



Connecting Families Report 2015-2016 Delivering Better Outcomes October 2016

↑ Photo Above: Family day trip to the seaside



↑ Activity Day for Families 2016



↑ Connecting Families Young People Take Part in British Karting Championships with The Wheels Project!

Quotes from families

“Our keyworker is always happy laughing and joking, this helped to lift our mood, they have helped us, all of us out of our depression. They respect our culture and understand things which are important to us, it was like they knew even before we worked together. They are lovely to work with - a real human with a beautiful heart”

“Our keyworker helps in any way they can and goes out of their way to help. I can ask them anything, they make me feel at ease”

“Our keyworker has been a great help on the job front, taking me and my daughter to the job fair and building a good relationship with my daughter, they are very good and don't take no for an answer, which is what we both need.”

#onecouncil

Background and Introduction

Connecting Families (CF) is the name which B&NES Council has given to its programme of Service transformation as part of Central Government's Troubled Family Programme (TFP). During Phase 2 from 2015-2020 there will be 700 families in B&NES in need of interventions in addition to the 228, that we have already worked with during Phase One (2012 to 2014). The team works with families who have the most complex needs and require intensive interventions to help them achieve positive outcomes for themselves. The keyworkers help change the lives of these vulnerable families by using innovative approaches and providing outcome-focused strategies.

This directly supports the Council's strategic objective to "promote independence and positive lives for everyone" working with families that are the hardest to engage and/or living in the most deprived parts of B&NES.

Establishing how our future focus as an organisation is moving to a more **preventive**, approach, working on the root causes of problems before they become complex and expensive issues to deal with.

The way that Connecting Families works with Services, partners and volunteers in the community around the family demonstrates the way we want to work as '**onecouncil**' - collaboratively across traditional Service boundaries to achieve shared objectives.

The track record of helping the most 'troubled' families transform their life stories through intensive, flexible and personalised support packages shows how empowering families creates real transformation, as families are the masters of their own destiny. The Connecting Families Team's innovative approach has enabled family members into employment, improved school attendance, maintained reductions in drug use and anti-social behaviour and a decline in child protection concerns. Families are positive about their futures, which they are able to sustain over time. Embedding this progress by work with community volunteers to sustain life-changing outcomes once our support ends, this work is going really well. We work in close partnership with a volunteer programme Family Matters who support families who still need help when we have closed.

Each Family's progress is measured using a B&NES outcome star for family work, that captures changes in relation to parenting capacity, housing, finance, health and behaviour needs as well as employment, education and training. This provides professional and family measure's to record the positive changes and links into the payment by results method used by the Troubled Families Unit at Department for Communities and Local Government.

The Purpose

To **turn the lives of families around** by successfully addressing at least 2 of the following criteria:

- Parents and children involved in crime or anti-social behaviour
- Children who have not been attending school regularly
- Children who are at risk and need additional help
- Adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion and young people at risk of Worklessness
- Families affected by domestic violence and abuse
- Parents and children with a range of health problems

I am positive (and the family reiterate this) that without the key-workers involvement, the family would have disengaged altogether.

How we work with our families – 5 Key Strategies

Rather than fit families into programmes, we create flexible packages of support **around the family**. Our keyworker system of practical and emotional support builds trust and helps us work towards agreed family goals. Experienced workers choose from a wide range of therapeutic and evidence-based tools to deliver these key strategies:

1. Dedicated worker for families – each family has an allocated keyworker who considers the family as a whole. They use a problem-solving approach to all family members concerns. This worker works intensively with the family for up to one year. Taking on the lead professional role, and acting as the single point of contact for the family, who the family can trust and who can engage them in making choices, navigating their way through the system and effecting change, building positive and trusting relationships through activities.

2. Practical hands on support –from helping the family to clear gardens to tidying the house and applying for grants to purchase essential items such as a washing machine, beds etc. The worker will work from the family home and regularly engage with the whole family to provide practical support.

3. Assessment completed – Taking into account the whole family, considering relationships between family members as well as assessing their needs and developing support packages. It identifies any gaps in support and engagement over a period of time and asks the family what will help them the most.

Family quote re the Keyworkers role:

“Following my daughter’s permanent exclusion from school, my family have been going through a very difficult period. I was advised to request an Education Health Care Plan assessment in order to meet the needs of my child. I would not have been able to attend any of the meetings or appointments around this task, or felt confident enough to do the paperwork and make the relevant telephone calls without the involvement, help and support of my Keyworker. I feel that my stress levels have been reduced and I am feeling much more confident about my daughter’s future. My keyworker has built a rapport with my daughter and she is beginning to respond well to them.”

4. Whole Family Approach & Support – work with all members of the family, reviewed via team around the family meetings, especially involving dads. This identifies needs, which may have previously stopped the family engaging with support or making progress and identifies any other support requirements necessary for the family. Liaising with all agencies to ensure a high standard of service and support to the family.

5. Agreed Outcome Plan – All the agencies working with the family will share one vision for that family that they will have been involved in, deciding the goals for change with the family, which is then written in the plan focussing on positive outcomes, both short and long term

These outcomes are linked to the Troubled Family Unit guidance and desired outcomes for the programme, which is written up into the Bath and North East Somerset Troubled Family Outcomes Plan or TFOP. This can be found on the Connecting Families Webpage.

In October 2015 the Connecting Families Team was asked to take the Operational Lead for work with Syrian Refugee Families coming to England over the next few months. Using their positive approach to family work the team engaged with the refugees from December 2015. Before the families arrived the team had to prepare the family homes ready to receive them. Once the families arrived, working in partnerships with our health colleagues & other staff in the Council we were ready to start the real work with the families to settle them into life in England. See the Case Study below that illustrates the work & the families story.

Syrian Refugee family—Case Study

The family arrived in the UK as part of the Resettlement Programme on 24th February 2016. The parents have four children, aged between 1 and 9 years old. They are originally from Syria. Prior to their arrival in the UK the family had been living in a Lebanese camp.

The youngest child has the congenital condition known as oesophageal atresia, which affects the alimentary tract. It causes the oesophagus to end in a blind-ended pouch rather than connecting normally to the stomach.

Upon their arrival in the UK it soon became apparent that the youngest child needed urgent medical attention. As well as complications caused by his condition, he was suffering from an infection and was badly dehydrated and malnourished. During his journey to his new home, he needed to be urgently taken to Bristol Children's Hospital.

He stayed in hospital right up until August 2016. Slowly, as an in-patient, he got better and stronger, and on the 5th July was able to undergo a surgical repair to reconnect the ends of the oesophagus. During his time in hospital the other children started school and nursery for the first time in their lives. The family enrolled in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses, and the dad has started voluntary work. The family have had to open a bank account, register with a GP and dentist and keep regular appointments such as at the Job Centre, the dental practice, the doctor's surgery, the school – basically, they have had to start from scratch. They have had to organise these appointments and their time around visiting and caring for their son in hospital. They have also had to appeal for their older son to attend the school closest to the family home, so that he wouldn't be separated from his brother and sister. The appeal was successful and the children now all attend the same school, much to the relief of him and his parents.

The youngest was discharged in August and was able to join the family in their new home in Bath. It was the first time he had set foot in the house after spending almost six months in hospital, and the family celebrated by throwing a party for him. His parents were overjoyed as it meant that the whole family were together at last and it meant that he had received and will continue to receive the right help and support for his condition. The family get on well with the other Syrian families that have been settled in Bath, and have already made many good friends within the local community. The family report to feeling safe and happy and are extremely comfortable to get out and about on their own in their community, using local buses or walking to appointments.

At a recent dental appointment for the mum, while in the waiting room, I asked her if she was happy. She immediately welled up and became extremely emotional, telling me, "Yes, very happy! Happy with the house. Happy with Bath. Happy for our son. We are all very happy!"



Camping 2015



Syrian Family

Celebration Evening



A Typical Family Case Study

Family consists of Mum and 2 sons aged 14 and 11. On entry to Connecting Families, the issues were:

- Neglect – Family home was of poor hygiene and an unsafe environment for the family to live in.
- Mental Health – Mother suffered from severe depression and 11 year old son suffered from anxiety and mild learning needs
- Family dog was neglected and this exasperated the conditions of the home
- School attendance was below average
- Health – Mother was significantly over weight which impacted on her physical and emotional health and this prevented her having surgery she required for a hernia operation
- Financial exclusion – Mother on long term benefits, with a vast amount of debt (had poor money management skills)

Family received intensive support from a Keyworker, Initial barriers included:

- Mums concern about Social Care involvement
- History of domestic abuse for family
- Mothers perceptions of appropriate parenting, hygiene, safety and prioritising financial commitments.

Practical and Financial support included:

- Working at a pace that allowed Mum to feel some sense of control.
- Rehoming the dog
- Working alongside Mum and the boys to remove soiled carpets, and clear out unwanted household rubbish.
- Introducing family to activities to encourage **positive** family relationships
- Support with managing boys behaviour at home (working closely with school and a youth worker)

Partnership working and outcomes to date:

- Close partnership working with boys school, requested referral to Child Adult Mental Health Services for youngest child.
- Son assessed as having mild anxiety and learning difficulties, so is now receiving support in school.
- Through visiting GP, Mum was able to access Passport to Health and she has now lost 2 stone which has resulted in her being able to have her operation
- Welfare Support – Provided financial support for new flooring for the home. The home is in a better condition and the dog has returned home.
- Worked with the employment advisor to address debt issues, and then requested support from Christians Against Poverty, this means that Mum is now able to take a proactive approach to managing her finances
- Mum now volunteers in a charity shop with a view to gaining long term paid employment
- Family Matters volunteer continues to work with family even though Connecting Families have completed their intervention, to provide ongoing support

With support the family have managed to overcome some of their initial barriers to change, however they still need support to address some parenting concerns and to be able to meet the needs of their son. The environment is a much better and safer place to live for all the family and through this the parents have built a trusting relationship with their worker. This will enable them to continue with their progress to improve and sustain better outcomes for the whole family.

Hands on support that makes a difference and lasts!

Before



After



Positive Activities

The team provides positive activities to build relationships with family members. These activities help to build new skills and build confidence. The aim is for families to have the skills to be able to operate independently of services in the future, and be successful members of their community.

The activities provided have included Wheels for All which provide cycling sessions for families, Activity Days and Arts and Craft Days, Sports Sessions (delivered in partnership with Sporting Family Change) and family trips to Wookey Hole (December 2015, see below) and to the seaside (August 2016, see main photo front page). A targeted Karting project aimed at teenagers in the families, in partnership with The Wheels Project, helping them to learn about road safety and mechanics, and culminating in an opportunity to take part in the British Karting Championships.



“Had a lovely day, we have never been before, we’ve got to the entrance and couldn’t afford it so went home”



Case Study — Client at work

Family A were referred to DWP employment advisor in August 16 by Connecting Families Key worker as female had explained she wished to get into employment.

Family have worked intensively with their key worker to get core issues at home addressed prior to this.

Prior to working towards work placement I identified with client she had only had 1 month of paid employment in her adult life but had spent long periods in voluntary work.

Work completed as follows:-

- Advice given to Keyworker of work placement with Curo
- Family were Curo tenants so this accredited placement was suitable for her.
- Review of clients skills around her chosen career path.
- Reviewed and updated CV
- Work around improving confidence and self-esteem.
- Identified skills in admin and communication.
- Looked at all placements which matched her skill set and placed in order of priority choice.
- Interview arranged with Curo
- Support to purchase correct clothing for interview via welfare support scheme.
- Support given to shop for appropriate clothing.
- Interview technique training given
- DWP worker assisted client in attending interview to help reduce nerves.
- Interview successful client offered 8 weeks work placement with the view to paid work.
- Support with getting to and from placement for 2 weeks to support client with confidence.
- Support continues from Connecting Families Key Worker.

Client continues to attend work placement has improved confidence and her body language is showing this. Feedback from Curo that placement is going well and they are assessing outcomes.

Next steps-

- To support female client to gain paid work
- Work with male client around getting into work.
- Referral to in work psychologist.



Examples of sustained improvement

One mother now has regular hours working in a local store. She used to do cleaning and care-work, but this really conflicted with children's bedtimes and use of babysitters, which had its own complications. Since working during daytime the children are more settled in their bedtime routines.

A 16 year old man was at risk of crime, anti-social behaviour and poor school attendance. We supported him to attend Bath College, this did not suit his needs and he left. After working hard to find a more suitable course, we then helped him to enrol with Princess Trust and Fairbridge, unfortunately these did not work either. Eventually we helped him to attend a motor mechanics course at South Bristol College. He is now fully engaged and doing very well. This proves that not giving up on a young person really does work.

A 44 year old woman had not worked for several years due to ill health. After our intervention she is now in full time employment that meets her health needs as an Admin assistant, she is also studying for a qualification.

15 year old girl refusing to attend school, but with a multi-agency approach, her mental health needs were addressed. She has re-engaged with education and is now flourishing at Bath College.

Single mum with two children who had health and weight issues. Had been unemployed for 12 years. After working with an employment officer and key worker intensively started voluntary work in Feb 16 which she has continued to date. Now looking for paid employment after building confidence. The mums long term goal is for her children to be proud to say their mum works.



Welfare Support Team

The number of people the Welfare Support Scheme has helped in the 6 months from April to September 2016 is 1170

We have received a diverse range of applications for many crisis and challenging situations. Some examples are:

- Single female, had been subjected to domestic abuse and was in a safe house. Initially Welfare Support assisted with food until benefits were in payment. Eventually the customer was relocated to a suitable property and was accepted on a college course, however she could not afford the essential items required for the course. Welfare Support purchased the materials and uniform to enable her to start college and thus ensure a better future with a recognised qualification.
- Single homeless male with mental health issues, sleeping rough in the rural area of the authority. Initially came to Welfare Support for food on release from prison with no income. With the roll out of Universal Credit and the vulnerability of the customer it was impossible for him to claim this benefit successfully. Welfare Support spoke to various agencies involved in the quest for support only to be met with barriers. His situation deteriorated. We reported him to the rough sleeper outreach team; this was the turning point. As a result our service user has been sheltered; given the help he needed to claim the right benefits and has also received medical care. This multi-agency working has enabled the right help at the right time, and this person centred approach has changed the individual's life for the better.

Customer feedback: *"I am writing as we wanted to thank you for helping. Without people and organisations like yourselves who knows where we would be!"*

Advice agency: *"The way you help people and change so many lives and families for the better is the stuff of unsung legend"*



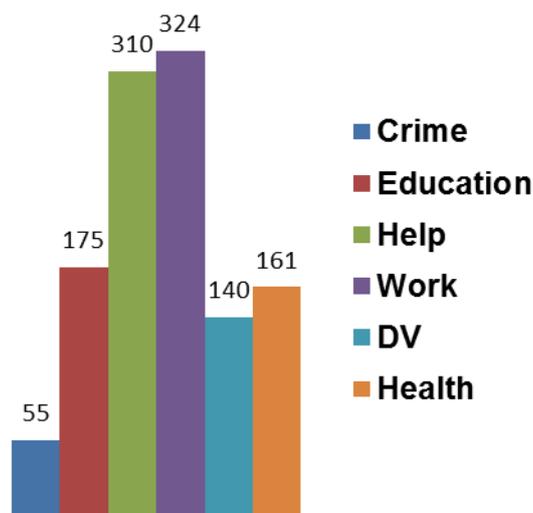
Troubled Families Programme

Phase Two of the Programme requires the Service to work with families that meet at least two of the National criteria and achieve a measurable outcome with them. This can be either through 'significant and sustained' improvement on the criteria or assisting a family member into continuous employment for a specific length of time.

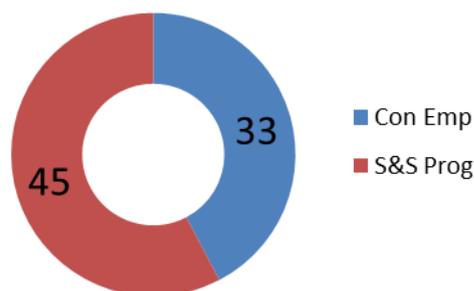
Identifying families, which are then attached to the programme and achieving the outcomes enable the funding to be released.

The work of the programme is co-ordinated through the Connecting Families team and supported by a matrix of teams from within the Council and from external agencies.

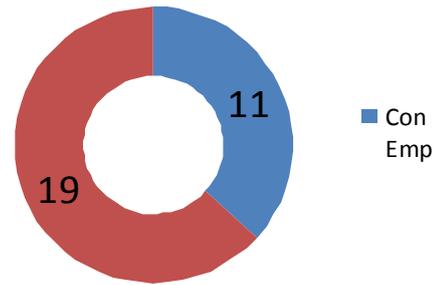
In Phase two, 416 families have been attached to the programme (worked with). The profile of which of the 6 criteria these families meet is below and reflects that the initial areas targeted were Early Years/Department of Working Pensions (DWP) to help people into work and the various Children's Social Care teams working with children in need .



The outcomes claimed now totals 78, which is 18.75% of the families identified. The split between the two outcomes achieved is shown below.



The Connecting Families team itself, has achieved 30 outcomes, with the majority being Significant and Sustained outcomes. The criteria profile of the outcomes achieved by the team is significantly different to that of the whole programme. This reflects the focus of the team to work with the more complex families to achieve improvements across a range of criteria.



The headline factors linked to the Troubled Families Programme Outcomes are reflected in the following statements:

- Members of 33 families have gained and remained in employment
- Attendance of children within 19 families has increased to above 90%
- There has been a reduction in Domestic Violence in 24 families
- Members of 7 families have stopped being involved in criminal activities

Thanks to all the various matrix teams for the support in achieving these outcomes.

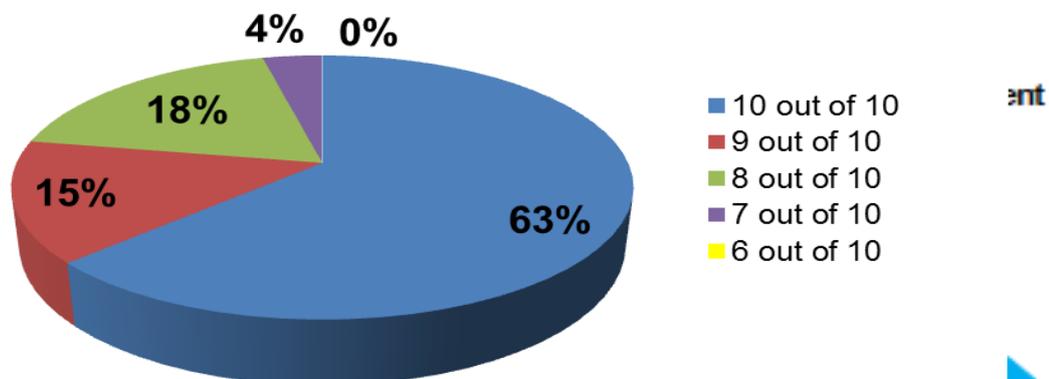
And families tell us...

To date 63% of all families thought their worker was a 10/10, with an average of 9.4/10 overall (August 2016).



Feedback

On a scale of 1 (very poor) to 10 (excellent) how would you rate support from your keyworker?



More Quotes from Families

"My Keyworker deserves a gold star, they have been a god send, not only have they formulated a great bond with my son, they have been a great support to me being a single father - it's so nice to have someone to speak to who really listens"

" Our Keyworker is really respectful, I am confident that he is experienced to help our family with the problems we are facing"

Going the Extra Mile

We believe the reason we make a difference with families who have entrenched behaviours and issues is because we are prepared to go the extra mile, not only in imaginative projects, but in the way we work. All staff are flexible, we work in the family home, seeing things for ourselves. We quickly build positive relationships, based on an honest approach, which means we can have difficult conversations when needed.

"The rapport between myself and the Connecting Families Keyworker (CFK) has helped me rebuild the relationship with my son, restored my faith in authority."

"The CFK's calm approach, the fact I know I can trust them has helped me feel more confident. They ignore their phone when they are with me and they listen fully to what I am saying."

Our Key workers really listen to the family's voices using a strength-based approach, encouraging all family members to fully engage with the whole process. We use venues they feel happy in and encourage them to speak for themselves, even in Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings. This is done by asking families to speak first, stating what has gone well and what they would like help with. If family members cannot be present, we take written statements to meeting or telephone them during the meeting to check things out. This is not usual practice.

APPLAUDING THE FANTASTIC WORK TO SUPPORT SYRIAN FAMILIES IN OUR COMMUNITY

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S AWARD

SYRIAN REFUGEE WORKING GROUP, MEDICAL TEAM AND CONNECTING FAMILIES

A difficult and rewarding task which has involved the team going above and beyond to welcome and support refugees arriving into our area from extremely traumatic circumstances.



Connecting Families Team at the Employee Excellence Awards recognition for – **Chief Executive's Award** – together with individuals from Policy & Partnership and People & Communities Public Health.