
Monitoring and evaluation of family interventions (information on families supported to March 2010)

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Introduction and Background

Intensive family interventions (formerly known as Family Intervention Projects or FIPs) work with the most challenging families and tackle issues such as anti-social behaviour, youth crime, inter-generational disadvantage and worklessness in families. They take an intensive and persistent multi-agency approach to supporting the whole family and helping them overcome their problems, coordinated by a single dedicated 'key worker'. The interventions form part of the Coalition Government's commitment to investigate a new approach to support families with multiple problems and links to the announcements in the Spending Review around a national campaign underpinned by pooled community budgets to support and turn around these families. All local authorities in England, apart from the City of London and the Isles of Scilly, provide support to families through intensive family interventions.

Headline findings from the monitoring and evaluation of these interventions were published in an Official Statistics Release¹ on 15 September 2010². This report provides further commentary and analysis of the families receiving an intensive family intervention between January 2006 and 31 March 2010.

Key findings

- The longer families work with a family intervention the greater the chance that they will achieve successful outcomes. Surprisingly the number of contact hours that a family intervention has with a family did not appear to be significant.
- Out of the 7231 referrals 4870 families (67 per cent) were offered and accepted a family intervention, 1860 families (26 per cent) were not offered a family intervention, 203 families (3 per cent) declined an intervention and 298 families (4 per cent) were placed on a waiting list.

¹ <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d000956/OSR09-2010-FIPs.pdf>

² The outcomes analysis presented in this report differs from the figures presented in the Statistical Release as the current report restricts this analysis to only families who have exited the intervention.

- 1952 families had completed a family intervention by 31 March 2010 and show a number of improvements across a range of measures (between their Support Plan being put in place and Exit):
 - Of the 1413 families reported to have problems with family functioning and risk 65 per cent (917 families) experienced a reduction in the number of their problems including poor parenting, relationship or family breakdown, domestic violence or child protection issues.
 - Of the 1588 families reported to have involvement with crime and anti-social behaviour 64 per cent (1024 families) experienced a reduction in the number of issues they were involved with.
 - Of the 1137 families reported to have a health risk 56 per cent (634 families) had reduced their health risks including mental or physical health and drug or alcohol problems.
 - Of the 1546 families reported to have an issue with education and employment 48 per cent (746 families) had reduced the number of their problems in this domain.

Methodology

As part of the original evaluation of the design and set up of Family Intervention Projects³, the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) created a secure web-based Information System (in 2007) to collect comprehensive data about *all* families referred to an intensive family intervention. This information is collected and inputted by family intervention staff and provides quantitative evidence about the type of families referred to a family intervention, their circumstances and risk factors when a Support Plan is put in place, how they are progressing at regular formal reviews, their outcomes at the point a family exits from a family intervention and whether these outcomes are sustained nine to 14 months after they leave the intervention.

The findings presented in the report are based on the families referred to family interventions in 150 local authorities prior to 31 March 2010. The findings for families who had formally exited a family intervention are based on data from 87 local authorities (because not all family interventions – particularly those that set up relatively recently - have families who have completed their intervention). The report is primarily based on simple descriptive statistics which provide a summary of the quantitative evidence. In addition statistical modelling (logistic regression) was used to look at the factors associated with successful and unsuccessful outcomes.

A report on the impact of Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) family interventions will be produced in early 2011 and will compare families engaging with the former

³ <http://www.education.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/acf44f.pdf>

ASB Family Intervention Project model with families who have similar characteristics, but who were not supported by a Family Intervention Project.

Families referred to intensive family interventions

- Out of the 7231 referrals⁴ 4870 families (67 per cent) were offered and accepted a family intervention, 1860 families (26 per cent) were not offered a family intervention, 203 families (3 per cent) declined an intervention and 298 families (4 per cent) were placed on a waiting list.
- The agencies who most commonly referred families to family interventions were Social Services, including Children and Young People's Services (referred 21 per cent of families); a Housing Department or Arms Length Management Organisation (16 per cent of families); and a local ASB team (16 per cent).
- Unsurprisingly, the reasons for referral varied between the different types of family intervention. Anti-social behaviour family interventions received more referrals than other family interventions relating to anti-social behaviour, housing enforcement and homelessness. Overall, the most common reason for referral was anti-social behaviour issues (62 per cent of referred families).
- 1860 of the referred families (7231 families) were not offered a family intervention. In more than half of these cases (1043) this was because the family did not meet the referral criteria (e.g. their problems were not severe enough) and in just under a third of cases other services were felt to be more appropriate to support the family.

Profile of family intervention families

- Family interventions continue to work with very disadvantaged families, including a considerably higher than average proportion of lone parents (65 per cent), large families (40 per cent have three or four children under the age of 18 and 20 per cent with five or more children in this age group). Just under two-thirds were workless households (where no adult member was in employment, education or training). Thirty-three per cent of families had one or more children aged 16 or under with special educational needs (SEN).
- The great majority (88 per cent) of family members were White. Three per cent of family members were recorded as Black, two per cent were recorded as Asian, and seven per cent were classified as 'other or mixed race'. The ethnicity of Family Intervention Project families is in line with the national average and the proportion of White families has slightly declined over time (91 per cent in 2008).

⁴ Of all the families referred to an intensive family intervention 272 were referred more than once

Risk factors for families at the beginning of the intervention

- The risk factors identified for families when they began working with a family intervention are categorised into four domains; family functioning and risk, crime and anti-social behaviour involvement, health, and education and employment.
- In the family functioning and risk domain the most common problem for families was poor parenting (68 per cent of families). Other key risk factors for these families were marriage, relationship or family breakdown (31 per cent), domestic violence (29 per cent), and child protection issues (28 per cent).
- In the crime and anti-social behaviour domain, 82 per cent were reported to have engaged with some form of anti-social behaviour and 36 per cent had contact with the criminal justice system (for example a family member was arrested, on bail, probation, a tag or a conditional discharge at the time of the Support Plan).
- In the health domain around a third of families faced issues associated with mental health, drug / substance misuse, or drinking problems / alcohol.
- In the education and employment domain, just under two-thirds of families had no adult member in employment, education or training while 60 per cent of families had at least one child with problems at school (i.e. truancy, exclusion, or bad behaviour at school).

The intensive family intervention

- The average length of an intensive family intervention (i.e. including a planned Exit) was around 13 months - this has increased from just over 12 months reported for Anti-social behaviour family interventions in November 2009 (and six to 12 months in 2008).
- The direct contact between with a family decreases during their intervention from an average of 9 hours a week between the Support Plan being put in place and the first Review to 6.8 hours a week between the final Review and leaving the intervention.
- 91 per cent of families had the same key worker between the Support Plan being put in place and the first Review and 95 per cent of families had the same key worker between the time of their final Review and leaving the family intervention.

Successful and unsuccessful outcomes

- 1952⁵ families left an intensive family intervention before 31 March 2010:
 - 76 per cent (1351 families) left for a successful reason
 - 14 per cent (245 families) left for an unsuccessful reason
 - 11 per cent (189 families) left for a reason which could not be counted as a success or failure⁶.
- At least half of family intervention families who were reported to have the following problems at the Support Plan stage achieved a successful outcome (i.e. they no longer had this problem when they left): poor parenting (1204 families or 54 per cent), marriage, relationship or family breakdown (492 families or 58 per cent), domestic violence (451 families or 64 per cent), child protection issues (477 families or 51 per cent), involvement in crime (558 families or 59 per cent) and/or anti-social behaviour (1543 families or 59 per cent), lack of exercise or poor diet (155 families or 55 per cent), drug or substance misuse (597 families or 50 per cent), drinking problem or alcoholism (531 families or 57 per cent), and truancy, exclusion or bad behaviour at school (1047 families or 59 per cent).
- Families were least likely to have achieved a successful outcome in relation to mental health (553 families or 40 per cent) and worklessness (1155 families or 20 per cent).

Factors associated with successful and unsuccessful outcomes

- The longer families work with a family intervention the greater the chance that they will achieve successful outcomes in each domain. Surprisingly the number of contact hours that a family intervention has with a family did not appear to be significant.
- The analysis also identified a number of socio-economic characteristics associated with an increased chance of success in the four domains which help us identify where families might need differing levels of support to others.
- Families with at least one member of the family aged 16 or over in work or lone parent families were more likely to achieve full success in the family functioning and risk domain.
- Families with younger children appeared to have an increased chance of success addressing problems connected with crime and anti-social behaviour at the start of the intervention.

⁵ It was not possible to classify the reason(s) for 167 families (nine per cent) of families.

⁶ E.g. they were a high risk case and unsuitable for staff to visit, the family moved out of the area, family no longer live together or child was taken into care

- Families with any kind of special educational need (SEN); or with at least one family member from a non-white ethnic group; or families being supported by a family intervention focused on reducing child poverty were less likely to achieve this success.
- If all family members are from a non-white ethnic group or if families have at least one child subject to a child protection plan then they are less likely to have achieved a successful outcome in the health domain.
- Analysis of how outcomes vary for different family interventions suggests that it is length of intervention which is the most important factor in families achieving successful outcomes.

Sustainability of outcomes

- 283 families⁷ were followed up nine – 14 months after exiting a family intervention to establish whether the outcomes have been sustained after leaving.
- These families were found to be more likely to achieve a successful outcome in family functioning and risk and crime and anti-social behaviour domains at the time they exited a family intervention. They were also more likely to sustain success in these outcomes nine – 14 months later. Eight four per cent of the families (111 families) followed up sustained their outcomes in the family functioning and risk domain nine to 14 months after leaving a family intervention. 71 per cent (107 families) of the families followed up sustained their outcomes in the crime and anti-social behaviour domain nine to 14 months after leaving the intervention.
- Lower proportions of families sustained outcomes in the health (63 per cent) and education and employment (34 per cent) domains at nine to 14 months.

Conclusions and implications

The report uses monitoring data to provide information about the capacity and throughput of family interventions, key aspects of the intervention such as contact time, intervention duration, and the profile of family intervention families. It focuses on exploring the outcomes achieved by families during the intervention. A final monitoring and evaluation report will be published in 2011 which will update this analysis, drawing conclusions from data on all the families working with a family intervention to the end of March 2011.

Throughout the analysis of successful and unsuccessful outcomes a recurrent finding at domain level and the more detailed level of individual indicators is the association between the length of intervention received and successful outcomes. The longer families work with a family intervention the greater the chance that they will achieve successful outcomes in each domain. This suggests that family interventions might want to focus on providing families with a longer intervention and explore whether the weekly number of hours support provided for families can be reduced to accommodate this.

⁷ Families with more positive experiences of family interventions are over-represented in this sample.

Additional Information

The full report can be accessed at www.education.gov.uk/research

Further information about this research can be obtained from
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This research report was commissioned before the new UK Government took office on 11 May 2010. As a result the content may not reflect current Government policy and may make reference to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) which has now been replaced by the Department for Education (DFE).

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education.