

Meeting of the Cabinet – 8th February 2012

Central Government Initiative; Troubled Families

Report of the Acting Director of Children’s Services

Purpose of Report

1. To brief Cabinet about the background to the Department for Communities and Local Government initiative regarding the most troubled families in local communities and to determine Dudley’s response

Background

2. In December the Prime Minister, alongside the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles, announced resources totalling £448m over the next three years for this programme. Government research has shown that there are at least 120,000 families fitting the description of a “troubled family” in England. These are families experiencing multiple problems and disadvantages, such as worklessness, truancy, drug and alcohol addiction and also causing problems such as anti-social behaviour. New analysis shows that these families are a significant drain on the public purse, costing us all over £9bn a year (on average, £75,000 per family per year) and most of this bill falls to local authorities.
3. The Department for Communities and Local Government estimates that there are 740 such troubled families in Dudley who generate an estimated cost to the taxpayer of £55.5m. The government is offering every local authority in England funding of £100,000 per annum for 3 years from 2012/13 to appoint a person, or sometimes people, at a sufficiently senior level who can be dedicated to coordinating and managing our local programme of action. The government expects most coordinators to be employees of a local authority. However, alternative arrangements with other local partners (e.g. the Police, the NHS, JobCentre Plus) may be agreed at a local level in consultation with the Troubled Families Team. Coordinators are expected to be in post by April 2012.
4. Part of the role of those appointed will be to formulate the business case needed to underpin local resource commitments from within our own budgets and from other local partners – i.e. making the case for 60% investment required to match the 40% offered by the Troubled Families Team in Central Government.
5. It is important to note that the government says that “the £448m programme budget will be payable when local authorities and their partners achieve success with families.” This initiative is a very important and “high profile”

element of government policy. Local authorities and other public agencies will be subject to considerable scrutiny of their engagement in this work and the effectiveness of their interventions. Without the resources that are being offered by the Department for Communities and Local Government Dudley will find it difficult to manage and coordinate the work that will be necessary, to achieve the desired outcomes with troubled families, or to achieve the expected financial benefits.

Law

6. Although not a statutory requirement, it is being made very clear that the Government expects local authorities to comply with these measures and is making available £100,000 per annum for three years.

Finance

7. The correspondence from the Department for Communities and Local Government identifies three strands of funding for this programme:
 - £20k will be available in 2011/12, to be spent in 2011/12, to facilitate the deployment of either senior level internal resources or the purchasing of external advice and expertise to prepare for the introduction of these new arrangements;
 - £100k per annum for three years commencing 2012/13 to fund the employment costs of coordinators;
 - The remainder of the funding available nationally is to be offered to local authorities at up to 40% of the cost of interventions, payable on the achievement of successful outcomes. Therefore, the LA and partners are committed to match fund at least 60%.

Equality Impact

8. The proposals in this report are consistent with the Council's Policy on Equality and Diversity. It is expected that if this initiative goes ahead in Dudley, the associated work will be of considerable benefit to groups with protected characteristics and many other vulnerable groups of children, young people and adults.

Recommendation

9. It is recommended that Cabinet gives consideration to this report and approves the full engagement of the borough in this initiative.



.....
Jane Porter
Acting Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Ian McGuff
Telephone: 01384 814387
Email: ian.mcguff@dudley.gov.uk

List of Background Papers

Troubled Families – Prime Minister’s announcement
Troubled Families – Initial Plans