



ISLINGTON

Draft Impact of Early Help on Preventing Escalation to Statutory Services Review

REPORT OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



**London Borough of Islington
June 2015**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Impact of Early Help on Preventing Escalation to Statutory Services Review

Aim

- To analyse the extent to which services provided by Islington Council and its partners are preventing needs escalating to the point children, young people and families need statutory intervention (statutory social work services and youth offending service).
- To highlight areas of good practice.
- To make recommendations to further improve outcomes for families with multiple problems.

Evidence

The review ran from September 2014 until April 2015 and evidence was received from a variety of sources:

1. Presentations from Council Officers

Ruth Beecher, Service Manager for Early Help for Families
Lucinda Hibberd-French, Deputy Service Manager with responsibility for the Families First service
Ellen Ryan, Islington Learning and Working (ILW) Manager

2. Site visits

Families First (Highbury and Hornsey Team), Holland Walk Area Housing Office, N19
Families First (Holloway and Canonbury Team), The Exchange, N7
Islington Families Intensive Team (IFIT), New River Green Children's Centre, N1

3. Documentary evidence

Impact of Early Help on preventing escalation to statutory services, background report – October 2014
Families First Early Impact Report, Executive Summary
Family Intervention Employment Advisor Evaluation – July 2014
Families First mystery shopping feedback – November 2014
Data from exit interviews with former Families First service users – March 2015
Evaluation of Islington's Early Help Family Support Services, Executive Summary – April 2015
Families First service specification – April 2014

4. Information from witnesses

Elaine Sheppard, Operational Manager of Family Action
Mairead McDonnell, Deputy Head of Newington Green School,
Win Bolton, Camden and Islington Mental Health Foundation Trust
Michelle Tolfrey, Camden and Islington Mental Health Foundation Trust
Hazel Jordan, CASA Islington Community Alcohol Service
Families using the Families First and IFIT services
Families First and IFIT staff

5. Information about a comparable service of another local authority

Stella Clarke, Programme Director for Preventative Services, London Borough of Lambeth
Marcella McHugh, Delivery Lead Multi-Agency Team 1, London Borough of Lambeth
Geraldine Abrahams, Delivery Lead Multi-Agency Team 2, London Borough of Lambeth

Main Findings

Overall the Committee was impressed with how Islington's early help services operated. Families First and IFIT provided comprehensive support to families with complex and multiple issues. The support offered was wide-ranging and practical; focusing on issues such as housing, benefits, social problems and relationships with schools, as well as parenting, mental health, employability and substance abuse. Each family was assigned a support worker who was the primary contact throughout their intervention.

The Committee was pleased with the level of integration between early help services, statutory services, and partner organisations such as schools. A range of supplementary wrap-around services were available which focused on issues such as mental health, employment and substance abuse.

The Council offered a single point of contact for families requiring support via the Islington Children's Services Contact Team. Families could self-refer to the team, or could be referred by professionals with parental consent. This method was considered to be efficient and less complex for service users; the single point of contact enabled families to be placed with the right support service first time, which meant that families did not need to repeat information multiple times to different agencies.

The evidence received from service users was overwhelmingly positive, with all of the families interviewed praising the early help services. The families indicated that, as well as providing practical support, early help services had helped to increase their confidence and raise their aspirations. Support workers received particular praise from service users, and were described as professional, friendly, approachable, dedicated, knowledgeable, non-judgemental and good with children.

Islington's early help services used a mentoring and supportive approach which was intended to empower service users and build resilience. The services also took a holistic "whole family" approach where support was offered to parents, children and siblings. These approaches were well received by families. Parents felt engaged in their own support, and that early help services were being delivered in cooperation with them.

Many of the families interviewed compared the welcoming approach and positive experiences they had with early help services to the negative experiences they had with other services. In particular, families had little trust in social services, housing providers and schools and found these services difficult to work with. Although early help services worked to build the resilience and increase the confidence and independence of service users, the Committee speculated if more could be done to make other council services more approachable to the borough's most vulnerable residents. For this reason the Committee recommend that the positive feedback received on the Council's early help services be noted and consideration be given to how similar approaches to positive relationship building can be adopted by other services.

Many of the families interviewed had not heard of either Families First or IFIT before their intervention began. It was thought that this unfamiliarity led to anxiety about engaging with the services. Some service users had assumed the early help services would be similar to the statutory services they either had negative experiences with or negative perceptions of, and were then surprised when this was not the case. The Committee also noted the stigma attached to accessing help and thought that targeted promotion could help to normalise access to help. Following the work carried out by the London Borough of Lambeth to address these issues, the Committee recommend that the early help services appoint former service users as ambassadors to work in the community, both publicising the service and removing the stigma of accessing early help services.

Another improvement which could be made is better publicising that families may change support worker in exceptional circumstances. It was reported that some families had changed support worker, and others were unaware of this possibility.

Users of both services interviewed by the Committee expressed their anxiety at their case being closed and some worried they would not be able to cope after their intervention ended. Some service users explained that early help services carry out a great deal of advocacy work, liaising with schools, housing providers and others on their behalf, and worried that they would not be able to engage positively without the help of their support worker. Some families suggested that a longer time period for interventions was needed; however officers suggested that a fixed and relatively short timescale was most effective in focusing service users on achieving their goals and leaning to live independently. Many of the families interviewed expressed that they were socially isolated and it was considered that their anxieties about their intervention ending were partially connected to their lack of a social support network. This presented problems as it was suggested that those without a support network were more likely to require follow up support from early help services. The Committee heard some evidence to suggest that support workers helped to reduce social isolation by recommending social groups to service users; however the Committee considered that further work was needed in this particular area. It was recommended that early help services better prepare service users for their intervention ending by working further to build resilience, which will reduce social isolation and empower families to live independent and fulfilled lives;

The Committee gave a great deal of thought to how the success of early help services could be measured. It was agreed that any measure of success must be focused on outcomes for families, however as the purpose of early intervention programmes is to turn around families before significant problems arise, it can be difficult to evaluate the outcomes and impact of the service quantitatively.

Internal assessment carried out by the services included measuring how families had progressed on the 'family star' assessment tool, mystery shopping exercises, exit interviews with service users and cross-auditing the work of other teams. The Council had commissioned an external evaluation of the service, which concluded that Islington's early help services had been '*successful in directing their services at families who face the 'priority issues' outlined in their service specifications*'; however noted that that no local authority had yet demonstrated a reduction in need for statutory services since the introduction of early help strategies and the Troubled Families agenda. The evaluation also highlighted that early help services appeared to support a disproportionately high number of younger children and recommended that the service should carry out more targeted work to engage families with adolescents. The Committee recommended that the service adopt this recommendation.

The available evidence suggested that Islington's early help services had a positive impact on families and led to improved outcomes for children. There were positive indications that early help services were reducing demand on statutory services, however not enough evidence was available to make a firm conclusion on this point. To ensure that the services continue to perform favourably, the Committee recommend that the internal monitoring and evaluation of early help services continue to be prioritised through further exit interviews and mystery shopping exercises. The service may wish to consider the methodology of this type of internal evaluation to ensure that the widest possible range of views on the service is sought.

The Committee noted how early help services worked with other support services and emphasised the importance of joined up working to achieve the best outcomes for families. For example, early help services could be supplemented by wrap-around employment support services which thought to be crucial in improving outcomes for workless families. Service users were often most successful in finding employment when they considered employment to be a priority and understood how this would initiate change in other areas of their life. Employment could help to improve a family's financial position, increase aspirations, and broaden social networks. The Committee noted that the

annual cost of the wrap-around iWork service was £269,000 and considered this good value given the number of people helped into employment.

The Committee also noted the high prevalence of mental health need Islington and that a significant proportion of early help clients needed related support. It was thought that 46% of families engaging with Families First had a mental health need; these were often complex and related to trauma. The Committee was particularly concerned with the mental health of early help service users and suggested that better targeting of mental health services could improve outcomes for these families. For this reason it was recommended that the Council work with its partners, such as clinical commissioning groups, to ensure better access to effective mental health provision;

The Committee was pleased with the integration and wrap-around approach adopted by the service and the number of projects available to assist families with particular needs. It was recommended that the Executive continue to recognise mental health, school attendance, domestic violence and parental employment as key factors in achieving family wellbeing.

In carrying out the review the Committee asked service users and support workers for their suggestions to improve the early help services. Some suggestions were made which the Committee thought warranted further consideration. It was thought that a greater emphasis could be given to helping families to access other services and support available to them. One theme that emerged through the review was that some families needed help in accessing the Council's online services. Demonstrations of how to access these from council facilities or local libraries could be beneficial. Support workers also expressed that some families may benefit from cultural and social trips and outings, and although the service could not fund these directly, it was understood that some local theatres had outreach schemes and the service could help families access these and other similar opportunities. It was noted that such trips can inspire and raise the aspirations of young people and strengthen family relationships. The Committee recommended that consideration be given to how information about cultural and social opportunities can be more accessible to families and staff.

Some support workers suggested that increased access to remote working would be useful, as this would give them the ability to take technology on home visits. However officers said that this would require a significant financial outlay and may not achieve value for money given the relatively small amount of written work completed by support workers. It was also noted that staff had laptops to enable home working when appropriate and the Council was in the process of upgrading its case recording system which would lead to efficiencies.

Support workers also suggested that a discretionary 'crisis fund' could be available, offering small amounts of money (£10-20) for families in extreme crisis situations. It was understood that Children's Social Care had a similar budget. The Committee noted that such a fund would add additional costs to the service which would be difficult find, however the Committee recommended that officers investigate if such a fund could be provided within existing budgets.

Conclusions

The Committee found Islington's early help services to be of a high quality. The services worked well with partner agencies, were integrated with other support services, and took a comprehensive 'whole family' approach. The services were very well received by service users, with families praising the accessibility of the service and the work of support workers. There was evidence that the Council's early help services and associated wrap-around support services were leading to better outcomes for families, and there were positive indications that early help services were reducing the demand for statutory services. It was known that school attendances were increasing, parents were being helped into paid employment, and parents had expressed that they feel empowered and more confident as a result of their interaction with the services. Although there was scope for further innovation, the Committee supported the work of the Council's early help services and recommended that the Executive continues to prioritise the early help approach. It was hoped

that continuing the early help approach over a sustained period of time would further decrease demand for statutory services.

In carrying out the review, the Committee has met with officers, support workers and members of the public to gain a balanced view. The Committee would like to thank all witnesses that gave evidence in relation to the scrutiny. The Executive is asked to endorse the Committee's recommendations.

Recommendations

- 1. That the Executive continue to prioritise the Early Help approach to preventing escalation to statutory services;**
- 2. That the positive feedback received on the Council's early help services be noted and consideration be given to how similar approaches to positive relationship building can be adopted by other services;**
- 3. That early help services better prepare service users for their intervention ending by working further to build resilience, which will reduce social isolation and empower families to live independent and fulfilled lives;**
- 4. That the Executive continue to prioritise mental health, school attendance, domestic violence and parental employment as key factors in achieving family wellbeing;**
- 5. That the Council work with its partners, such as clinical commissioning groups, to ensure better access to effective mental health provision;**
- 6. That consideration be given to introducing 'Early Help Ambassadors', resident volunteers that can assist with outreach, promotion, and reducing the stigma of accessing help;**
- 7. That the internal monitoring and evaluation of early help services continue to be prioritised through further exit interviews and mystery shopping exercises;**
- 8. That consideration be given to how information about cultural and social opportunities can be more accessible to families and staff;**
- 9. That officers investigate if a discretionary fund to support families in extreme crisis situations could be provided within existing budgets;**
- 10. That the service adopts the recommendation of the external evaluation to work further with families with adolescent children.**

MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 2014/15

Councillors:

Councillor Kaya Comer Schwartz (Chair)
Councillor Nick Ward (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Alice Donovan
Councillor Michelline Safi Ngongo
Councillor Dave Poyser
Councillor Nurullah Turan
Councillor Diarmaid Ward
Councillor Nick Wayne

Co-opted members:

James Stephenson, Secondary Parent Governor
Erol Baduna, Primary Parent Governor
Mary Clement, Roman Catholic Diocese

Substitutes:

Councillor Mouna Hamitouche MBE
Councillor Angela Picknell
Councillor James Court
Councillor Satnam Gill
Councillor Asima Shaikh (to February 2015)

Acknowledgements:

The Committee would like to thank all the witnesses who gave evidence to the review.

Officer Support:

*Nikki Ralph – Children's Partnership Development and Strategy Manager
Cathy Blair – Director, Targeted and Specialist Children's Services
Jonathan Moore and Zoe Crane – Democratic Services*

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Committee commenced the review in September 2014 with the following aims:
- to analyse the extent to which services provided by Islington Council and its partners are preventing needs escalating to the point children, young people and families need statutory intervention (statutory social work services and youth offending service);
 - to highlight areas of good practice;
 - to make recommendations to further improve outcomes for families with multiple problems.
- 1.2 In carrying out the review the Committee met with Council officers, service users, support workers from both the Families First and IFIT teams, and representatives of partner organisations. Visits were carried out to offices which the Families First and IFIT services operate from, and the Committee also considered a range of written evidence including evaluation documents and service specifications.

National context

- 1.3 Early Help services were provided within the context of the *Working Together to Safeguard Children* statutory guidance. This set out the legislative requirements and expectations on individual services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The guidance identified that providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later.
- 1.4 The guidance required local agencies to provide early help services and to work together to identify and assess families which may benefit from those services. In particular, early help was expected to be required by a child who: is disabled or has specific additional needs; has special educational needs; is a young carer; is showing signs of engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour; is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health, domestic violence; and/or is showing early signs of abuse or neglect.
- 1.5 The guidance specified that local areas should have a range of effective, evidence-based services in place to address assessed needs early. The early help offer should relate to each area's local assessment of need and the latest evidence of what works in terms of early help programmes. Local early help services typically include family and parenting programmes, assistance with health issues and help for problems relating to drugs, alcohol and domestic violence. Services may also focus on improving family functioning and building the family's own capability to solve problems; this should be done within a structured, evidence-based framework involving regular review to ensure that real progress is being made. Some of these services may be delivered to parents but should always be evaluated to demonstrate the impact they are having on the outcomes for the child.
- 1.6 Early help services also operated in the context of the Government's Troubled Families programme, which started in 2012. In its first phase, local authorities were required to engage families with multiple problems defined nationally in relation to (1) crime and antisocial behaviour, (2) poor school attendance and (3) adults in the family on out-of-work benefits. Local factors could also be taken into account. The programme was expanded in 2015 to include families with a broader range of problems, including those affected by domestic violence and abuse, and those who need help with a range of physical and mental health problems. The Government estimates that each troubled family costs local services an average of £75,000.

1.7 The Committee noted that early help services cannot be considered in isolation. Early help services operated in the national context of reorganisation and cuts to local government and health services; and increased demand on children's social care due to the wider economic context and changes to welfare systems.

Local context

1.8 In Islington the Troubled Families Programme was 'branded' as the Stronger Families Programme. There was no specific troubled families service, instead the programme was used to change the way that all services support and challenge families to achieve better outcomes. At 30th September 2014, Islington had identified 848 families as eligible for inclusion in the safer families programme.

1.9 Islington's approach to early help was set out in the Early Help Strategy. Islington's definition of Early Help was:

- Understanding Islington's families and pro-actively reaching out to those at risk;
- Preventing problems from arising in the first place;
- Nipping problems in the bud – getting involved to support families and help them build resilience so that emerging problems do not become serious.

1.10 Local partners signed up to an Early Help Pledge to Families which sets out the ways in which local early help services will work with families. This included the following pledges:

- Every communication will count;
- We will not pass the buck;
- There will be one main point of contact;
- Assessments will be uncomplicated and robust;
- Services that are needed will be easy to access;
- Services will be safe, practical and useful and available close to home or in a place where families can get to them;
- Families will be involved in drawing up goals in a plan that everyone can sign up to and that sets out mutual expectations.

1.11 Islington worked closely with the Early Intervention Foundation, an independent charity established in 2013 to support services in moving from late reaction to early intervention. They gathered and analysed evidence about what works and advised local authorities, charities and potential investors on how to implement Early Intervention to best effect in order to make the most impact for children and families. Islington has been selected as one of the charity's twenty 'Early Intervention Pioneering Places'.

Islington's early help services

1.12 Islington's early help services included Children's Centres, Families First, the Islington Families Intensive Team (IFIT) and the Adolescent Multi-Agency Support Service (AMASS). These services were supplemented by a variety of parenting programmes and specialist wrap-around services which focused on issues such as mental health, employment and substance abuse.

1.13 Children's Centres provided universal support to children aged 0-5 years, targeting the most vulnerable to focus on child development, school readiness, parenting skills, child and family health and pathways to employment. Children's Centres were not covered by the scope of this review.

- 1.14 Families First provided outreach and regular home visiting support to families from vulnerable groups with children aged 5-19 years and multiple problems (such as managing difficult behaviour, poor school attendance, low income, single parents, and health problems). Each family's intervention was expected to last six months. The service had 24 support workers operating from three geographic hubs which worked with around 1,150 families in 2013/14. The Highbury and Hornsey Families First service was provided directly by the Council whereas the Holloway and Canonbury and Barnsbury and Finsbury hubs were provided by Family Action, a voluntary sector organisation, on behalf of the Council.
- 1.15 IFIT provided multi-disciplinary support and challenge to families with young people aged 10-18 years. The service worked with families with more complex issues such as high risk of eviction, children not attending school, and children involved in crime and anti-social behaviour. The support provided by IFIT was more intensive, with families meeting their support worker at least twice a week. Each family's intervention was intended to last twelve months. The service had 15 Family Intervention Workers which worked with around 90 families in 2013/14.
- 1.16 The AMASS service was for adolescents on the edge of care. As all service users were already in receipt of statutory social work support this service was not included within the scope of this review.
- 1.17 Families First received funding from Islington's 'community budget'. This included pooled resources from the Council, NHS Islington, Job Centre Plus, the Probation Service, the Police, housing agencies and the voluntary sector. The main benefit of this approach was that it provided a single, borough-wide support service which reflected the priorities of all local agencies. This ensured that the service maintained a high profile with partner agencies, and that more specialist services provided by partner agencies could 'bolt on' to the core Families First service, providing an integrated approach and avoiding duplication. Examples of this included joint working with Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Pentonville Probation.

2. Findings

The operation of early help services

- 2.1 Overall the Committee was impressed with how Islington's early help services operated. Families First and IFIT provided comprehensive support to families with complex and multiple issues. The support offered was wide-ranging and practical; focusing on issues such as housing, benefits, social problems and relationships with schools, as well as parenting, mental health, employability and substance abuse. Each family was assigned a support worker who was the primary contact throughout their intervention.
- 2.2 The Committee was pleased with the level of integration between early help services, statutory services, and partner organisations. Two clinical psychologists from Camden and Islington Foundation Trust were embedded in the Council's early help services. Although the psychologists occasionally carried out home visits with support workers, the primary intention was for them to provide support and training to early help staff. Support workers were able to consult with the psychologists on their client's mental health issues and discuss possible solutions. There was no waiting list for support from the clinical psychologists.
- 2.3 The services were also integrated with the iWork service delivered by Islington Learning and Working, and the CASA Islington Community Alcohol Service. A wrap-around approach enabled early help services to be complemented by specialist support on issues such as employment and substance abuse. It was assumed that service users consented to their data being shared with other support services, with the exception of the police.

- 2.4 Early Help services worked closely with schools. A Families First support worker was linked to every school in the borough and maintained close relationships with pastoral care staff and attendance officers to ensure that families in need of additional support were identified early. It was suggested that this was well received by parents as it provided a 'face' to the service. Newington Green School verified that the service's relationship with schools was positive, noting that the service was well coordinated, tailored to the specific needs of schools, and was easily accessible. Teachers were aware of the service and knew how to make a referral. It was welcomed that Families First had established outreach coffee mornings and parenting groups in local schools, and regularly attended school safeguarding meetings with other agencies.
- 2.5 Families First was also linked with GPs and other health services. The service offered support to families where children were regularly accessing emergency rather than routine health care, as this could be an indicator of wider problems.
- 2.6 Early Help services had a clear and effective partnership with statutory services. There was a clear procedure through which families in need of statutory intervention could be stepped-up to Children's Social Care, and families who had finished working with Children's Social Care could be stepped-down to early help services for ongoing support. Some families were stepped-down from social care on the proviso that the family would be referred back to social services if they did not engage with early help services. In such instances a joint home visits were carried out by social workers and family support workers to ensure continuity in service. It was noted that families were consulted on escalation to statutory services, unless it was considered that this would put children at risk.
- 2.7 The Committee considered the benefits of the Families First service being provided both in-house and by Family Action. This structure provided service users with a comprehensive service which recognised the strengths of both the public and voluntary sectors. There was no evidence of disparity in how the services were implemented or how the different hubs were integrated with other services.
- 2.8 Although the Committee was pleased with the level of integration and partnership approach, it was recognised that further innovations could always be made. The Council had previously considered that there were too few referrals for families in which young people showed signs of engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour. As a result work had taken place to try and increase such referrals. It was also noted that, with the increasing independence of schools, further work would be required to ensure that schools remained engaged with the service. Although greater linkages could be developed, officers could not identify any partner services that were difficult to engage with.
- 2.9 The Council offered a single point of contact for families requiring support via the Islington Children's Services Contact Team. Families could self-refer to the team, or could be referred by professionals with parental consent. Professionals carried out an early help assessment which helped to identify the particular needs, strengths and support required by the family. Once contact was made with a family, a judgement was made on which support service would be most suitable. This method was considered to be efficient and less complex for service users; the single point of contact enabled families to be placed with the right support service first time, which meant that families did not need to repeat information multiple times to different agencies. It was also commented that the referral form for professionals was particularly detailed and sought to capture a great deal of useful information about the family. Such a form was not required for self-referrals; the Council had worked to remove bureaucracy for service users and as a result self-referrals could be made through email or telephone call. There was no backlog at

the central referral point; initial visits were arranged within three days of a referral, and visits then then took place within a week.

- 2.10 Parenting programmes available through early help services included 'Triple P' and 'Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities'. The 'Triple P' Positive Parenting Programme had a focus on research into behaviour management techniques and was particularly suitable for more academically able parents. The 'Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities' programme was a longer programme with an emphasis on peer support. It was more suitable for parents whose first language is not English.
- 2.11 Support workers had a broad range of skills. Families First includes specialists in disability, fostering, social care, employment support and mental health. Staff were encouraged to share their experiences and learning through fortnightly group reflection sessions. Support workers sometimes carried out joint home visits with other professionals to maximise the support available to the family. Staff turnover was manageable and current vacancies had a high number of good quality applicants. Although management were aware of the risks of staff "burnout" it was advised that the service was very supportive towards staff. In general staff had left the service for career progression.
- 2.12 Early help services could uncover further, more complex issues through their work, such as domestic violence. This was a sensitive issue and family support workers had received relevant training. On uncovering a case of domestic violence, support workers would carry out a risk assessment in order to determine if a MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) was required. Support workers always sought to minimise the risk to victims.

The experiences of service users

- 2.13 The Committee received evidence from users of both the Families First and IFIT services. The evidence received was overwhelmingly positive, with all of the families interviewed praising the early help services. The families indicated that, as well as providing practical support, early help services had helped to increase their confidence and raise their aspirations.
- 2.14 Support workers received particular praise from service users. Support workers were described as professional, friendly, approachable, dedicated, knowledgeable, non-judgemental and good with children. Families indicated that trust between families and support workers was very important. It was extremely important to service users that they had a single support worker, so that they could develop a working relationship and didn't have to re-tell their story. Some service users commented that support workers were from a similar background to their own and this helped to develop a bond between them. Families were generally clear on what their support workers could and couldn't do and recognised the importance of maintaining professional boundaries. It was reported that some support workers had provided support outside of usual working hours during crisis periods; it was highlighted that this required management approval, but service users valued this flexibility.
- 2.15 Islington's early help services used a mentoring and supportive approach which was intended to empower service users and build resilience. The services also took a holistic "whole family" approach where support was offered to parents, children and siblings. These approaches were well received by families. Parents felt engaged in their own support, and that early help services were being delivered in cooperation with them.
- 2.16 Islington's early help services were consent based; families had to choose to engage with the services. Given this element of choice, the Committee was encouraged that 91% of families referred to IFIT engaged with the service. Some families reported that they were initially anxious

about engaging with the service, however were eventually glad they had engaged. The Committee welcomed the persistence of support workers; it was advised that if a family was not engaging, early help services considered whether other communication methods could be used and how links with other services could encourage engagement. Early help services would make telephone calls, send letters, and even carry out unannounced visits to encourage engagement.

- 2.17 Many of the families interviewed compared the welcoming approach and positive experiences they had with early help services to the negative experiences they had with other services. In particular, families had little trust in social services, housing providers and schools and found these services difficult to work with. IFIT intervention workers agreed that some services were not as sympathetic to service users as early help services. However, it was suggested that service users' negative experiences of other services may be influenced by the purpose of their interaction with them. For example, service users were most likely to engage with schools, housing and social services when there was a particular problem. In such instances, the service often had statutory powers to sanction service users and this was likely to lead to negative experiences. This was very different to early help services, the only purpose of which was to support parents and families. It was also noted that other services, such as housing providers, often did not know the background of service users, and service users did not want to disclose personal information to other agencies.
- 2.18 The Committee was pleased with the extremely positive feedback received on the services, however was cautious not to conflate the services' popularity with its achievement of results. At the very least, the approach of early help services was clearly working to engage families with complex needs, and the Committee suggested that other front line services may be able to learn from this approach. Families reported that they were sometimes anxious about contacting other services, or believed that their interactions with them would not be as positive as those with early help services. Although early help services worked to build the resilience and increase the confidence and independence of service users, the Committee speculated if more could be done to make other council services more approachable to the borough's most vulnerable residents. For this reason the Committee recommend that the positive feedback received on the Council's early help services be noted and consideration be given to how similar approaches to positive relationship building can be adopted by other services.

Promotion and outreach

- 2.19 The promotion and outreach work already undertaken by Families First included advising council tenants of the service at the start of their tenancy, attending community events and working in local schools and doctor's surgeries. Information was also available from the Council's website.
- 2.20 Many of the families interviewed had not heard of either Families First or IFIT before their intervention began. It was thought that this unfamiliarity led to anxiety about engaging with the services. Some service users had assumed the early help services would be similar to the statutory services they either had negative experiences with or negative perceptions of, and were then surprised when this was not the case. It could be thought that simply increasing publicity of the services could counteract this issue; however officers noted that this may have the unintended consequence of attracting families who may not have the greatest needs. The resources of early help services were limited and for this reason promotion should be targeted at those with the most complex needs.
- 2.21 Promotion and outreach work should also help to reduce the stigma associated with accessing help services. Although it was thought that there was less stigma attached to early help services than statutory services, some of the service users interviewed suggested that they previously considered accessing help to be shameful and explained that, for example, their own parents would not have accessed early help services. Some work was already carried out to remove

stigma; the integration with universal services and co-location with area housing offices and other community buildings was intended to normalise access to help, however it was thought that more could be done in this area.

- 2.22 The Committee learned that the London Borough of Lambeth had appointed 'Parent Champions' to raise the profile of early help services in the community and to normalise accessing help. Some early help service users expressed that they would be willing to work as volunteers and it was thought that a similar role could be introduced in Islington for these parents. The Committee recommend that the early help services appoint former service users as ambassadors to work in the community, both publicising the service and removing the stigma of accessing early help services.
- 2.23 The need to increase publicity and outreach to the most vulnerable was also emphasised by the evidence received from Islington Learning and Working. It was suggested that some parents were unaware of the full range of support services available to them and this could result in anxiety about making changes to their home life. For example, it was suggested that many parents were unaware that the Council funded a childcare bursary to help single parents with the cost of childcare.
- 2.24 Another improvement which could be made is better publicising that families may change support worker in exceptional circumstances. It was reported that some families had changed support worker, and others were unaware of this possibility.

Building resilience

- 2.25 Families First had a target of each intervention lasting six months, however this could last longer if service users were not yet ready for their intervention to end. This was often the case if families were particularly slow to engage with the service or had more complex needs. IFIT interventions were intended to last for a twelve month period split into three stages; assessment, intensive intervention, and maintenance. Support reduced during the maintenance stage and families were supported in sustaining the changes made during the intervention stage. Support through IFIT could be extended if a family was not yet ready for their intervention to end.
- 2.26 Users of both services interviewed by the Committee expressed their anxiety at their case being closed and some worried they would not be able to cope after their intervention ended. Some service users explained that early help services carry out a great deal of advocacy work, liaising with schools, housing providers and others on their behalf, and worried that they would not be able to engage positively without the help of their support worker. Support workers agreed to an extent, indicating that some schools seemed more willing to engage with professionals than parents. It was also commented that support workers could identify service failures due to their familiarity with the processes of schools and other agencies, whereas parents would not necessarily be able to do so.
- 2.27 Some families suggested that a longer time period for interventions was needed; however officers suggested that a fixed and relatively short timescale was most effective in focusing service users on achieving their goals and leaning to live independently. It was highlighted that families were always able to re-refer to the Council's early help services, or ask for advice and guidance when required. Members of the Committee commented on the drastic change in service users; from being anxious about engaging with the service to not wanting to end their intervention within a relatively short time period. This was considered to be indicative of the effectiveness of the service.
- 2.28 Some of the families interviewed were unsure of their progress and what would happen when their intervention ended. The Committee understood that this topic had to be handled sensitively

with families, however it was suggested that greater communication around timescales and individual progress with their intervention could minimise the anxiety families felt about their support ending.

- 2.29 Many of the families interviewed expressed that they were socially isolated and it was considered that their anxieties about their intervention ending were partially connected to their lack of a social support network. This presented problems as it was suggested that those without a support network were more likely to require follow up support from early help services. The Committee heard some evidence to suggest that support workers helped to reduce social isolation by recommending social groups to service users; however the Committee considered that further work was needed in this particular area. It was recommended that early help services better prepare service users for their intervention ending by working further to build resilience, which will reduce social isolation and empower families to live independent and fulfilled lives;

Outcomes and impact

- 2.30 The Committee gave a great deal of thought to how the success of early help services could be measured. It was agreed that any measure of success must be focused on outcomes for families, however as the purpose of early intervention programmes is to turn around families before significant problems arise, it can be difficult to evaluate the outcomes and impact of the service quantitatively.
- 2.31 It was possible to monitor the outcomes and impact of the service through the service's own assessment tools. Each family was measured on the 'family star' assessment tool at the beginning and end of their intervention. The purpose of this was to identify the areas in which the family needs the most support and to enable the family's progress to be measured over time. Through this tool, Families First was aware that the majority of clients had made good progress, and that it had been most successful in improving the safety of children, however further work was needed to improve the social networks of clients. Although this monitoring was considered useful, it was recognised that this was not an independent measure of the service's outcomes, and although the family star indicated the service's successes with particular families, it would not highlight the performance of the service more generally, or identify any problems with the quality of the service encountered by service users.
- 2.32 Families First had evaluated customer service internally through a mystery shopping exercise in November 2014. Former service users were asked to make a telephone call to Families First, and were given a fictional case study to present to the service. This exercise yielded two inadequate responses and one good response. Although the results of this exercise were not encouraging, the Committee was pleased that the service had made changes and increased staff training as a result of this exercise.
- 2.33 The service had also undertaken exit interviews with former service users in March 2015. 45 former service users were randomly selected and of those 16 agreed to give feedback. All service users had ended their intervention within the previous six months. The results of this exercise were very positive, with over 50% stating that Families First 'definitely' provided the family with the support they wanted, and the same number indicating that they felt involved in planning the work with their family. A significant proportion, 81%, advised that Families First had helped them feel less stressed and anxious, and the same number rated their experience with Families First as 'good' or 'excellent'. No negative feedback was received through the interviews.
- 2.34 Although the Committee considered the results of the exit interviews to be very positive, it was recognised that the survey was of a relatively small sample of service users, and families who felt they had received a good service may be more inclined to provide feedback. Families who experience difficulties with spoken English were also not interviewed as part of the exercise. It

was noted that while exit interviews provide the service with valuable information in regards to service quality, the interviews do not objectively assess the impact of the service and are sometimes dependent on service user expectations; for example, one interviewee gave the service a neutral rating as their housing situation had not improved, however such matters are beyond the control of the service. It was noted that other internal evaluation is undertaken, such as the three Families First teams cross-auditing each other's work.

- 2.35 Objective and independent evaluation of the service can be conducted externally. The Council commissioned an external evaluation of the service, the conclusions of which became available towards the end of the scrutiny review. This concluded that Islington's early help services had been *'successful in directing their services at families who face the 'priority issues' outlined in their service specifications.'* The evaluation made a number of recommendations, one of which was to work further with families with adolescent children. The evaluation noted that the Families First service had a disproportionate focus on children of a primary school age, with 67% of the 2013/14 cohort under the age of ten. Although it was noted that Targeted Youth Support service supported a large number of adolescents, this service did not work with parents on wider family issues. The evaluation suggested that further thought is required in regards to how early help services can work more collaboratively with other youth services on this issue, and how adolescents with escalating needs can be identified and engaged before their needs become entrenched. The Committee welcomed this detailed external assessment and recommended the service to adopt its recommendations on working further with families with adolescent children.
- 2.36 One aim of this scrutiny was to analyse the extent to which early help services prevent needs escalating to the point children, young people and families need statutory intervention. Unfortunately it was not possible for the Committee to make a firm conclusion on this point. Due to the nature of early help services, there were difficulties in assessing how many families would have otherwise gone on to require statutory services. The independent evaluation of the Council's early help services advised that no local authority had yet conclusively demonstrated a reduction in need for statutory services since the introduction of early help strategies and the Troubled Families agenda. However, there were promising indications that the Council's early help approach was working. In 2014/15 the Children's Services Contact Team received an 11% increase in contacts, however experienced a 13% reduction in the number of cases referred to social care, which in turn meant that social care carried out 12% fewer assessments. Of those assessments carried out by Children's Social Care, 70% went on to receive a service as opposed to 50% in the previous year. The implication of this was that more contacts were being made for early help services, and more contacts were being diverted to early help services rather than social care. As a result fewer and more appropriate cases were being dealt with by social care, and a greater proportion of social care assessments resulted in a service.
- 2.37 The Committee was pleased with the indications that the early help approach was working to reduce demand on statutory services, however in the absence of conclusive evidence, the Committee expressed that a vision of success is needed for early help services and the Council may wish to further consider what success will look like and how this can be monitored.
- 2.38 It was also difficult to objectively assess how particular areas of the service were performing. A member queried how the effectiveness of the psychologist support to Families First was measured. It was recognised that this was difficult to evaluate as the psychologists did not frequently work with service users directly, however it was possible to undertake staff surveys, measure family wellbeing, and review how the recommendations of the clinical psychologists were being implemented. These indirect evaluation measures were welcomed by the Committee, however further illustrated the difficulties faced in quantitatively evaluating the impact of the service.

- 2.39 There were other measured outcomes which indicated that the service was performing well. Early help services (including children's centres) reached 12% of children and young people in Islington. Families found Islington's early help services accessible, flexible, and it was easy to get an appointment. Internal evaluation indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the services, and all of the families interviewed by the Committee as part of the review indicated that early help services had made a positive impact on their lives. 68% of families engaging with Families First and 31% of families engaging with IFIT had experienced a reduction in school absence. 48% of young offenders known to IFIT did not re-offend, and of those that did, 37% reduced the frequency of their offending. Many of the families interviewed by the Committee spoke of their increased confidence, improved family relationships, and expressed gratitude towards the service. In conducting the review the Committee heard positive anecdotal evidence of ways the services had helped families, including how the service had helped a family avoid eviction, and how the service had helped source funding for a family with a child with medical needs.
- 2.40 The available evidence suggested that Islington's early help services had a positive impact on families and led to improved outcomes for children. There were positive indications that early help services were reducing demand on statutory services, however not enough evidence was available to make a firm conclusion on this point. To ensure that the services continue to perform favourably, the Committee recommend that the internal monitoring and evaluation of early help services continue to be prioritised through further exit interviews and mystery shopping exercises. The service may wish to consider the methodology of this type of internal evaluation to ensure that the widest possible range of views on the service is sought.

Comparisons with other local authorities

- 2.41 The Committee received evidence from officers of the London Borough of Lambeth about their early help offering. It was noted that Lambeth's service had a multi-agency approach with similar step-up and step-down procedures to Islington's. Lambeth's service had a similar approach to Islington's and had also provided parenting programmes. Differences between the borough's services included the length of intervention and evaluation measures. Lambeth's early help interventions lasted between three and six months, and the impact of the service was assessed against broader societal measures, such as overall reductions in the number of young people classified as NEET and teenage pregnancies. Although the early help services of Islington and Lambeth were similar in many ways, it was thought that benchmarking services was a useful tool in learning best practice from other local authorities.

Specialist services and projects

- 2.42 The Committee noted how early help services worked with other support services and emphasised the importance of joined up working to achieve the best outcomes for families. For example, early help services could be supplemented by wrap-around employment support services which thought to be crucial in improving outcomes for workless families. Islington Learning and Working delivered the iWork service which provided coaching, mentoring and support to the long term unemployed. The service was co-located with Jobcentre Plus. Early help services could refer parents to the service, and likewise iWork clients could be referred to early help services. The service had adopted an approach to building relationships similar to the Council's early help services and it was thought that this had contributed to the service's success in increasing the number of parents helped into paid work. In 2012/12 the service helped 68 parents into paid employment and following the change of approach this number increased annually, to 380 in 2014/15. Service users were often most successful in finding employment when they considered employment to be a priority and understood how this would initiate change in other areas of their life. Employment could help to improve a family's financial position, increase aspirations, and broaden social networks. The Committee noted that the annual cost of the service was £269,000 and considered this good value given the number of people helped

into employment.

- 2.43 Early help services could also be supplemented by substance abuse support from the CASA Islington Community Alcohol Service, which the council had a partnership agreement with. The organisation was small, with one manager, three support workers and a part-time administrator, and was previously independent but had merged with Blenheim, a larger addiction organisation, to realise efficiencies. The organisation offered direct work with clients and training and support to professionals to increase their capability and confidence in working with those suffering from substance abuse. Similar to the council's early help services, the organisation had a "whole family" approach and welcomed self-referrals. An evaluation of the service was carried out in 2011, the results of which were very positive. Since this date the service has assessed its outcomes and achievements against its own measures. It was noted that there was no nationwide performance framework to benchmark the service against.
- 2.44 The Committee also noted the high prevalence of mental health need Islington and that a significant proportion of early help clients needed related support. Two clinical psychologists had been co-located with Families First since November 2013 and had provided support on 400 cases in their first year. It was thought that 46% of families engaging with Families First had a mental health need; these were often complex and related to trauma. The Committee emphasised the importance of effective, targeted mental health support for these families. Some families had a history of not engaging with mental health services and therefore the psychologists would need to consider how to improve the wellbeing of those in need without necessarily referring to specialist services. Although this work was commended, the Committee was particularly concerned with the mental health of early help service users and suggested that better access to mental health provision could improve outcomes for these families. For this reason it was recommended that the Council work with its partners, such as clinical commissioning groups, to ensure better access to effective mental health provision.
- 2.45 There was a high prevalence of domestic violence in families accessing the Council's early help services and new programmes were being piloted for both victims and perpetrators. The Committee also welcomed the projects undertaken by early help services themselves to address the particular issues faced by service users. Families First was piloting a project for families whose children struggled with school attendance, which would involve working with a small number of families in the early mornings and evenings. A support worker at the Highbury and Hornsey Team had also worked in her own time with teenage service users to produce a short film, the aim of which was to raise aspirations.
- 2.46 The Committee was pleased with the integration and wrap-around approach adopted by the service and the number of projects available to assist families with particular needs. The Committee wished for these to continue, especially those which focus on mental health, school attendance, domestic violence and parental employment which were considered crucial to improve the outcomes for families. It was recommended that the Executive continue to prioritise mental health, school attendance, domestic violence and parental employment as key factors in achieving family wellbeing.

Enhancing the service

- 2.47 In carrying out the review the Committee asked service users and support workers for their suggestions to improve the early help services. Service users had very few suggestions, with many re-stating their satisfaction with the services. Some parents suggested extending the working hours of support workers. Family support workers were available during usual working hours (9am – 5pm) and it was suggested that extending these could provide a more comprehensive service. However, family support workers were already available for early and late appointments, and weekends, on request. Officers highlighted that support workers were not an emergency service which needed to be able to respond immediately, and as the majority of

service users were not in full time employment, there was no reason to amend working hours. The Committee agreed with this view and found the current flexibility of the service to be good.

- 2.48 Parents also suggested that Families First could offer crèche facilities for families who had to attend appointments with other services where it would not be appropriate for their child to attend. Although the Committee understood the need for affordable and good quality childcare, providing such facilities directly was not thought to be a priority for the service. It was also suggested that more joint meetings could be had between early help support workers and social workers, if a family is receiving support from both services.
- 2.49 Some support workers suggested that increased access to remote working would be useful, as this would give them the ability to take technology on home visits. However officers said that this would require a significant financial outlay and may not achieve value for money given the relatively small amount of written work completed by support workers. It was also noted that staff had laptops to enable home working when appropriate and the Council was in the process of upgrading its case recording system which would lead to efficiencies.
- 2.50 Support workers also suggested that a discretionary 'crisis fund' could be available, offering small amounts of money (£10-20) for families in extreme crisis situations. It was understood that Children's Social Care had a similar budget. The Committee noted that such a fund would add additional costs to the service which would be difficult find, however the Committee recommended that officers investigate if such a fund could be provided within existing budgets.
- 2.51 Other suggestions of support workers included a dedicated and well-resourced meeting room, external therapeutic support for support workers, further professional development, and further programmes for perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- 2.52 Some suggestions were made which the Committee thought warranted further consideration. It was thought that a greater emphasis could be given to helping families to access other services and support available to them. One theme that emerged through the review was that some families needed help in accessing the Council's online services. Demonstrations of how to access these from council facilities or local libraries could be beneficial. Support workers also expressed that some families may benefit from cultural and social trips and outings, and although the service could not fund these directly, it was understood that some local theatres had outreach schemes and the service could help families access these and other similar opportunities. It was noted that such trips can inspire and raise the aspirations of young people and strengthen family relationships. The Committee recommended that consideration be given to how information about cultural and social opportunities can be more accessible to families and staff.
- 2.53 The Committee also asked partner agencies for their suggestions to enhance the service. Newington Green School commented that it would be helpful for schools to receive updates on families that had self-referred to the service, however the importance of confidentiality was accepted. The opinion of the school was that the Families First budget should be protected.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1 The Committee found Islington's early help services to be of a high quality. The services worked well with partner agencies, were integrated with other support services, and took a comprehensive 'whole family' approach. The services were very well received by service users, with families praising the accessibility of the service and the work of support workers. There was evidence that the Council's early help services and associated wrap-around support services were leading to better outcomes for families, and there were positive indications that early help services were reducing the demand for statutory services. It was known that school attendances were increasing, parents were being helped into paid employment, and parents had expressed

that they feel empowered and more confident as a result of their interaction with the services. Although there was scope for further innovation, the Committee supported the work of the Council's early help services and recommended that the Executive continues to prioritise the early help approach. It was hoped that continuing the early help approach over a sustained period of time would further decrease demand for statutory services.

- 3.2 In carrying out the review, the Committee met with officers, support workers and members of the public to gain a balanced view. The Committee would like to thank witnesses that gave evidence in relation to the scrutiny. The Executive is asked to endorse the Committee's recommendations.

SCRUTINY REVIEW INITIATION DOCUMENT (SID)
Review: Impact of Early Help on preventing escalation to statutory services
Scrutiny Review Committee: Children’s Service Scrutiny
Director leading the Review: Eleanor Schooling
Lead Officer: Ruth Beecher
<p>Overall aim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To analyse the extent to which services provided by Islington council and its partners are preventing needs escalating to the point children, young people and families need statutory intervention (statutory social work services and youth offending service). • To highlight areas of good practice • To make recommendations to further improve outcomes for families with multiple problems
<p>Objectives of the review:</p> <p>To identify how well the early help approach is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying issues at the onset to nip problems in the bud • providing a system of support that is easily accessible for families • providing a range of services to meet the differing levels of need of families and how they address issues related to school attendance, offending and employment including parental employment. • providing effective programmes of support • effectively building family functioning and ability to solve/overcome problems • effectively solving problems faced by children, young people and families identified as having multiple needs that can’t be met by universal services, preventing offending and the need for entry into social care services. • making efficient and effective use of all resources available
<p>How is the review to be carried out:</p> <p>Scope of the Review</p> <p>The review will focus on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The national and local context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The legislative framework • National early intervention and prevention policy context • National policy context including Troubled Families Programme • Local strategies including the Early Help Strategy and Family Support Strategy • Our role as a local authority and that of our partners 2. Local need <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National and local definition of need • Troubled Families Programme Data on families with multiple problems

3. Community budget approach
 - Pooled resources
 - Financial information

4. The local early help offer
 - Early help services including Troubles (Stronger) Families, Families First, Islington Family Intensive Team (IFIT)
 - Parenting programmes
 - Evidence of 'what works'

5. Partnership working
 - Interagency working (i.e. Family Action; Parent Employment Partnership)
 - Inter-departmental working
 - Work with schools and other partners (i.e. police and health)

6. Systems and processes
 - Referral pathways
 - Common Assessment Framework
 - Lead Professional

7. Current performance
 - Phase 1 Families First evaluation
 - Troubled Families PBR
 - Phase 2 evaluation plans

Types of evidence:

1. Documentary submissions including:

- Contextual report
- Early Help Strategy and Family Support Strategy
- Evidence of Islington's early help programmes and approaches - best practice and what works
- Evaluation of Families First
- Evidence of revised systems (referral routes/assessment tools/ outcome recording and measurement tools)
- Evidence from diversionary work (IFIT)
- Parent Employment Partnership evaluation
- Case studies/user survey information

2. Witness evidence including:

- i) Officer presentations
(eg. Families First, IFIT, Targeted Youth Support, Chair of Community Budgets Steering Group)
- ii) Partners
(eg. schools, health, police, Family Action (the organisation contracted to deliver Families First))
- iii) Contractors
(i.e. Family Action – the provider delivering Families First)
- iv) Parent Employment Partnership

3. Visits

- Families First
- Schools
- Targeted Youth Support (i.e. detached youth work)

Additional Information:

Children's Service Scrutiny – Work Programme: Early Help Scrutiny

Scrutiny topic: Impact of Early Help on preventing escalation to statutory services

Our role as a scrutiny committee:

- To ask questions about decisions that have already been taken
- To ask whether these decisions are good enough
- To make recommendations to further improve what the council (with partners) are doing

Focus: Access and Effectiveness

Section 4 of SID: The local early help offer

- Early help offer: Families First; IFIT (Islington Family Intensive Team)
- Parenting Programmes
- Evidence of what works

Section 5 of SID: Partnership working

- Interagency working (ie. Family Action; Parent Employment Partnership)
- Inter-departmental working
- Work with schools and other partners (ie. Police and health)

Key questions

- Is Families First reaching the right families, those families who, without the additional support, are more likely to require statutory intervention?
- Do parents get the right help when they need it? And do parents feel this help is beneficial?
- How do we know Families First is making a difference?
- Do we know Families First is reducing demands on statutory services?
- Are parenting programmes working?
- Is Families First an effective use of resources? Is it value for money? Are we going to save money/avoid costs in the future?

Work programme for early help scrutiny

Additional documentation

- Families First Service Specification
- Finance report
- Families First evaluation (TBC) – we have previously provided the committee with the early impact evaluation of Families First. We have commissioned a follow up evaluation which is currently in progress and we will share the findings with the scrutiny committee if we receive the final report in time.

Ellen Ryan	Islington Learning and Working (ILW) Manager, LBI	Employability/poverty - Parental Employment Partnership – partnerships between ILW, Children’s Services and Jobcentre Plus to set parents/adult children on the pathway to employment
Hazel Jordan	CASA Islington Community Alcohol Service	CASA works with families First but also deliver separate pieces of work specifically around substance misuse .
Families (at a special witness evidence session from 7-7.30pm prior to main meeting)		To find out about families’ experiences of support from Families First and IFIT, whether the support was what they needed and at the time they needed it. Whether we are delivering our Early Help Pledge. And what difference the support has made to families. How could the service be more effective?

Visits (to take place between March and May)

Who	Organisation/remit	Area of focus	When
Family Intervention Workers	Islington Families Intensive Team (IFIT), LBI	Family Intervention Workers provide intensive outreach support and challenge to (usually workless) families who with young people aged 10-18 years. The families are at high risk of eviction, children are not attending school, and/or are involved in crime and anti-social behaviour. Find out methods of engaging with families, challenges of working with families with complex needs, the difference their support makes.	Wednesday 22 April 2015 1pm – 4.30pm

Family Support Workers (visit to 2 area teams)	Families First	Find out methods Family Support Workers use to engage with families, challenges of working with families with complex needs, the difference their support makes.	Monday 13 April 2015 10-12noon 1-3pm
Parents/families	At Families First site	To find out about families' experiences of support from Families First and IFIT, whether the support was what they needed and at the time they needed it. Whether we are delivering our Early Help Pledge. And what difference the support has made to families. How could the service be more effective?	Monday 13 April 2015 10-12noon 1-3pm

- **11 June 2015: Draft recommendations and report**
- **6 July: Final Report**