

New Developments in Family Intervention

Background

Family Intervention Projects

FIPs were introduced in 2003 as a way of providing intensive support to families who were causing significant anti-social behaviour in their communities. A number of 'pathfinder' projects were launched to test the principles underlying family intervention and these projects have shown demonstrable benefits. The initial areas were

- Sheffield
- Manchester
- Bolton
- Salford
- Oldham
- Blackburn & Darwen

Following the 'pathfinders' experiences FIPs are now being rolled out on a much wider basis and may well become part of the mainstream responses to ASB. They are designed around the specific needs of a particular family and a key worker is assigned to ensure the family is dealt with consistently and who acts as an interface between the family and other service providers. This worker makes written agreements with the family members which, if broken, are punishable by sanctions. The form of intervention depends on the needs of the family and is either based on 'outreach' or residential support.

Latest developments – the FITs

A key issue surrounding the Family Intervention Projects was the concern about the type of tenancy the family would have and new provisions in the Housing and Regeneration Bill, published this month, address this.

One of the key problems was moving tenants between properties especially where there were different types of tenure in place.

The Government has committed to legislate to give social landlords the ability to offer tenancies that are neither secure (local authorities) or assured (RSLs) without having to grapple with complex allocations procedures. These new voluntary tenancies will be known as Family Intervention Tenancies or FITs.

These FITs will be non-secure and will be granted to families whose behaviour has been sufficient to warrant possession proceedings. Families

that successfully complete the programme, however, will be offered more security of tenure when they move from the FIP into other accommodation.

But what about families that do not engage?

It is likely that such families will not be tolerated and will risk being evicted from such accommodation with the landlord issuing a Notice to Quit (28 days) and obtaining a Court order for eviction. Clearly this will be the very last resort and it is expected that the threat of eviction is likely to act as a deterrent from committing anti-social behaviour.

One key difference that should be borne in mind is the fact that Local Authority tenants will have a right to a review within 14 days if their landlord decides to terminate the FIT. This will not be the case for RSL tenants.

Please get in touch if you have any queries.