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19 June 2014
Your reference:
Our reference: FOI 2014-0425

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - DISCLOSURE

The council has completed its search relating to your request for information about troubled families, which we received on 13 May 2014.

The council holds information within the definition of your request.

Questions

- 1 Is Domestic Violence a local criterion for inclusion of families in the Troubled Families Programme?
- 2 Has any assessment been made of the incidence of domestic violence within families involved with the Troubled Families Programme?
- 3 What percentage of families in the Troubled Families do you estimate have incidence of domestic violence?
- 4 What estimates have been made of incidence of wider violence within families involved with the Troubled Families Programme?
- 5 Is there a named, dedicated worker for each family involved with the Troubled Families Programme?
- 6 How many families within the Troubled Families Programme does each dedicated, named key worker have?
- 7 Does the local authority use a contract-based approach between the key worker and the family?
- 8 Does the council monitor the number of families re-entering the Troubled Families Programme?
- 9 How many of the “turned around families” who exited the Troubled Families Programme currently match the criteria of eligibility for the Troubled Families Programme? And if there are any, have they re-entered the programme?
- 10 To whom does the council report the number of families re-entering the Troubled Families Programme to?
- 11 Are members made aware of statistics on re-entry to the Troubled Families Programme?
- 12 Please provide any data or reports regarding re-entry to the Troubled Families Programme?
- 13 What savings, across all services, do you anticipate resulting from a family successfully exiting the Troubled Families Programme? In which budget would savings accrue? How will such savings be accounted for?

Answers

- 1 Cumbria’s Troubled Families programme is known as “Focus Family” and in order to ensure we support the right families we have made the local discretionary criteria as wide as possible whilst still targeting issues that are a high cost to the public purse.
- 2 The Focus Family team are working to progress recording methods so intelligence on all local discretionary criteria is improved, this includes domestic violence. As the local discretionary criteria are not rewarded through payment by results there is a need to find a balance between recording and storing sensitive information and protecting the rights of individuals.

3 It is estimated that at least 20% of families known to be eligible for Focus Family support reach the MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) threshold. Due to the hidden nature of domestic violence and abuse it is difficult to state with accuracy the number of families who live with domestic violence/ abuse. However, at the point of referral approximately 75% of the families are known to live with domestic violence/abuse.

4 This is similar to a previous response in that the Focus Family team are working to improve intelligence on the levels of violence within the family without breaking legislation such as the data protection act.

5 Every family allocated through the monthly allocation meetings has a lead worker. This person can be from a range of partner agencies, including the enhanced Children's Centres contracts.

6 As the lead workers come from a range of organisations it is not possible to state their workload. The additional contracts in Children's Centres were specifically to enhance the workforce of key workers. In line with national recommendations these workers have a case load that is directly related to the level of need within the families. Therefore, a key worker working with families at the "intensive" level of need would have a case load of up to 5 families; the "Light" level of need would have a caseload of up to 15 families. Workers with "Superlight" families would be expected to also carry on with existing duties.

7 As previously stated, due to the wide range of partners working with the families we have not specified details of whether contracts should be used. Some partners routinely use this approach whilst others will be following statutory practice. In order to assess the family's needs we advocate that every family not in receipt of a statutory assessment must have an early help assessment/ common assessment framework (CAF).

8 The Focus Family team keep a comprehensive record of families identified, allocated and any claims for successful outcomes. This would be used to check if any newly nominated families have previously received support.

9 To date, we have not received any re-referrals for families where a successful claim has been made. According to the terms of the Department for Communities and Local Government publication "The Troubled Families Programme: Financial Framework", a claim for payment by results can only be made when a family has demonstrated a sustained reduction in their offending alongside a sustained improvement in their school attendance. The ethos of the work is that although families may have improved their circumstances enough to meet criteria for the payment by results work will continue as long as necessary to ensure the family is able to embed their new behaviours and skills. Therefore, families who may still have very low levels of offending or truancy are still in receipt of services.

10 To date, the Focus Family team have not been asked to specifically report this information to any department on a regular basis. There are regular updates to the Children's Services leadership team, national Troubled Families team, local committees and partner organisations. If the Focus Family team were to receive re-referrals it would be reported through existing channels as part of any updates.

11 As there have not yet been any re-entries to the programme there has not been a need to report this. In future this could be made more explicit in reports to members.

12 There have not yet been any families re-entering the programme.

13 The national Troubled Families team have released a cost benefit analysis tool, which some local authorities have piloted. Once this is fully utilised in Cumbria we will be able to produce accurate figures for Cumbrian services.

The Department for Communities and Local Government report "The Cost of Troubled Families" reports on early cost-benefits analysis work in a handful of local authorities. Rural authorities most like Cumbria, such as West Cheshire, estimate that the average family costs around £7,795 in universal services provided by the local authority alone. In contrast, their average troubled family costs an estimated £76,190 through accessing targeted and specialist services. Through the Troubled Family work they expect to reduce the demand on these services and make savings of £20,000 per year on each troubled family, therefore this would cost them approximately £56,000 pa.

Savings would be made across all budgets and in many cases the savings would accrue directly to each budget. For example, successful work to reduce incidents of domestic violence would result in savings to the Police through reduced Police call outs, time taken to arrest and process offenders and costs to victim support. It could be reasonably expected that the same family presented at A & E with injuries as well as their GP with mental ill health difficulties. Again, these reductions would accrue to the relevant budgets.

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Yours sincerely,

Claire Park
Team Leader – Corporate Complaints and Information Compliance

Internal Reviews

If you are dissatisfied with the way we have responded to your request or wish us to reconsider our decision, please write to:

Corporate Complaints and Information Compliance
Resources Directorate
Cumbria County Council, The Lonsdale Building, The Courts, Carlisle, CA3 8NA
E-mail: foi-dp@cumbria.gov.uk Fax: 01228 226706

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