

Department for Education (DfE) Press Release 10/12/2010

Focus on families - new drive to help troubled families

The Government is today setting out its ambition to help all troubled families get back on their feet and create a better future for their children.

This new drive will set out to ensure that the 120,000 families who are struggling in the face of multiple problems are helped to address their problems in ways that really work. They need extra help because they may have health problems, they may be addicted to drugs or alcohol, they cannot control their children's behaviour or have never worked in their lives. Most of these families want to get back on their feet, they just don't know how.

In a speech to *Relate* today, the Prime Minister will set out his vision for this country to be a much more family-friendly society. He will say that the strength and stability of adult relationships in a family are vital to the wellbeing of children, that Government, businesses and communities need to do more to support family relationships, and that in particular we urgently need to help the most troubled families with targeted interventions.

Central to this ambition will be to trial innovative new approaches to providing tailored support to the whole family for those with complex problems, providing personalised and holistic support to help a family deal with its problems and get back to work.

As a first stage of this new drive to help troubled families turn their lives around, the Government:

- will give local authorities new freedoms to pool budgets to help provide more joined up solutions for troubled families
- will provide new money to a number of local authorities through the Early Intervention Grant for trialling innovative new approaches to help families with problems
- welcomes the announcement that Emma Harrison, an entrepreneur who specialises in getting jobseekers into work, will help up to 500 families in an initial six to ten areas of the country to develop and deliver these trials.

As part of the Government's focus on strong and stable families, Children's Minister Sarah Teather also announced plans to invest £30 million of Government funding over four years for relationship support. This will be used to deliver better support for couples in relationship distress, for example in Sure Start children's centres, encouraging couples to take up preventative support, and minimise the negative impacts for children when relationships unfortunately breakdown.

The funding represents a significant increase to the Department's current funding levels of just over £5 million a year for relationship support.

Speaking to *Relate* today the Prime Minister will say:

What works is focused, personalised support – someone the family trusts coming into their home to help them improve their lives step-by-step, month-by-month. Emma Harrison understands that. She refuses to believe some people are lost causes and has a proven track record of turning lives around. Her approach is the complete opposite of the impersonal, one-size-fits-all approach that has failed so many families – which is why I have asked her to come on board to help us.

Children's Minister Sarah Teather said:

Government interference in family life is often unwelcome and usually unnecessary. But where there are unstable, vulnerable families the Government cannot step away. All children deserve as good a start in life as

possible and those with vulnerable backgrounds need extra help. This is where Government can help, by offering targeted support that's practical and can make a difference.

One way we are doing this is by reforming Sure Start so it is better at supporting the most disadvantaged families. Another is by giving local communities the freedom to use budgets flexibly and redesign services, so that they can deliver family intervention and relationship support unique to the needs of their local area. I look forward to seeing the results of this new approach.

The new drive will look at how to bring life-changing benefits for individual families, helping them to build a strong family where their children have access to opportunity, and the family as a whole are able to contribute to their community.

The campaign is backed up with new Community Budgets, and the Early Intervention Grant, which frees local areas from Government micro-management in the way they spend money on vulnerable families.

Emma Harrison said:

This scheme will allow all families, even those with the toughest circumstances, to gain a clear purpose through employment.

I have over twenty years experience helping the long-term unemployed get back into the workplace and all the evidence shows that by providing focused, one-to-one support we will start to help troubled families.

To help implement my vision, I will be forming an advisory board, made from the leading figures from across the main political parties as well as the third and private sectors. Every one of these members will have a proven track record in caring about troubled families.

Our primary focus is to start by helping 500 'never worked' families into families that are working, paying their own ways and living great lives. This will be achieved by giving every troubled family the support they rightly deserve.

Kim Bromley-Derry, Past President of ADCS and Chief Executive of Newham Council has been asked by the Secretary of State for Education to chair a national group of professional bodies and voluntary organisations to advise on the development of the new approach to families with multiple problems.

Kim Bromley-Derry said:

Helping the most disadvantaged and dysfunctional families sort out their problems benefits everyone, the family themselves, local communities and taxpayers. I am sure that local authorities will welcome any new learning which shows how this can be made a reality for more families.

Notes to editors

1. Evidence shows that having one single professional working with a family costs on average £14,000 per family compared to costs to local services of up to £330,000 per family per year. Realising this massive potential saving would mean more money could be used to help even more vulnerable families. It is hoped that eventually the learning from this campaign will help the estimated 117, 000 families with multiple problems in England.
2. One-to-one support from one professional helps a family overcome the full range of their problems – from drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and child safety to young people's anti-social behaviour and truancy from school. It is a far better than that family being dealt with by a different professional every time they come into contact with local services. Information about the impact of family intervention on families to date can be found on [the Department's publications website](#).

3. Roughly 46,000 of the estimated 120,000 families with multiple problems have children with behaviour problems. One in five youth offences are caused by children from these families, and over a third of these families have children subject to a child protection order.
4. **Further details on the Community Budget announcement** which gives local authorities more freedom to spend money on these families was released by the Department of Communities and Local Government on 22nd October.
5. A National Prospectus for improving outcomes for children, young people and families was published by the Department on 22 November. This invites organisations to bid on a 'not for profit' basis for grant funding to improve outcomes for children and families including through the delivery of relationship support services from April 2011. A procurement process for new online and telephone family services from April 2011 was launched earlier this week.
6. The investment of £30 million over four years in relationship support meets the Programme for Government commitment to put funding for relationship support on a long-term stable footing. Investment will focus on online professional support and services which are non-stigmatising and encourage self-help.
7. Emma Harrison's involvement is on a purely personal basis, no payment or benefit of any type will accrue to her or to any organisations she is involved with. No intellectual property rights will be claimed and learning from the study will be made publically available.
8. The Government is today launching a new **online destination hub for relationship advice on the Directgov website**. This page highlights some of the best sources of support and practical help with relationships - such as how to find trained counsellors and authoritative advice on legal and financial issues.

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