



Troubled families
Case studies

Contents

Sheffield	1
Bradford	3
Lancashire	4
Leeds	7
Norfolk	9

Sheffield

The project: Early Intervention and Prevention Service, based on family intervention project principles

The family

- Bridget (late twenties)
- John (early thirties) left school without any qualifications and has been out of work. He is currently serving a 2+ year sentence with further time on licence
- Jayden (junior school age) with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Erin (primary school age)

Social services have been involved with the family for about a year. The children were briefly placed on the 'at risk register' as they were considered to be at risk of physical abuse. John had involvement with social services when he was a child himself.

John has a history of offending since his teens. There is a history of domestic violence in the family.

The children were considered to be at risk of offending and anti-social behaviour due to John's repeat offending and family attitudes to offending.

Activity with the family

John was apprehensive about involvement with the service but the worker established a good relationship and built trust with the family who said they appreciated the worker's straightforward, honest, and down to earth approach.

The worker visited John in prison, met the agencies already involved with the family, worked with Bridget and the children at home and then with the whole family on release.

The worker talked to John and Bridget about their parenting to agree consistent approaches in advance of John returning home from prison.

John attended a programme covering domestic violence, anger triggers and alcohol awareness.

The family was supported for around 10 months and there have been a number of positive results:

- Social services are no longer needed to be involved with the family.
- John has changed his behaviour through one-to-one sessions and counselling. He became a mentor to others in difficult situations, and has

completed an NVQ Level 2 qualification which has led to full-time employment for him. There have been no further arrests to date.

- Bridget has grown in confidence and independence. She has remained in employment throughout.
- The children are in school full time.

Bradford

The family

- Julie, is a single mother of four boys and two girls: Tom, Ricky, Leo, Charley. Kia and Donna
- Sonia is the children's aunt.

The family had been known to a number of services for many years. Julie was periodically absent from the family home and was involved in criminal behaviour and suspected prostitution to fund her heroin habit.

Sonia was in effect the primary carer of the four boys and two girls. The eldest child, Tom, was involved with the youth offending team due to his criminal behaviour.

None of the children were attending school on a regular basis, and three of the boys were permanently excluded and supposed to be attending alternative provision.

The youngest child was attending nursery only 3 per cent of the time, and was behind with immunisations.

There were concerns about general neglect of the children.

The family was living on an estate earmarked for demolition, but housing providers experienced difficulty rehousing the family due to high levels of anti-social and criminal behaviour, including convictions for robbery, shoplifting, criminal damage, rowdy behaviour, begging, and substance misuse.

The local community had had enough of problems caused by the family, and some local people had taken matters into their own hands, trying to push the family out of the area by smashing windows in the property.

Activity with the family

Julie and Sonia were very mistrustful of agency involvement and were worried that the intervention of the local authority would lead to the children being taken into care.

Serious consideration was given to removal into care of the younger children. It was agreed with the family that this would be deferred on the condition that they engaged with a key worker and worked intensively on a number of agreed actions to improve the situation.

The offer of a new social housing tenancy was made conditional on the family's engagement with services. Failure to do so would result in them being evicted from their current home and classed as intentionally homeless.

The family was given a short-term tenancy, and compliance with the family intervention plan was written into the tenancy requirements. Once the family moved into their new home, the key worker helped them to get the home in decent order. The family responded well to their new surroundings and everyone started to take pride in the home.

Julie was referred to and stuck with a local drugs support project and went on to complete an educational course in basic literacy. She stopped her criminal behaviour and the number of unsuitable visitors to the family home decreased as a direct result.

Sonia worked with the Family Links Nurturing Programme run by the intervention project to improve parenting and relationship skills, and the key worker also worked intensively with her on budgeting, debt advice and implementing routines for the children.

The children's school attendance improved to over 90 per cent and Sonia began to take a more active role and attended parents' evenings.

Tom completed his youth offending team order successfully, although he was still involved with anti-social behaviour and eventually left the household to live in another city with his father. His departure had a positive impact upon his brothers as they were no longer involved in anti-social behaviour themselves.

The key worker worked intensively with the family and other agencies for a full year. The exit strategy included stepping down the level of intensive intervention, and the housing association has taken on lead agency role to monitor the family. The tenancy was made permanent, secure and fully assured, providing long-term stability for the family.

Lancashire

The project: Working Together with Families Programme

The family

Two related families:

Family A

Carol is a single mum aged 38 with four children, three of whom are dependents, Daniel (17), Abigail (10), and Kerry (4), all with different birth fathers.

Family B

Debbie is a single mum aged 42 with three children, one of whom is a dependant, Simon (13).

Both families live in private rented accommodation in deprived areas. Both mothers claim benefits and were not looking for work.

Daniel had an ASBO for his anti-social behaviour, which was an ongoing problem in the local area. He was believed to be using cannabis and alcohol and had already served a sentence in secure accommodation. He had previously been excluded from school and received very limited education, consisting of a few hours a week.

The police attended Family A's home many times to deal with domestic violence between mother and son, all of which was witnessed by the two younger siblings. Daniel also had 35 offences recorded on the police national computer with 14 convictions for theft, offences against property, against the person, public order and bail offences. He had been arrested 36 times in the last three years. He was recorded as the offender on 23 crime reports and as the victim on four. He had been reported missing from home twice.

Abigail and Kerry were attending school but were starting to show signs of withdrawal and distress linked to Daniel's behaviour.

Simon came to the attention of services due to his high levels of anti-social behaviour in the community and at school – there was concern that he may have been mirroring the behaviour of his cousin Daniel. Simon has one conviction for burglary.

Activity with the family

Work to turn the family around has involved a number of agencies working together. It has resulted in:

- Alternative housing for Daniel which took pressure off the whole family and Carol's relationship with Abigail improved as a result of him leaving the home. Daniel is currently serving a prison sentence but he wrote to Simon from prison encouraging his cousin not to follow in his criminal footsteps.
- Simon was assessed by an educational psychologist and is now attending a special school which was able to address his needs and his school attendance has increased. Simon signed an ABC (acceptable behaviour contract) and was not in further trouble, and took up fishing.
- Lifting of some financial pressure on the family following referral to the food bank.
- Carol is now looking for work. She has been referred to a scheme to help her get work with her job skills.
- A 90 per cent reduction in police calls to the home address of Family A over a year.
- The health, wellbeing, behaviour and confidence of all family members have greatly improved.

Leeds

The project: Signpost

The family

- Laura (33) is a single mother of five
- Laura's ex-partner Ebrahim is the father of the oldest four boys, Saeed (15), Adam (13), Rashid (11), and Javid (9)
- Gary is the father of the youngest child, Ed (6)

At the point of referral the main concerns with the family were the high levels of anti-social behaviour and the children offending. The family had been given a housing caution and were at risk of eviction.

Laura was dependent on alcohol and amphetamines, which affected her ability to parent the children properly and meet their needs. She'd made allegations of domestic violence against her previous and current partners.

The family were resistant to working with agencies - and agencies felt that both fathers had very limited input or interest in parenting the children. Saeed's attendance at school was at 0 per cent, the other children's attendance was low and all displayed challenging behavioural issues - including Rashid having a tattoo at the age of 11. The children became subject to interim care orders, which means they could be removed from their family and placed in local authority care, due to lack of parenting and care.

Activity with the family

Intervention with the family included activity designed to make an immediate impact like help with practical tasks in the home such as cleaning and washing clothes. This helped the family develop motivation, skills and a routine.

Signpost looked afresh at the role the fathers could play in their children's lives and revisited previous assumptions that had been made about their parenting. They built up trust and strong relationships with the fathers, for example by ensuring visits from Signpost fitted around Gary's working hours.

They worked with the children's schools to address and manage the impact that Laura's emotional state had on the children and helped Laura to attend Leeds Addiction Unit for help with her alcohol and drug problems.

Ebrahim obtained a residency order for Saeed, Adam, Rashid and Javid which meant the court decided they could now live with him rather than in local authority care, and they are settling in well. They are now no longer subject to interim care orders. Their attendance and behaviour at school has improved. Saeed, who was not in education, employment or training is now

attending Leeds College of Building and is progressing well. There are no concerns regarding anti-social behaviour or offending.

Gary obtained a residency order for Ed, and he has settled in well and has been described as more secure and happy in school. Gary is getting the help he needs from the agencies there to help him and has sought support about housing and parenting advice.

Norfolk

The project: The Families Unit

The family

- Holly (37) is a single parent of three children, Sarah (13) Mark (9) and Kylie (2)

The family was referred to the unit by the local authority and the children were subject to a child protection plan (where the local authority sets out what actions a family must take to improve how their children are looked after) because of emotional abuse and neglect.

There was a long history of experiencing and witnessing domestic violence in the family. Holly had problems with alcohol addiction and suffered from panic attacks and anxiety. She had poor problem-solving skills and found it difficult to set appropriate boundaries for the children.

The family was both the perpetrator and the victim of anti-social behaviour on the estate and the children's attendance at school was poor.

Activity with the family

The Families Unit worked intensively with the family for 11 months, and achieved significant improvements including:

- A significant reduction in the family's anti-social behaviour, which led to them being able to move house
- Holly was supported to leave a violent relationship
- Holly stopped her anti-social behaviour and recognised why she frequently found herself in abusive relationships following work on understanding the consequences of behaviour
- Holly was given support and guidance about boundary setting with the children, and has improved her parenting
- Sarah's school attendance has increased from 65 per cent to 96 per cent following mediation with the school to tackle bullying
- Sarah attends dance lessons and Mark has been on a drama course – this has helped them both improve their confidence and self-esteem
- Holly was also helped to access a nursery place for her youngest child, Kylie

The children are no longer subject to a child protection plan, Holly no longer misuses alcohol, and the family really enjoys its new home.