

County Durham Think Family Strategy

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INTRODUCTION

‘Strong families help build strong communities, so they are crucial for a successful society’. *(Think Family Toolkit 2009)*

Families are the building blocks of our communities. As well as providing for the current generation, families bring up the children who will be the future of County Durham.

In the majority of cases, families provide the positive nurturing, learning and care needed to enable children to lead healthy and happy lives. Good parenting leads to improved attainment, resilience, healthy lifestyles, confidence and feelings of self worth. Through the provision of effective universal services such as GP and other community health services, good child care, nursery and school education, play areas, transport services and so on, most families will flourish.

Some families however, need extra support. Too often cycles of intergenerational disadvantage can become established in families. For example, research shows us that:

- 63% of boys with convicted fathers go on to be convicted themselves;
- 61% of children in workless homes live in poverty;
- 60% of children in lowest reading attainment groups have parents with low literacy and;
- Parental alcohol misuse is a factor in over 50% of all child protection cases in the UK.

Young people’s problematic behaviour in school and the community has traditionally been treated as a child-specific issue, rather than one caused by unmet parental need, or broader social circumstances, such as housing.

It is well understood that a small number of families require a disproportionate amount of support. In the case of families facing multiple challenges, they often receive services from several or more separate services in response to a range of needs. This strategy focuses specifically on the needs of these families.

WHAT IS THINK FAMILY?

'Thinking Family' means taking a broader view by ensuring that both parents **and** children are able to get the support they need, at the right time, to help their children achieve good outcomes. It means making sure that families receive integrated, co-ordinated, multi-agency, solution focused support. By identifying problems early, all services can work closely together to help prevent a family's needs escalating and requiring more intensive intervention.

It is recognised that where families have multiple and complex needs, services have traditionally operated in isolation of each other and have lacked coordination. In many cases, services have offered support to family members as individuals, ignoring the impact that the individual can have on other members of the family group. Children's Services have traditionally focussed on the needs of the child, ignoring that the causes of these difficulties may lie within the family. Adult health services and social care services have traditionally on the individual's needs, ignoring the impact these can have on their dependents.

This Strategy proposes working across these traditional age-related service boundaries to "Think Family". In taking an integrated approach, we will meet needs in a more effective and efficient way.

A MORE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE WAY OF DELIVERING SERVICES

Intensive, whole family approaches, working across Adult, Children's and Health Services to provide joined up, coherent support to the whole family have been piloted. They are designed to provide seamless support to families.

There have been numerous Think Family projects in County Durham over the last few years, set up as pilots under government grants. These projects aim to strike a balance between appropriate, intensive support to members of the family whilst challenging and changing risky behaviour. These include the Anti-Social Behaviour

Family Intervention projects (ASB FIPs), the Family Pathfinder Teams, the Youth Crime Action plan Family Intervention Projects (YCAPFIP), the Parenting Early Intervention Project (PEIP) and the Respect Practitioners. The projects could overlap and operate in isolation of each other, despite being focused on similar challenges and sharing similar aims.

In County Durham we have been determined that this would not happen, and have therefore set out to work together to make best use of our collective resources.

Most funding for these projects is continuing despite public spending reductions, indicating continuing support for the approach despite a change of government, and there is an increasing body of evidence to support the effectiveness and efficiency of the Think Family approach.

A MORE EFFECTIVE WAY OF DELIVERING SERVICES

A national evaluation of Family Intervention Projects, published in 2010 showed that there was on average a:

- 47% reduction in the number of families experiencing risks associated with poor family functioning, including poor parenting, marriage, relationship & family breakdown, domestic violence or child protection issues;
- 47% reduction in the number of families involved in anti-social behaviour and crime;
- 34% reduction in the number of families with health issues including mental or physical health and drug or alcohol problems
- 34% reduction in the number of families with education and employment issues.¹

Evidence from national research into Think Family projects in general revealed a number of promising findings including:

- 50% reduction in anti-social behaviour.
- 70% reduction in family violence

¹ Monitoring and evaluation of Family Intervention Projects to march 2010 , Department for Education and Skills

- 23-51% improvement in financial stability ²

Locally, research into the impact of the Durham Pathfinder project has identified the following family impacts³:

- 71%(25) of families recorded an increase in the number of resilience and protective factors;
- 58%(20) of families had family debt concerns removed;
- 86%(30) of families with violence concerns had these concerns removed on exit;
- 57%(17) of families with overcrowding/poor living conditions had improvements on exit.

COST AND EFFICIENCY

The cost of failing to address these concerns to society and to agencies is immense. For example, the cost of a single child in care costs on average £25,000 p.a. for Foster care and £125,000 per year for residential care. There are currently over 450 children in care in County Durham. Total impact costs of an imprisoned parent have been estimated at over £50,000 p.a.

Social costs are also high. Community cohesion can suffer where family needs remain unmet. The costs of crime, anti-social behaviour, domestic violence and other such issues are felt by individuals, families and communities and ultimately impact on the wellbeing of all.

‘Think Family: Improving the life chances of families at risk’ (January 2007) focussed on vulnerable families and those at risk, particularly noting that where parental problems were not addressed, this could have a detrimental and enduring impact not only on the parent but also on their children.

A ‘Think Family’ approach seeks to provide early intervention to help families avoid reaching crisis point where problems may be more entrenched, as well as harder and more expensive to resolve.

² Redesigning Provision for Families with Multiple Problems: an assessment of the early impact of local approaches, York Consulting, Oct 2010

³ Durham Pathfinder costs and benefits: A social return on investment approach York Consulting 201

DfE research suggests that for every £1 million invested in family intervention, £2.5 million of cost to local authorities and the state is avoided.⁴

Preliminary findings suggest family interventions generate net programme benefits. This emerged from an initial Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis of 53 families immediately on exit from Pathfinder support across England.

Preliminary findings from the Durham Pathfinder area suggest that family interventions generate net programme benefits. £420,000 of family intervention costs is estimated to generate potential family outcome avoidance savings of £1 million; a net benefit saving of £664,000.⁵

It should be noted however, that some of these benefits are not “cashable” and represent social benefit rather than benefit to any agency. Nevertheless, this is a significant efficiency. A more critical review of the projects was published post-general election in 2010, which suggested that the effects and savings may be smaller scale than previously proposed, but confirmed that positive results were evident.⁶

It is not suggested that Think Family is a panacea for all social ills; intensive specialist support for some families will always be necessary. However Think Family offers an evidence based model that has been shown to produce better outcomes and is more efficient.

⁴ Redesigning Provision for Families with Multiple Problems: an assessment of the early impact of local approaches, York Consulting, Oct 2010.

⁵ Durham Pathfinder costs and benefits: A social return on INVESTMENT APPROACH: York Consulting 2010

⁶ Family Intervention Projects: a classic case of policy based evidence: Centre for Crime and Justice studies 2010.

LINKS TO OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND PLANS

The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) is the overarching strategic plan for County Durham and takes into account all other key plans and strategies. The SCS outlines the vision for an Altogether Better Durham and how the local authority and its partners will achieve this vision by 2030. It sets the direction and provides the context for all partners working to improve quality of life in County Durham.

By 2030, County Durham will be a place where people of all ages and circumstances have their needs met, whether material, social or spiritual. As a result it will be a place where people choose to live, work, visit, invest and relax. It will also be a place where social, economic and environmental resources are managed in ways that do not compromise the quality of life for future generations or people in the wider world. The physical structure of towns and villages, the location of housing, jobs, shopping and leisure facilities, the design of buildings and the transport links will be managed and will create more opportunities for local people.

By 2030, County Durham will be a place where deprivation is tackled wherever it exists and gaps in life chances are narrowed. It will be a place where there is equality between different sections of the community as well as between County Durham and the rest of the region and the country by ensuring that our residents and communities have the skills and support they need to achieve their goals and improve their life chances.

The Think Family strategy sets out how the partners of County Durham will work together to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, challenged and challenging families in the County. By working together, partners will create a coherent system of support to the whole family, with benefits across the strategic agenda.

The Durham County Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee completed a review of Think Family in 2010. Their recommendations propose:

- The Development of a Think Family Commissioning Strategy for County Durham.

- Integration of systems, procedures and practices across services to Think Family.
- Understanding local need to ensure services are responsive and inclusive.
- The need to embrace cultural change across service groupings.
- Further work to assess the impact of Sure Start Children's Centres.

This strategy responds to these recommendations.

The challenge of establishing the Think Family approach should not be underestimated. It requires significant cultural change, system and service reform and workforce development. This will require strong leadership and commitment. The council is determined to lead by example and ensure the active involvement of its partners through the County Durham Partnership.

THE COUNTY DURHAM PARTNERSHIP AND THINK FAMILY: GOVERNANCE

Durham County Council and partners are committed to working together to meet the needs of families who are themselves challenged and who in turn can challenge our communities. Think Family touches on the priorities of several thematic groups of the County Durham Partnership and so requires a joined- up response at strategic as well as operational level.

A 'Think Family Board has been established across the County Durham Partnership to coordinate this activity and to provide senior leadership to practitioners in all services. Membership is drawn from a broad range of agencies and services:

- Durham County Council Children and Young People's Services
- Durham County Council Adult Wellbeing and Health Services
- Durham County Council Housing Services
- Durham County Council Regeneration and Economic Development Service
- Durham County Council Partnerships and Community Engagement
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valley Trust (TEWV)

- County Durham Primary Care Trust
- County Durham Constabulary
- Job Centre Plus

Board members represent services responsible for the commissioning and provision of services to adults, children and to communities and are well placed to provide the necessary direction. The breadth of membership indicates the relevance of Think Family to partners and signals our collective commitment to the approach.

Figure 1, sets out the Governance framework for the delivery against the strategy

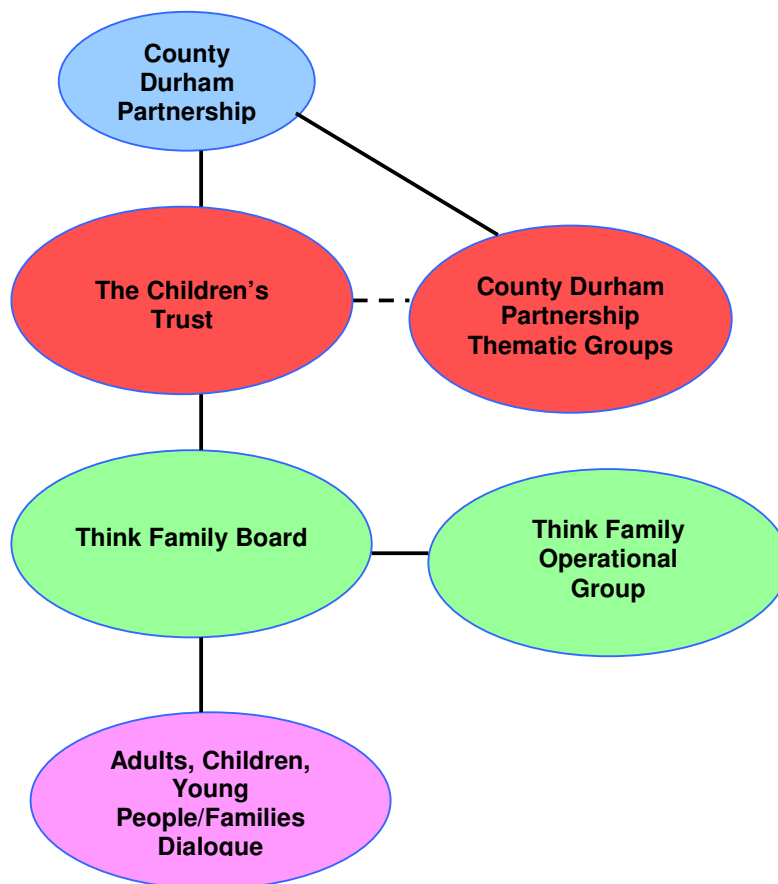


Figure 1

The Think Family Board will coordinate and drive this strategy and action plan. They will provide regular reports to The Children's Trust and to the County Durham Partnership who will retain overall accountability for its successful implementation.

THINK FAMILY STRATEGY – 6 KEY OBJECTIVES:

Our strategy is made up of 6 Key Objectives which we commit to deliver on over the next 3 years.

These Key Objectives are outlined below and describe our commissioning intentions (what we will do) to ensure that progress is made.

Key Objective 1	Strategic Leadership All agencies will put children, young people and families at the heart of what they do.
Key Objective 2	Network of support We will provide a coordinated network of support services that will identify family needs and intervene early.
Key Objective 3	Services for the most vulnerable families We will provide more intensive support to those families who need it.
Key Objective 4	Involving Families We will engage with families to develop the most effective forms of service .
Key Objective 5	Economic wellbeing We will tackle child and family poverty.
Key Objective 6	Value for Money We will ensure that the services provide value for money and are effective.

KEY OBJECTIVE 1:

All agencies will work together to “Think Family”.

Durham County Council and its partners’ will provide the strategic leadership required to deliver the Think Family strategy. On behalf of the County Durham Partnership, the Think Family Board will ensure that partners work together to ensure that needs are identified, that information is shared and that suitable plans are developed with family members to meet their needs.

Issues identified by single services may not appear significant on their own, but when put together with those seen by other agencies, may indicate need for support or intervention. For these patterns to be “spotted”, agencies need to share information earlier and work together. Senior leaders must create the conditions for this change of culture and practice to happen and adopt single processes to support effective joint working.

What we will do.....

No.	We will.....	Who Will do it....
1	Bring partners together in the Think Family Board to provide strategic and operational leadership.	<i>County Durham Partnership Think Family Board</i>
2	Ensure the Working Together policy is fully implemented across agencies to facilitate identification of need and to ensure services work together	<i>Think Family Board</i>

KEY OBJECTIVE 2:

We will provide a coordinated network of support services that will identify family needs and intervene early

Services should be accessible to all families no matter where they live. The establishment of integrated teams for children's and adults' services, providing universal and targeted services, is a key step towards this goal.

Integrated services for children are designed to the following principles:**1. Children, young people and families will be at the heart of all we do:**

Consideration will be given the needs of the whole family, not just the individual, when delivering services.

2. Children, young people and families will be involved in the design and delivery of their services :

By working with them, services that are more suited to need will be commissioned.

3. There will be “no wrong door”:

Required services will be accessed no matter which agency is first contacted.

4. Services will be delivered in and through the universal services:

Families can access support at the earliest opportunity.

5. We will “hold the baton”:

The service will work with the family rather than just refer them on.

6. Services for people, not people for services:

Services will be flexible enough to meet need wherever and whenever children and families need them.

7. Services will be experienced as “seamless” by children and parents:

Services will be well coordinated.

8. Single point of contact:

Children and families will not be required to struggle through the maze of services, but will have a named individual contact that will support them to get the help they need.

Parenting, family health and child support services will be accessed through universal services such as GPs, Children's Centres and schools.

Network of support

Integrated teams will provide a single point of access to a range of additional local authority and health services. In addition to the multi-discipline and multi-agency members of the children's team, families will be able to access a network of support that spans services. This may include:

- adult mental health services,
- substance and alcohol services,
- housing services,
- police services
- employment support
- Information, advice and guidance
- Welfare advice
- Domestic violence services
- Probation services

Common assessment processes have been in place across the Children's Trust for several years. Thinking family requires that this approach is broadened to assess the needs of all members of the family, not just the child

From the **network of support**, a "**team around the family**" will be drawn together as indicated by the needs assessment. By coordinating this package of support, we will reduce duplication, ensure that needs are identified earlier and that appropriate services are provided.

What we will do.....

No.	We will.....	Who will do it...
1.	By September 2011, we will create integrated children's services teams throughout County Durham to improve accessibility, information sharing and earlier intervention.	<i>DCC /County Durham FoundationTrust / TEWV</i>
2.	We will adopt a single pathway of care to ensure that all agencies work together to intervene earlier and to meet need.	<i>DCC and Partners through the Think Family Board</i>
3.	We will include parenting questions in all single agency assessments, to ensure that we all "Think Family" and ensure that concerns are acted on.	<i>DCC and Partners through the Think Family Board</i>
4.	We will adopt common family assessment processes.	<i>Think Family Board</i>
5.	We will introduce Team around the Family plans to ensure that families receive the services they need.	<i>DCC and Partners through the Think Family Board</i>
6.	We will train staff in all agencies so that they are able to adopt new ways of working.	<i>DCC and Partners</i>

KEY OBJECTIVE 3:**We will provide intensive support to those families who need it**

There have been numerous Think Family projects in County Durham over the last few years, set up as pilots, under government grants. These include the Anti-Social Behaviour Family Intervention projects (ASB FIPs), the Family Pathfinder Teams, the Youth Crime Action plan Family Intervention Projects (YCAPFIP), the Parenting Early Intervention Project (PEIP) and the Respect Practitioners.

Indications at local and national level are that Think Family projects and approaches are effective in helping families with multiple and complex needs cope with their problems and find sustainable solutions. There is evidence that these services are valued by those that receive them and provide value for money. They have been shown to help reduce the number and severity of problems and so reduce the cost to society.

What we will do.....

No.	We will.....	Who will do it.....
1	By April 2011 we will have mainstreamed the effective practice from Family Pathfinder, Anti Social Behaviour FIP and Youth Crime FIP pilots into our core services to ensure their sustainability.	<i>Think Family Board</i>
2	By September 2011 we will have introduced a single performance framework for all Think Family projects to demonstrate effectiveness and value for money.	<i>Think Family Board</i>
3	By September 2012 we will agree how and when to establish a single county-wide Think Family service.	<i>Think Family Board</i>

KEY OBJECTIVE 4:

We will tackle child and family poverty

Because poverty and deprivation are strongly correlated with the sort of disadvantage and poor outcomes this strategy aims to reduce, it is essential that economic wellbeing is considered as an integral part of this strategy. Children and families who live in poverty suffer more from physical and mental health, stressed relationships and disadvantage. Children do less well at school, have lower aspirations and are more likely to be obese. Poverty and disadvantage make it harder for people to be the parents they want to be because of depression, stress and a lack of physical, emotional or mental resources. Two million children in the UK go without adequate clothing, meals, toys, out-of-school activities and live in households where there is no adult in paid work; over half of lone parents live in poverty and nearly half of poor children live in a lone-parent family. Child and family poverty is not associated with worklessness only: it affects working families too – half of children living in the poverty in the UK have parents in work.

The County Durham Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2010-2011 measures child poverty as the number of under 16s living in households that claim out-of-work benefits. Based on DWP figures from August 2009 to May 2010 an average of 21,830 children lived in households claiming out-of-work benefits. This equates to almost one in four children in County Durham - 24.3% of the under 16 population. This proportion has steadily increased recently reflecting the impact of the recession but has not declined since the economy started growing again and is currently 16% higher than the national average.

The Child Poverty Act (April 2010) places a duty on Local Authorities and their partners to undertake a child poverty needs assessment of the level of poverty in their local area, prepare a joint local child poverty strategy and co-

operate with their partners to reduce child poverty in their area and have appropriate links to the Sustainable Community Strategy.

What we will do.....

No.	We will.....	Who will do it....
1	<p>Establish a comprehensive, cross cutting Child Poverty needs assessment and strategy by April 2011 with the following aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To help more families find and maintain paid work with the support they need to progress and improve their opportunities; 2. To help families access financial support that is appropriate to their situation; 3. To develop and promote environments in which children can thrive; 4. To help to prevent poverty in childhood translating into poor experiences and outcomes in adult life. 	<p><i>Durham County Council and partners</i></p>

KEY OBJECTIVE 5:

We will engage with families to develop the most effective forms of service.

Durham County Council and partners are committed to engaging children, young people and families in service development by listening to their views and designing services in response to them. We know from experience that this is the way to ensure that services meet needs and expectations.

It is also the case that the very families who most need help are often the least likely to receive it, either because they choose not to, or because our services are hard for them to access. By working with families, we intend to design and deliver models of service able to overcome these barriers and so ensure that families do not “fall through the gaps” in service.

What we will do.....

No.	We will.....	Who Will do it...
1	Ensure that opportunities for consultation and engagement are published widely and ongoing, for example through the Local Media, Durham County Council's Website: Consultations page, and within services delivered to children, young people, adults and families.	<i>DCC and Partners</i>
2	Provide regular opportunities to engage children and families in direct feedback about service delivery and suggestions for improvements and ensure that these opportunities are well publicised	<i>DCC and Partners</i>
3	Listen to and act upon the issues and suggestions raised by children and families wherever possible.	<i>DCC and Partners</i>
4	We will tell children and families what we have done about issues and suggestions they have raised	<i>DCC and Partners</i>

KEY OBJECTIVE 6:**We will ensure that Think Family services provide value for money and are effective**

Durham County Council and partners have a duty to ensure that public money is used wisely and well. Public expenditure reductions challenge agencies to redouble efforts to improve efficiency whilst continuing to meet needs and to improve outcomes. The Think Family Strategy proposes a new way of working with families that provides effective support for all families, whilst targeting integrated support to those who need it most. There is an increasing body of evidence that this is not only a more effective way of working, but that it is also more efficient.

However, we will not take this assumption for granted, but will monitor the effectiveness of this strategy and its impact on the cost of delivery.

What we will do.....

No.	We will.....	Who will do it....
1	Adopt a consistent, single, measurable performance management framework so that the effectiveness of services can be demonstrated and compared.	<i>Think Family Board</i>
2	Monitor the cost of services relative to alternative approaches, using a Social Return on Investment model	<i>Think Family Board</i>
3	Audit activity across services to ensure that policies and procedures are being used effectively.	<i>Think Family board</i>

COMMISSIONING INTENTIONS

The Think Family Board has proposed a number of commissioning intentions in line with this strategy that will ensure our collective resources are focused where they are most needed and used most effectively and efficiently. These will ensure that the Council and its partners develop an integrated approach to meeting the needs of our most vulnerable families.

Broadly it is our intention to commission the following:

- Integrated Teams for Children and Young People
- Family Intervention Projects and Family Pathfinder team
- Integrated processes for all.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

It is imperative that we can demonstrate that our work is effective. The objectives and actions set out in this document will form the basis of a performance management framework, to be monitored by the Think Family Board. In addition, a single performance management framework will be introduced for all Think Family Services, so that impact on families can be monitored. This will include a basket of indicators that will enable judgements to be made about impact and cost of services.

In broad terms we will know that the Think Family Strategy has made a significant impact when we see:-

- Children and young people are healthier, safer, enjoy activities and succeed at school, make a positive contribution to our community and go on to be economically active, contributing members of our community;
- Inequalities between those who do best and those who do not are reduced
- Families who tell us they feel well supported;

- Effective and coordinated working between all our services to meet the needs of our children and families, including appropriate information sharing;
- A workforce able to implement the Think Family approach in their day to day working practices;
- Leadership at all levels throughout our services to delivering the Think Family approach.

REVIEW

The Think Family strategy will be reviewed in September 2011 and annually thereafter with a report to the County Durham Partnership. In line with the strategy itself, families will play a pivotal role in measuring the success and progress of this strategy. We will work through existing reference groups where they exist, and where they don't, we will create opportunities for children and families to tell us whether we are making the progress we intend and that they wish to see. Through this process the strategy will continue to evolve.