families had been identified and entered onto the programme, with payment-by-results claims made for 13%
- The second annual report (March 2018) showed that over 70% of the 400,000 target families have been incorporated into the programme. Payment-by-result claims had risen to approximately 36% of these families.

3.1 Changes to the evaluation process

The 2016 PAC report on the Troubled Families programme criticised the design of the evaluation for phase one, noting that it was unable to directly attribute any significant impact on a range of key measures, despite receiving some evidence of good practice.

As a result, the Committee recommended that DCLG develop a more meaningful, longitudinal methodology for evaluating the impact of phase two, which should also include annual progress reports.[59]

Significant changes were made to the evaluation methodology for phase two of the programme

The Government's response to the Committee report agreed with this recommendation, and set out a number of changes to the evaluation process for phase two:

- regularly reporting throughout the lifetime of the programme and beyond to 2022;
- measuring over 60 outcome indicators across crime, education, employment, health, domestic abuse and child safeguarding;
- tracking outcomes for up to five years before and after intervention;
- ensuring all participating local authorities have committed to the collection and provision of good quality data;
- including rich qualitative information from local authorities and families describing how the
- programme is being delivered and how changes are experienced by families;
- a survey of over 1,000 families interviewed before and after intervention, capturing improvements in families circumstances;

[59] Committee of Public Accounts, *Troubled families: progress review*, 20 December 2016, HC 711 2016-17, recommendation 2

- regularly feeding back local findings to councils so they can review family progress, estimate cost-savings and make comparisons with similar councils; and
- establishment of an independent advisory group of leading academics to provide external support and scrutiny of the evaluation.[60]

DCLG was already required to report annually to Parliament on progress of phase two of the programme, under provisions set out in section 3 of the *Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016*. On top of this annual report, it has been the intention of DCLG since December 2017 to publish six monthly datasets. This is to better monitor trends "as they emerge". However not every dataset will be released every 6 months due to different cycles of data.[61]

The rest of this chapter will summarise the most salient findings of the reports published so far. The study of the Troubled Families programmes is being undertaken by Ipsos MORI and it incorporates four main elements:

- The Family Survey […] a quantitative longitudinal survey of families in receipt of help from the programme in nineteen local authorities
- The National Impact Study, where individuals in families being worked with by all local authorities are matched to data held by other government departments and outcomes tracked throughout the programme
- Annual staff surveys, online quantitative surveys of delivery staff (Troubled Family Co-ordinators, keyworkers/local practitioners and Troubled Family Employment Advisors (TFEAs))
- Qualitative research involving in-depth interviews with staff delivering the programme and families receiving services[62]

The evaluation for phase two will also include an economic evaluation, which provides a cost-benefit analysis. The analysis will be carried out automatically through the Troubled Families Information System:

1. Local authorities enter the costs of delivering their local interventions via an online information system. Using data collected through the National Impact Study and Family Progress Data the monetised costs families incur on the public sector and wider society (for example, through crime and truancy) is calculated, both before and after the intervention.

TF coordinators (TFCs) oversee a local authority's programme and bring services together.

TF keyworkers work alongside families to help them deal with their various needs. They act as a single point of contact.

TF employment advisors (TFEAs) are Jobcentre Plus specialists seconded to local authorities to provide advice to families.

60 HM Treasury, *Treasury Minutes: Government responses on the Committee of Public Accounts on the Twenty Sixth, the Twenty Seventh and the Twenty Ninth to the Thirty Fourth reports from Session 2016-17*, March 2017, para 2.3

61 Troubled Families Programme: Evaluation Overview Policy Report, DCLG, December 2017, p.4

62 National evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015 to 2020: family outcomes – family survey: part 1, Ipsos MORI/DCLG, p.3

> 2. The system uses the costs of delivering services and attaches unit costs to outcomes to allow local authorities to see how much they are spending on their services and the outcomes and benefits associated with this spend. It also estimates how much public money was saved for each pound spent on interventions, and reports the estimates back to local authorities through an online tool.[63]

No economic evaluation of the programme has yet been published

No public cost-benefit analysis is yet available, but the Government hopes that this will be possible by 2019/20.[64]

Researchers are attempting to identify appropriate control groups for the purposes of comparing data with individuals not involved in the TF programme. It is hoped that a more "robust comparison group" will make the impact of the TF programme clearer. [65]

Only the most recent annual report from 2018 has published comparative data based on a matched control group and this only considers the impact on children's social care. The December 2017 data release attempted to compare outcomes with an indicative unmatched comparison group. DCLG acknowledged that further study is required to establish whether "the comparison group data is not distorted by issues relating to selection or contamination (families in the comparison group receiving services similar to the Troubled Families Programme as a result of the programme's goal to drive wider local public service transformation)."[66] As a result, **comparisons "should not be interpreted as showing the net impact of the programme."**[67]

3.2 April 2017 – first annual report

In April 2017, the first annual report under the *Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016* was published. As well as summary of their progress so far, the Government released a number of documents:

- National evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015 to 2020: family outcomes – national and local datasets: part 1

  This report looks at the characteristics of families in the TF programme, matched to national and local datasets.

- National evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015 to 2020: service transformation – case study research: part 1

  These are the findings from interviews conducted with 48 families from eight of the nine local authorities participating in the survey and 79 troubled families staff in all nine authorities. The

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63 DCLG, *Supporting disadvantaged families – Troubled Families Programme 2015-2020: progress so far*, 4 April 2017, p62

64 Troubled Families Programme: Evaluation Overview Policy Report, DCLG, December 2017, p.8

65 Troubled Families Programme: Evaluation Overview Policy Report, DCLG, December 2017, p.8

66 Troubled Families Programme: Evaluation Overview Policy Report, DCLG, December 2017, p.8

67 National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015-2020, Family Outcomes – national and local datasets, DCLG, December 2017, p.6

interviews looked at delivery of the TF programme and how families received it.

- National evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015 to 2020: service transformation – staff survey: part 1

  This is an online survey of 118 Troubled Families Co-ordinators (TFCs), 1,360 Keyworkers and 194 Employment Advisors (TFEAs).

- National evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015 to 2020: family outcomes – family survey: part 1

  These are the results of interviews with 1760 families, looking at the characteristics of families in the TF programme and their experiences of services before entering the programme.

Household characteristics

The first annual report under the *Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016* included a family survey conducted by Ipsos MORI, across 19 local authorities. The same families will be interviewed again after 24 months to see what impact the programme is having or has had.

In the first family survey publication, the household characteristics of the families participating in the programme were explored:

- The mean household size of 'troubled families' (TF) was four, compared to 2.5 nationally;
- 56% of TF were one parent families, compared to 10% nationally;
- 82% of TF rented, compared to 29% nationally, although a higher proportion of TF renters were in social housing than non-TF renters;
- 29% of TF main carers are in employment, compared to 75% nationally;
- 57% of TF households are workless households (no-one aged 16 or over is currently working), compared to 16% nationally;
- With regards to benefits, 78% of TF households receive Child Tax Credit (10% nationally), 31% receive Income Support (3% nationally) and 23% receive Carer's Allowance (1% nationally);
- 21% of TF main carers said their health was good or excellent, compared to 51% nationally;
- 52% of TF main carers smoke, compared to 19% nationally;
- 25% of TF main carers left school with no formal qualification, compared to 8% nationally;
- 46% of TF households include at least one child with special educational needs, compared to 15% nationally.[68]

[68] Ipsos MORI, *National evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015-2020: family outcomes – family survey: part 1*, April 2017

Participation in the programme

The results published in the first phase two evaluation report show that nationally, of the 399,960 families funded up to 2020, 46% had been entered onto the Troubled Families programme by December 2016.

Almost half of the 400,000 families had already been identified and entered onto the programme by December 2016

As of 28 March 2017, local authorities had made claims for 13% of the 399,960 families. 17% of these claims were made for families achieving continuous employment, whilst 83% were for families achieving significant and sustained progress.

Data is also available at a local authority level and shows significant variations in performance and outcomes. Some noteworthy variations include:

- North Yorkshire has already entered 70% of its allocated families to 2020 onto its programme, whilst the figure for Derby is only 14%.
- North Yorkshire has also already submitted claims for 37% of its allocated families to 2020, whilst Dudley has only claimed for 1% of its allocated families.
- Of the 1,385 claims made by Essex, none of these have been on the basis of continuous employment. 100% have been for significant and sustained progress achievements.
- Other local authorities have relied more heavily on continuous employment. 100% of Wokingham's claims have been on the basis of continuous employment (although they have made only six claims), and 94% of Coventry's 264 claims have been on this basis.[69]

Service transformation

As well as surveying households to evaluate the impact of the programme on families, Ipsos MORI is also carrying out staff surveys as part of the evaluation process, to see if and how local authority service provision is being transformed.

This looks in detail at multi-agency working. 54% of Troubled Families keyworkers told the survey that they find it easy to get support from partner organisations, with 15% finding it difficult.

This also varied depending on the agency worked with. Key workers particularly noted that they would like more input from mental health services (almost 60% mentioned this service), housing services and adult services. 85% noted that waiting for health teams to diagnose problems was a barrier to effective partnership working.

62% of keyworkers use accredited programmes such as the DWP Working Programme, Family Nurse Partnerships and the Big Lottery Fund's Improving Futures as part of their support package.

Whilst 84% of keyworkers said they thought the Troubled Families programme was effective at achieving long-term positive change,

[69] DCLG, *Supporting disadvantaged families – Troubled Families Programme 2015-2020: progress so far*, 4 April 2017, p49-56

suggestions for improvement were also made. These included reduced workloads, less paperwork at the expense of contact with families and better data sharing between organisations.[70]

3.3 December 2017 – early findings in year two

Between May and December 2017, several additional reports had been published which continued in the same vein as the April 2017 release:

- National evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015 to 2020: family outcomes – national and local datasets: part 2

  This report looks at the characteristics of and outcomes for families within the TF programme between September 2014 and December 2016 and an indicative **unmatched** comparison group.

- National evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015 to 2020: service transformation – case studies research: part 2
- National evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015 to 2020: service transformation – Troubled Families coordinators staff survey: part 2
- National evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015 to 2020: service transformation – keyworkers staff survey: part 2
- National evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015 to 2020: service transformation – Troubled Families employment advisers staff survey: part 2

A Government overview of the above was also published in December 2017.

Household characteristics

The December 2017 release included information on Family Outcomes. Its 'key findings' when comparing the TF cohort with a comparison group were the following:

> - Children were eleven times more likely to be classified as a Child in Need […]
> - Adults and children were five times more likely to have a caution or conviction
> - Adults were five times more likely to be claiming benefits
> - Children were three times more likely to be persistently absent from school
>
> […]
>
> - One in three troubled families had a family member with a mental health issue
> - One in four troubled families had a family member affected by an incident of domestic abuse or violence[71]

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70 Ipsos MORI, *National evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015-2020: service transformation – staff survey: part 1*, April 2017

71 National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015-2020, Family Outcomes – national and local datasets, DCLG, December 2017, p.5

Employment advisors identified in their survey the main barriers to work faced by TF programme claimants:

- Mental health: 64%
- Childcare or caring responsibilities: 45%
- Health problem/disability: 33%
- Lack of confidence: 32%
- Lack of work experience: 29%
- Lack of motivation: 25%
- Lack of skills: 18%
- Low level qualifications: 17%
- Criminal record: 6%
- Language barriers: 6%
- Substance misuse: 5%
- Inability to travel/leave local area: 4%
- Learning disability/SEN: 2%
- Cultural barriers: 1%[72]

Keyworkers were asked in a survey what support they most commonly provide (at least once a week). The responses were as follows:

- Addressing parenting issues: 81%
- Addressing mental health difficulties: 62%
- Improving school attendance: 59%
- Encouraging use of local facilities/services: 56%
- Parenting support for pre-school children: 49%
- Keeping children in the family home: 47%
- Managing impact of domestic abuse: 47%
- Dealing with housing needs: 47%
- Managing debts or money: 46%
- Preventing involvement in crime/anti-social behaviour: 45%
- Helping with benefits: 38%
- Facilitating employment/training access: 36%
- Reducing alcohol consumption: 27%
- Providing practical support: 25%
- Reducing use of non-prescription drugs: 20%[73]

82 interviews with families involved in the programme between October 2015 and December 2016 revealed some of their characteristics and impressions of the TF programme. It was found that "families typically faced a number of persistent ongoing challenges" in,

- Financial and domestic management
- Housing problems
- Adult and child mental health problems, especially depression and anxiety[74]

In 'successful' cases, families appreciated 'whole family working' and having keyworkers as a single point of contact. Keyworkers helped to

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72 Troubled Families Programme National Evaluation: Research among Troubled Families Employment Advisers, Ipsos MORI/DCLG, May 2017, p.7

73 Troubled Families Programme National Evaluation: Research among Troubled Families Keyworkers, Ipsos MORI/DCLG, May 2017 p.17

74 National evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015 - 2020: Qualitative Case study research Phase 1 – 2015-2017, Ipsos MORI, November 2017, p.4

build trust, deal with practical issues, improve intra-family relationships and facilitate access to services. However some families were reticent about support, especially if compulsorily referred via social services.[75]

Family outcomes

Although outcomes of phase two were contrasted with a comparison group of families outside the TF programme, the comparison group is currently **unmatched,** which may mean that the two groups' characteristics may differ too greatly to render a comparison fair.[76]

These caveats withstanding, the early findings, according to the DCLG's summary,[77] suggest that:

- Since entering the TF programme, the TF cohort experienced a dip of 13% in the number of children classified as 'in need' when comparing their situation 6 and 12 months after their entry to the programme. In contrast, the percentage of children in the comparison group continued to rise.
- 12 months after entry to the TF programme, there was a 25.3% drop in police cautions and 10.4% drop in convictions amongst the TF group; the comparison group experienced a smaller reduction.
- School attendance figures seem to be more consistent with both groups, although time lags in data collection make interpretation difficult.
- Looking at the percentage of benefit claims, both groups (inside and outside the TF programme) experienced a small improvement in employment status.

In the survey of TF keyworkers, Ipsos MORI conclude the following:

> Keyworkers are supportive of the Troubled Families Programme approach: 78% say it is **effective at achieving long-term change in families' circumstances**. However, while positive, this level of support is actually lower than in 2015 (84%).
>
> Keyworkers also remain **positive about how the programme engages with families** in their area; assessments and family action plans are largely thought to take account of the whole family and keyworkers feel they are recognised as families' first port of call.[78]

Keyworkers also identify other improvements that could be made to lead to better outcomes, including flexibility over timescales and outcomes, more financial and physical resources, a shared database and reductions in caseloads.[79]

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75 National evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015 - 2020: Qualitative Case study research Phase 1 – 2015-2017, Ipsos MORI, November 2017, pp.4-5
76 Troubled Families Programme: Evaluation Overview Policy Report, DCLG, December 2017, p.6
77 Troubled Families Programme: Evaluation Overview Policy Report, DCLG, December 2017, pp.6-8
78 Troubled Families Programme National Evaluation: Research among Troubled Families Keyworkers, Ipsos MORI/DCLG, May 2017 p.37
79 Troubled Families Programme National Evaluation: Research among Troubled Families Keyworkers, Ipsos MORI/DCLG, May 2017 p.9

Amongst TF co-ordinators,

> **Troubled Families Co-ordinators continue to be supportive of the Troubled Families Programme and its key elements**: 93% say it is effective at achieving whole family working, 76% in achieving long-term positive change in families' circumstances, and 74% believe it is implementing wider system reform/service transformation.
>
> […]
>
> **TFCs are confident in achieving most of the programme's goals**, although they are less positive about achieving progress with their target number of families; a significant decline from 2015 (60% likely compared with 76% previously).[80]

Service transformation

Following interviews with recipient families and staff involved in the TF programme, DCLG believes that,

- The programme is driving service transformation in local authorities; changing structures and processes, strengthening partnership working and promoting 'whole-family' working.
- Troubled Families Co-ordinators […] are providing effective leadership and improving multi-agency working.
- Families have appreciated the way family keyworkers took time to understand the family, build relationships and trust.
- There is work to do to improve engagement between Local Authorities and the voluntary and community sector including ensuring that once families exit the programme, they are plugged into the right services locally so that the positive outcomes that they have achieved are sustained.[81]

Ipsos MORI find, in their survey of TFCs, that

> TFCs are generally **satisfied with the commissioning process** in their LA. Most are satisfied that it is based on an assessment of local needs and what works in practice (both 72%). However, they are slightly less satisfied that it is based on comprehensive and reliable data and that there is appropriate input from a range of agencies (62% and 58% satisfied).
>
> **Local authorities appear to be making progress with transforming the way services work with families with complex needs**, but results suggest that this model needs further development. For example, while 44% strongly agree that senior leaders are ensuring a focus on services that best meet families' needs, fewer strongly agree that; strong governance arrangements are in place to manage demand and deliver value for money (18%); evidence and analysis of demand informs commissioning of services (14%); or that local agencies have a common purpose (8%).
>
> Having said that most TFCs do feel that **service transformation values are communicated well and that staff are taking**

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80 Troubled Families Programme National Evaluation: Research among Troubled Families Co-ordinators, Ipsos MORI and DCLG, May 2017

81 Troubled Families Programme: Evaluation Overview Policy Report, DCLG, December 2017, p.5

> **ownership**. In addition, there is evidence that the **programme is effecting wider system change**, for example 63% say it is has influenced their LA's approach to commissioning services more widely.[82]

Employment advisors, it is reported, are highly supportive of the TF programme and their role within it, and most believe they have the time and support required to carry out their work effectively.[83] TFEAs work with a number of local services and there is a keenness to work further with housing services, mental health services, adult and community services, schools and health and social care.[84] There is a desire for better support from partner organisations and data sharing.[85]

Summarising their findings from the survey of keyworkers, Ipsos MORI finds the following:

> Keyworkers feel that **multi-agency working directly contributes to the success of the programme**; 96% say it contributes to the effectiveness of the local programme and 92% that it encourages effective input from all agencies related to each case.
>
> However, there is some evidence that keyworkers are **finding it more difficult to get the support they need from partners** when delivering solutions for families; 20% say it is difficult compared with 15% in 2015. Housing and particularly mental health stand out as the services they would like more input from.[86]

Their report finds that 66% of keyworkers think the programme is fairly/very effective in "achieving long term positive system change within their local authority." 27% think it fairly/very ineffective.[87]

Interviews with 109 stakeholders/staff and 18 keyworkers between October 2015 and December 2016 also suggested that,

- There had been improvements in 'multi-agency working' in local authorities, usually 'catalysed and sustained' via the Troubled Families Co-ordinator, and supported by better joint-agency communications approaches.
- "centralised databases for collating information were key tools for the programme" and investing in "early intervention and data sharing systems" have been helpful
- There is scope for improving links with the voluntary sector; so far engagement is at an 'early stage'

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82 Troubled Families Programme National Evaluation: Research among Troubled Families Co-ordinators, Ipsos MORI and DCLG, May 2017
83 Troubled Families Programme National Evaluation: Research among Troubled Families Employment Advisers, Ipsos MORI/DCLG, May 2017 pp.31-2
84 Troubled Families Programme National Evaluation: Research among Troubled Families Employment Advisers, Ipsos MORI/DCLG, May 2017 p.26
85 Troubled Families Programme National Evaluation: Research among Troubled Families Employment Advisers, Ipsos MORI/DCLG, May 2017 pp.28-9
86 Troubled Families Programme National Evaluation: Research among Troubled Families Keyworkers, Ipsos MORI/DCLG, May 2017 p.37
87 Troubled Families Programme National Evaluation: Research among Troubled Families Keyworkers, Ipsos MORI/DCLG, May 2017 p.6

- It is difficult for Troubled Families Co-ordinators to plan finances due to a lack of knowledge about funding post-2020.[88]

3.4 March 2018

In March 2018, the Government published its Annual Report of the Troubled Families Programme, along with part 3 of the Family outcomes datasets.

Participation in the programme

According to the 2018 Annual Report, 289,809 families had been brought into the programme which represents over 70% of the 399,960 families targeted in phase two. 92,245 had achieved 'significant and sustained progress' and 13,907 had achieved 'continuous employment'; in March 2017, the numbers had been 44,000 and 9,100 respectively.[89]

The report also details family enrolment at a local level, compared to the maximum number of families targeted by the TF programme. As was the case in the first annual report, rates at which families have been incorporated into the TF programme vary greatly between areas. The percentage of Payment-by-Result claims also differ. More details can be seen on pages 43-48 of the report.

Family outcomes

The 2018 Annual Report states that it has been possible to create a **matched comparison group** for outcomes relating to children's social care. These are preliminary results that only consider the 'early impact' of the programme, and only use data from a fifth of the upper tier local authorities that administer the TF programme.[90] The authors found reduced demand on children's services which may be attributable to the TF programme:

> This analysis showed that in the six to 12 months period after intervention, compared to the comparison group:
>
> - a significantly smaller proportion of children on the programme were classed as children in need (a 3.9 percentage point difference, a statistically significant difference)
> - a smaller proportion of children on the programme had been continuously looked after (a 0.6 percentage point difference, a statistically significant difference)

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88 National evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015 - 2020: Qualitative Case study research Phase 1 – 2015-2017, Ipsos MORI, November 2017, p.3

89 Supporting disadvantaged families: annual report of the Troubled Families Programme 2017 to 2018, MHCLG, March 2018, p.8.

90 National evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015 to 2020: family outcomes - national and local datasets: part 3, MHCLG, March 2018, p.10-11

- a slightly higher proportion of children on the programme were subject to a child protection plan (a 0.3 percentage point difference, no statistically significant difference).[91]

The Government therefore suggests that "the Troubled Families programme appears to have reduced demand for costly children's services compared to what would have happened if programme interventions had not taken place."[92]

91 National evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015 to 2020: family outcomes - national and local datasets: part 3, MHCLG, March 2018, p.5
92 Supporting disadvantaged families: annual report of the Troubled Families Programme 2017 to 2018, MHCLG, March 2018, pp13-15

4. Similar programmes

4.1 Respect programme (2006-2010)

As part of the previous Labour Government's approach to tackling anti-social behaviour, 2006 saw the launch of the Respect programme. Following six local authority pilot schemes, the programme included family intervention projects (FIPs), which would:

> Take a new approach to tackle the behaviour of 'problem families' by challenging them to accept support to change their behaviour, backed up by enforcement measures.[93]

The Respect family intervention projects also focused on families with multiple problems

The policy was part of a change in policy emphasis on anti-social behaviour, moving from investment in deprived areas to a more targeted focus on so-called 'problem families'.[94]

Similar to the Troubled Families programme, Respect allocated a key worker to co-ordinate with the family and multiple services, and to offer a single point of contact. However, unlike Troubled Families, there was a focus on sanctions for those who did not sufficiently engage with the programme.

There were a number of similarities with the Troubled Families programme, including personnel. The Respect Task Force was led by Louise Casey, who was also in charge of the Troubled Families Unit in DCLG between 2011 and 2015.

Additionally, like the Troubled Families programme, the Government's analysis argued that the programme was extremely successful, with significant reductions in anti-social behaviour, truancy and housing enforcement actions.[95] Critics similarly argued that poor families were misrepresented as 'problem families' and that the statistical basis for the high success rate was questionable.[96]

In his response to Eric Pickles' March 2015 statement on the Troubled Families Programme, the then Shadow Communities Secretary Hilary Benn argued that the programme could be directly traced back to the Respect programme:

> We on the Opposition Benches support this important work. As the Secretary of State has generously acknowledged, the previous Labour Government started the family intervention project, and a future Labour Government would want to see this work continue and go from strength to strength.[97]

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93 Home Office, *Respect Action Plan*, 10 January 2006
94 'I got it wrong on problem families, admits Blair', *The Telegraph*, 28 April 2007
95 Department for Children, Schools and Families, *Anti-social behaviour family intervention projects: monitoring and evaluation*, November 2009
96 CCJS, *Family intervention projects: a classic case of policy-based evidence*, June 2010
97 HC Deb 10 March 2015, c159

4.2 Families with Multiple Problems programme (2011-2015)

The Families with Multiple Problems programme was launched in December 2011 and funded under the 2007-2013 European Social Fund, with the DWP acting as one of the co-financing organisations. £200 million was provided for the programme from the DWP's budget.

It sought to work with families that faced multiple barriers to work, and the coordinator role could either be carried out by local authorities or private providers. The DWP set a target that 22% of those joining the programme would have moved into employment by March 2015.

The final outcomes data was published in October 2015, which showed that 9,130 out of 79,130 participants moved into sustainable employment, with 3,550 employment outcomes achieved from March 2015 onwards. The DWP calculated the overall job outcome rate for all participants, 18 months after joining the programme, as 11.8%.[98]

The NAO highlighted concerns about the performance of private contractors in the programme, noting that none met their target for number of families to work with (attachments), with the best performing reaching 74% of the target, and the worst performing reaching only 7%.[99]

The Public and Commercial Services trade union argued that the contracted private companies were "proving themselves incapable of providing the kind of complex, dedicated support necessary".[100] However, although some local authorities performed better, with one reaching 270% of its attachment target, 105 authorities did not meet the target set for them by the DWP by December 2013.

Relationship to the Troubled Families programme

The DWP programme launched in the same year as Troubled Families, with many of the same objectives

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) looked at the DWP programme and the DCLG programme together in its 2014 report, *Programmes to help families facing multiple challenges*.

The PAC report was critical that the two programmes had both been launched in the same year, targeting similar families and both offering payment-by-results, with little coordination or joint governance arrangements between DWP and DCLG:

> The integration of the programmes at the design phase was poor, leading to confusion, and contributing to the low number of referrals to the DWP's programme.[101]

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98 DWP, *ESF Support for Families with Multiple Problems – December 2011 to August 2015*, October 2015

99 National Audit Office, *Programmes to help families facing multiple challenges*, 3 December 2013, HC 878 2013-14

100 ''Catastrophic' back-to-work scheme for families gets just 720 people back to work - out of 88,000', *Mirror*, 3 December 2013

101 Public Accounts Committee, *Programmes to help families facing multiple challenges*, 24 March 2014, HC 688 2013-14

The Departments told PAC that this was because it was decided that both programmes were to be rolled out as quickly as possible, then ensuring they were joined up later. Some coordination took place after both programmes had been launched, such as the secondment of 150 Jobcentre Plus advisers to local authorities' Troubled Families teams.

The similarity in some of the outcomes can be seen in the payment-by-results criteria for phase one of the Troubled Families programme (see section 1.2). Local authorities cannot receive payment for getting families into work if they are attached to the DWP/ ESF programme, to avoid double payment.

5. Devolution of the Troubled Families programme

Greater Manchester is so far the only combined authority to secure devolution of the Troubled Families programme

As part of the Government's devolution agenda, combined authorities in some areas have chosen to negotiate control over local Troubled Families programmes. So far, only Greater Manchester's devolution deal has done so:

> The government now commits to support Greater Manchester to establish a Life Chances Investment Fund from April 2017, on the basis of a jointly agreed business plan. The government will enable Greater Manchester to bring together funding from the following budget lines into a single pot:
>
> a. Troubled Families Programme, including the service transformation grant and payment by results allocation for Greater Manchester;
>
> b. Working Well pilot; and
>
> c. Cabinet Office Life Chances Fund
>
> […]
>
> This commitment is subject to agreement of an appropriate outcomes framework and governance arrangements, and fulfilment of DCLG performance and evaluation requirements in respect of the Troubled Families programme.[102]

Whilst DCLG will retain oversight of the programme, the ten Greater Manchester boroughs will be able to pool their Troubled Families funding. The combined authority has a history of pooling its Troubled Families budgets, being only one of two combined council areas among the 16 total council areas participating in the 2011 Community Budgets pilot (see section 1.1).

Greater Manchester's programme will also incorporate elements of the community budget model, pooling funds from two other related funding streams:

> Government and Greater Manchester will jointly establish a Life Chances Investment Fund from April 2017, aligning funding from the Troubled Families Programme, the Working Well pilot and the Cabinet Office Life Chances Fund with local resources to increase investment in innovative approaches to delivering public resources.[103]

More information can be found in the Commons Library briefing paper, *Devolution to Local Government in England*.[104]

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[102] HM Treasury, *Further Devolution to Greater Manchester Combined Authority*, 16 March 2016

[103] Greater Manchester Combined Authority, *Budget Announcement: further devolution to Greater Manchester*, 18 March 2016

[104] House of Commons Library, *Devolution to Local Government in England*, SN07029, 23 November 2016

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