

**THINK FAMILY THEME DISCUSSION: Context Document**

**Strengthening Families**

This commissioning strategy aims to create services which will provide families in need with the information, support and guidance they require in order that they can build the skills needed to cope in times of crisis, challenge or change. We aim to support families to become strong, developing fundamental parenting and inter-personal skills required for successful family development. It is our aim to ensure that outcomes for families are improved and in turn reduce the number of children and young people who are becoming vulnerable adolescents in Devon.

We believe that:

⊕ **When families participate in developing services, services are more effective in meet their needs**

- **Helping to develop** rather than developing services.
- Practical applications
- Duplication could be addressed
- Fire Service to work closer with police
- Service delivery should follow from principle?
  - Must be central to service development
  - Must be mechanisms in place to listen to families effectively
  - Language
- More informed service.
- Do we need this many services? Keep it simple.

⊕ **When families are able to set their own outcomes and be supported to raise their aspirations, they are likely to have more positive futures**

- Most important statement should come first
- What work would need to be done to challenge family aspirations?
- How to motivate families to engage.
- More likely to be better outcomes
- Some definitions can equal harsh, criminality etc.

⊕ **When families are strong there are better outcomes for children and young people**

- Sustaining support/timescales for interventions
- Not a quick fix
- Strong family may have unhelpful connotations – families come in and out of processing change.
- And healthy!

⊕ **When services work in partnership there is better alignment and coherence in service delivery**

- Empowering rather interfering
- Explicit inclusion of adult services in the statement.
- Examples?
- Family Intervention project – what works, good practice.
- What does it mean for me as a service user.

⊕ **When families are strong there are increased efficiencies as there is less need for high cost interventions**

⊕ **When services pool resources, multiple needs can be met through multi-agency approaches and wastage is avoided**

- Not much evidence to support this. Is it happening?
- Do agencies need permission to pool resources?

⊕ **Services should be provided to the broadest audience, ensuring provision for a diverse range of families regardless of ethnic origin, physical or learning disabilities, mental health issues etc**

- Wherever you live (rural)
- Pockets of deprivation.

⊕ **The most innovative services include all Stakeholders i.e. parents, carers, children and young people, multi-agency service providers etc**

- What about those families who refuse to engage? Who tackles that and how?
- Recognise the contribution of the Third sector and the Private Sector.
- Actions should be evidence based to improve outcomes.

⊕ **NEED THEREFORE statements: The above are part of forming an hypothesis and the rest of the statement is needed**

⊕ **How do we communicate this whole "Think Family" ethos to families and children in simple English.**

⊕ **How does this fit into the "safeguarding" issues i.e. families who do not engage.**

⊕ **Hard to engage parents. How do we reach them?**

⊕ **It is meant for all children and young people – transitions.**

**CHILDREN'S TRUST PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL**  
**THINKING FAMILY TO STRENGTHEN FAMILIES**  
**6 October 2009**

**Areas of Strength:**

**ETHOS**

- Partnership opportunity – willingness
- Recognising/accepting the need for preventative services.
- Voluntary sector
- Joined up approach
- Trust and reasonable working relationships with other agencies
- Commitment to make it happen
- Building on learning from pilot projects
- Willingness to build on strengths and weaknesses
- General partners motivated to think about integrated delivery – links with community based work and issues.

**PRACTICALITIES**

- Funding
- AXS pathway method of working needing further development
- Commissioned activity through CTs more locally identified.
- Housing services – look at whole families – households, parents, carers opinion is valued by DCC.

**Areas of Development:**

**RESOURCES/BUDGETS**

- Third sector infrastructure provision – resource to support the strengthening families agenda
- Pooled budgets
- Sustainability – short term grants – extended services?
- Resourcefulness
- Greater stability in use of resources – pooled (virtual) budgets to support individual plans as part of family plans.

**COMMUNITIES**

- Recognition of the geography of Devon
- Enabling communities to respond.

**PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE**

- We are not at the same starting point. Why are we doing this?
- Everyone needs to know what Think Family is. Where it has come from.
- Team around the family
- Who identifies the issues?
- Rolling out integrated practice to include adult services.
- Information sharing – contact person

**FAMILIES**

- Are families aware of this?

- Shift away from “deficit” language
- Build on the positives without families

### **SERVICE STRUCTURES & BOUNDARIES**

- Information sharing – practical delivery – action
- Ensure there is stability in staffing across agencies
- Have period of stability as opposed to reorganisation, particularly health, PCT
- Awareness of impact of actions of one service on all members of family
- Transitions, young carers crossing children/adult services.
- Adult/child services split a barrier
- Exeter FIP – funding not sustainable – works intensively with whole families
- Families do not necessarily want to be engaged unless they have a problem
- Better services for families – cannot provide just services for children have to think of the whole family

### **Any really good ideas?**

- Access to third sector through existing infrastructure (VCS)
- Services should be developed jointly
- Do not work in Silos - put money together – bring funding streams together.
- Define what is good enough parenting.
- Commissioning needs to be led by local engagement and matching services to meet need. Locality commissioning is a strength. Strategic commissioning should be supportive of local commissioning not a hindrance.
- Partners need to be open about finance/budgets and information sharing – open and transparent.
- “Buggins turn” for those with complex needs who fall between a range of services.
- Set questions when any service engages with a person – what are the implications for the family or what about the family?
- What will be commissioned as a result of the strategy?
- If someone wants help, how do they get it? Where from?
- Lots of inputs i.e. training, what are the outputs/outcomes?