

Whiteheads Bulletin

Family Intervention Projects



What are Family Intervention Projects?

Family Intervention Projects (FIPs) were first introduced in 2003 with 6 Local Authorities, Housing Associations and Charities setting up Projects in the North West of England.

They were set up in response to the growing need to stop anti-social behaviour and rehabilitate families who were costing the various services vast sums each year. One example of an FIP (available on the RESPECT website) estimated that a single family (single parent and four children) were costing service providers in excess of £250,000 per year.

The original group of 6 projects were run by the organisations below using a variety of outreach and residential interventions:

- **Sheffield High Support Service** (Sheffield City Council)
- **Manchester Foundations Project** (MCC, Irwell Valley HA and NCH North West)
- **Bolton Families Project** (Bolton MBC and NCH North West)
- **Salford ASSFAM Families Project** (Salford CC and NCH North West)
- **Oldham Families Project** (Oldham MBC and NCH North West)
- **Blackburn with Darwen Families Project** (Blackburn with Darwen MBC and NCH North West)

As can be seen, NCH has had significant involvement in most of the projects across the North West. The exception is Sheffield City Council, which is the only Local Authority that has dealt with these issues on its own.

Since these, a number of other local projects have been undertaken which have similar aims. Rochdale has worked with Shelter to provide services and MCC has a project aimed at improving the lives of young people and their parents/carers.

How do FIPs work?

FIPs are designed to take a holistic approach to dealing with ASB and in helping 'difficult' families re-integrate into society. They address the needs of each of the family members and of the family as a group with regard to social services, health, education, criminal justice etc.

One of the key elements of providing the service is to have a lead key worker presence that works with the family and basically refuses to go away. A further element of the FIP projects is that they are based on written contracts agreed by the family members and the service providers about the sorts of interventions that will take place, at what intervals and what the desired outcomes are.

In support of the process, FIP providers have available a number of sanctions in order to increase the chances of success. These can include (further) legal action by a Housing Association, involvement of the police, intervention by social services etc.

In the main, there are 3 types of intervention, which can take the form of home-based intervention or residential services (see below).

- Outreach programme where the family is visited by project staff who provide sessions to family members in their own home
- Outreach programme to families who have been given non-secure tenancies which can be converted to secure on the basis of successful compliance with the interventions
- Intensive support in supervised accommodation where 24-hour support through structured sessions and observation

Who are services aimed at?

The families that will require the services of the FIP are those who have been involved in severe or long running ASB. Research commissioned by ODPM profiled the families involved according to a number of criteria. Some of these are shown below:

- 22% of families had four or more children
- 18% of adults were in full-time work
- 42% of families were in debt

- 73% of families had a number of issues to address
- 46% of families said that there were problems with children's schooling
- 39% of families had at least one member with mental health issues
- 28% of families were affected by violence (spouse & child/parent)
- 28% of families said children had been charged with criminal activity

In a large number of cases, the families using the service have been subjected to threats of eviction or other legal interventions such as ASBOs, ABCs and Injunctions.

How successful are they?

In 2005, Sheffield Hallam University were asked by the ODPM to carry out an evaluation of the services being provided through an analysis of the responses given by 99 families who had used the service.

Amongst the different areas of intervention, the FIPs work across a number of aspects family life, from addressing issues regarding health and child education to practical skills such as budgeting and managing money. A further area is developing awareness of anti-social behaviour and modifying patterns of behaviour across the family.

Although there has been some success in the projects to date, there are still many families who fail to complete or fully engage with the projects. According to Sheffield Hallam's research, around 42% of families fully engage and of those that complete the process, there is significant benefit, which in a number of cases is attributed to 'having someone to talk to'

What's Next?

The FIPs are part of the Government's RESPECT Action Plan which aims to invest £70 million in supporting families and launch a number of new initiatives to get young people off the streets and reduce ASB.

A further development will be the Secondary Schools Behaviour and Truancy Partnerships, which combine tackling truancy and improving behaviour.

The Housing Corporation has recently invited expressions of interest from housing providers for funding for a further 5 FIP centres to help vulnerable or problematic families to rehabilitate. The various programmes to date have been implemented according to local needs and dependent on the individual requirements of the families and is expected that future programmes will be the same.

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