



BRIEFING PAPER

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The Troubled Families Programme (England)

By Philip Loft

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Summary

The Troubled Families Programme (TFP) is a programme in England administered by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The programme conducts targeted interventions for families experiencing multiple problems, including crime, anti-social behaviour, truancy, unemployment, mental health problems and domestic abuse.

The programme has had two iterations since its introduction in 2012: the first programme ran from 2012 to 2015 and the second was due to run from 2015 to 2020. The Spending Review in November 2020 [announced](#) £165 million to extend the TFP to 2021-22. This was in addition to the £165 million [confirmed](#) for 2020-21 in January 2020.

2012-15 Programme

The previous [2012-15 programme](#) aimed to “turn around” 120,000 families in England. Department for Communities and Local Government [figures](#) stated 116,654 of the 117,000 identified families had achieved this outcome by May 2015.

Based on the accompanying report, [Benefits of the TFP to the taxpayer](#) (2015), the Department estimated that the average gross cost saving to the taxpayer per family was £12,000, more than twice the average cost of the programme’s intervention at £5,493. The programme had a central government budget of £448 million.

The 2016 Public Accounts Committee report, [Troubled families: progress review](#), criticised the Government’s evaluation. The Committee said the term “turned around” was “misleading” as the outcomes measured were short-term. The Committee also said the Department had “not demonstrated that the programme has provided genuine financial savings”. The Government, in its [response](#) to the report, agreed with the Committee’s recommendations and adopted new methodologies for evaluating the post-2015 TFP.

2015-21 Programme

Funding

In 2013, the then-Coalition Government [announced](#) that a second programme would run from 2015/16. A [total](#) of £1.1 billion of funding has been committed to March 2021. The programme [intended](#) to help up to 400,000 families “achieve significant and sustained progress against all their multiple problems and make work and ambition for all families” by 2020. The [programme](#) is primarily a payment by results scheme, where local authorities claim payment when their work with families results in significant and sustained progress against their identified problems, or achieve continuous employment. Funding is allocated to local authorities based on the level of need. From 2018, 14 authorities [moved](#) to an up-front funding model known as “earned autonomy”.

The County Councils Network in May 2020 [called](#) upon the UK Government to make TFP funds available “now to scale up family support services” and to set out a long term financial settlement in the forthcoming Spending Review, as it expected rising pressure on services due to the Coronavirus outbreak. £165 million of funding was [announced](#) in the November 2020 Spending Review to continue the programme to 2021-22. This was in addition to the £165 million [confirmed](#) for 2020-21 in January 2020.

Who does the programme aim to support?

To be [eligible](#) for the TFP, each family must include dependent children and/or expectant parents, and have at least two of the six problems prescribed by the MHCLG. These relate

to crime and antisocial behaviour, education, life chances, living standards, domestic abuse and mental and physical health.

Analysis in the MHCLG's [Annual report of the TFP 2019-20](#) (June 2020) shows that the most common problems faced by families related to children needing help (88%), worklessness (58%) and health (48%). Of the families on the programme, 49% had at least one child under the age of five at the start of the intervention. 74% of families were assessed as experiencing between two and four problems.

Who does the programme work for?

The MHCLG's [Annual Report of the TFP 2019-20](#) (June 2020) said that successful family outcomes numbered around 350,000 by 5 April 2020. Of these, around 30,000 families have adults who moved into continuous employment.

MHCLG analysis said the TFP was having a positive impact on offending outcomes for those families with a recent criminal history and for those who have been involved with children's social care in the year before joining the programme. The impact of the TFP on employment, school attendance and domestic violence were either less significant or could not be established as a direct result of participation in the programme.

1. The TFP 2012-2015

Box 1: Respect Programme, 2006-2010

The [Respect Programme](#), launched by the Home Office in 2006, sought to “tackle the behaviour of ‘problem families’ by challenging them to accept support to change their behaviour, backed up by enforcement measures”.¹ Interventions included Family Intervention Projects (FIPs), parenting contracts in respect to anti-social behaviour and a youth taskforce.² [2011 Analysis](#) commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) reported that 3,675 families on FIPs (85%) were recorded as achieving a positive outcome, including addressing parenting and family breakdown issues, involvement in crime, poor health, exclusion and alcohol/drug misuse. The report emphasised that not all impacts were sustained: in respect to health, 39% of families did not sustain their positive outcome 9 to 14 months after exiting intervention.³ The TFP is based on evidence from the FIPs.⁴

1.1 Announcement and design

In December 2011, the then-Prime Minister, David Cameron, [said](#) that the UK Government would commit £448 million to “turn around” the lives of 120,000 troubled families in England by May 2015.⁵ This followed a [pilot programme](#) in 2010.

When making the [fiscal case](#) for the programme, the then-Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) estimated that the Government would spend an estimated £9 billion per year on these families from 2010 to 2015, with £8 billion of this being “reactive” in nature rather than targeted.⁶

The estimate of 120,000 troubled families came from the Cabinet Office’s Task Force for Social Exclusion [report](#) of June 2007. This estimated that in 2005 there were around 117,000 families in England having five or more of the following problems: no parent working; family living in poor quality/overcrowded housing; no parent with qualifications; mother having mental health problems; a parent living with a longstanding limiting illness or disability; family income being below 60% of the median; and the family being unable to afford certain food or clothing items.⁷

Funding

Of the £448 million committed, up to £400 million was allocated to authorities based on the number of families they worked with and the results achieved. £51 million of central funding was used to fund a coordinator in each local authority to deliver the TFP locally.⁸

Councils were able to claim funding of up to £4,000 per family. The DCLG estimated the average cost of successful family interventions was around £10,000, with authorities expected to make up the remainder.⁹ Part of the £4,000 was paid up front as a “attachment fee” for each family meeting the eligibility criteria to reflect set-up costs and

¹ Home Office, [Respect Action Plan](#), 2006, p3

² Home Office, [Respect: Document Library](#), 1 November 2010

³ National Centre for Social Research and Bryson Purdon Social Research for the Department for Education (DfE) in [Monitoring and evaluation of Family Intervention services and projects between February 2007 and March 2011](#), May 2011, paras 8.1.3, 8.1.4

⁴ MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020: Findings](#), 2019, p8

⁵ Cabinet Office, [Prime Minister’s Troubled Families speech](#), 11 December 2011

⁶ Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), [The fiscal case for working with troubled families](#), February 2013, pp9-10

⁷ DfE, [FOI release: Families with multiple problems](#), September 2011; Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force, [Families at risk](#), 2007, p4; Full Fact, [Troubled Families estimates: A troubled history](#), August 2014

⁸ National Audit Office (NAO), [The TFP: Update](#), 2016, paras 1.14-1.16

⁹ DCLG, [TFP: Financial framework for the TFP’s payment by results scheme for local authorities](#), 2012, p7

the remainder could be claimed by a council if they “turned around” the family. The attachment fee made up 80% of the total payment in 2012/13, 60% in 2013/14 and 40% in 2014/15.¹⁰

Identifying families

Primarily using indices of deprivation and child-wellbeing as proxy-measures, the DCLG calculated an indicative number of “troubled families” in each local authority area.¹¹ It then expected authorities to identify and “turn around” this number of families, being identified locally using patterns in crime/anti-social behaviour, education, school exclusions, employment and through local discretions (such as frequent intervention from the police, or a child being on a Child Protection Plan).¹² The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) made regulations to share data on an estimated 240,000 people in connection to the TFP.¹³ The Department encouraged councils to work with more families than the indicative number, in case interventions did not succeed.¹⁴

Box 2: Who were the families supported in the 2012-2015 TFP?

The [Final synthesis report](#) (2016), commissioned by the DCLG, analysed Family Monitoring Data and evidence gathered in the 2016 report, [The Impact of the TFP: Findings from the Analysis of National Administrative Data](#), to establish the “typical” families on the TFP. It found that 48% of families who received an intervention included a lone parent (compared to 16% nationally) and “well over” a third of parents had three or more children (compared to 14% nationally). Most families (90%) rented their homes and 80% of families were White British.¹⁵

On the issues experienced by families, the same report estimated that 29% of intervention families had one or more adults in employment in the 12 months before starting on the programme and 47% of households included at least one adult claiming out-of-work benefits.¹⁶

The report estimated that 32% of families had a child in need 12 months prior to starting on the programme and 41% of families were in this position one month before the programme start. The authors said it appeared many families were referred to the TFP “with the express purpose of avoiding further escalation of safeguarding concerns” and a child being taken into care.¹⁷

Within the 12 months prior to programme start “just over one tenth” of families had a child who received a caution or conviction and around 17% families had an adult in a similar situation.¹⁸

“Turning around” families

The Department did not prescribe how councils should work with families, but encouraged a “family intervention approach”, where a nominated key worker was assigned to each family to gain an understanding of a family’s interconnected issues and design a plan of action.¹⁹ A family would be “turned around”, if:

¹⁰ [Ibid](#), p8

¹¹ Cabinet Office, [Troubled Families Estimates explanatory note](#),

¹² DCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP: First synthesis report](#), 2016, para 3.1.2; DCLG, [TFP: Financial framework for the TFP’s payment by results scheme for local authorities](#), 2012, pp4-5

¹³ The [Social Security \(Information-sharing in relation to Welfare Services etc.\) Regulations 2012](#)

¹⁴ NAO, [The TFP: Update](#), 2016, para 1.12

¹⁵ DCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP: Final synthesis report](#), 2016, p34

¹⁶ [Ibid](#), p35

¹⁷ [Ibid](#), p39

¹⁸ [Ibid](#), p39

¹⁹ DCLG, [The first TFP 2012 to 2015: An overview](#), 2016, p6

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- They achieve all 3 of the education and crime/anti-social behaviour measures set out below where relevant:
 - Each child in the family has had fewer than 3 fixed exclusions and less than 15% of unauthorised absences in the last 3 school terms; and
 - A 60% reduction in anti-social behaviour across the family in the last 6 months; and
 - Offending rate by all minors in the family reduced by at least 33% in the last 6 months;
- If they do not enter work, but achieve the 'progress to work' [but not in job] (one adult in the family has either volunteered for the Work Programme or attached to the European Social Fund provision in the last 6 months).
OR
- At least one adult in the family has moved off out-of-work benefits into continuous employment in the last 6 months.²⁰

1.2 UK Government and UK Parliament evaluations

Families "Turned around"

Local authority figures submitted to the DCLG for May 2015 indicated that all 117,910 troubled families had been identified by authorities, and that 116,654, or 99%, had been "turned around". As a minimum this meant that:

- Truancy and absent children were back in school and with high levels of attendance over three consecutive terms;
- Significant reductions were made in youth crime and anti-social behaviour; or
- An adult previously on out of work benefits was in continuous employment for at least three months.

11,921 families had achieved "continuous employment" and 9,106 had achieved the "progress to work outcome" by the same date.²¹

Of the 152 local authorities in England, only two, Cornwall and Lancashire, had a success rate of below 90%, whilst 132 had a success rate of 100%.²²

The Public Accounts Committee for their 2016 report, [Troubled Families: Progress review](#), heard that authorities had worked with more than the prescribed number of families, but the DCLG was not aware of how many families were worked with in total.²³

The Committee also argued that the terminology used by the DCLG "overstated" the success of the programme:

The implication of 'turned around' was misleading, as the term was only indicative of achieving short-term outcomes under the programme rather than representing long-term, sustainable change in families' lives. While there was some success, by claiming that an outcome achieved meant that a family had been "turned around", the Department's use of the term overstated the impact of the Troubled Families programme. The use of this term suggested that long term social problems could be

²⁰ DCLG, [The TFP: Financial framework for the TFP's payment-by-results scheme for local authorities](#), 2012, p9 and Annex C

²¹ DCLG, [Troubled Families: progress information by December 2014 and families turned around by May 2015](#), 22 June 2015

²² [Ibid](#)

²³ Public Accounts Committee, [Troubled families: Progress review](#), HC 711, December 2016, para 22

fixed within a few months or years, and risks undermining the entire concept of this work. The Department should not have used such misleading terminology.²⁴

The Committee recommended that the Department adopt new terminology to evaluate the programme, which, in its [response](#), the Government agreed to implement for the TFP from 2015.²⁵

Financial Savings

In March 2015, when 106,000 families had been “turned around”, the Government estimated that £1.2 billion had been saved for the taxpayer.²⁶ This was based on a sample of 7 of the 152 participating authorities.²⁷

In 2016, the DCLG estimated that there was a gross saving of £2.11 for every £1 spent on families participating in the programme but stated savings could not be directly attributed to the TFP.²⁸ The Government said that these spending reductions may have also reflected “changes in wider national trends, demographic changes in the make-up of the cohort, success of other government programmes, or a natural de-escalation of issues”.²⁹

The 2016 [Public Accounts Committee report](#) said that the Department had not demonstrated the “genuine” financial savings of the TFP:

The Department announced that the programme had saved £1.2 billion. This is an overestimate as it does not take account of the costs of delivering the programme, although these included existing resources at local authority level as well as new money.³⁰

The Government agreed that its measurements for savings should be improved and said it would work with authorities to develop better data collection for the future programme.³¹

Interaction with the Families with Multiple Problems programme

The Families with Multiple Problems programme, running from 2011 to 2015, was funded by the European Social Fund and sought to work with families facing multiple barriers to work. Outcomes data showed that by August 2015, there were 79,130 attachments to the programme, and 9,130 sustained job outcomes.³²

The Public Accounts Committee was critical of the launch of two programmes in the same year which targeted similar families and which both offered payment-by-results, with little in the way of coordination or joint governance arrangements between DWP and DCLG:

The integration of the programmes at the design phase was poor, leading to confusion, and contributing to the low number of referrals to the DWP’s programme.³³

²⁴ [Ibid](#), para 4

²⁵ HM Treasury, [Treasury Minutes: Government responses on the Committee of Public Accounts on the Twenty Sixth, the Twenty Seventh and the Twenty Ninth to the Thirty Fourth reports from Session 2016-17](#), March 2017, para 4.3

²⁶ DCLG, [More than 105,000 troubled families turned around saving taxpayers an estimated £1.2 billion](#), 10 March 2015

²⁷ DCLG, [The benefits of the TFP to the taxpayer](#), 2015

²⁸ DCLG, [Local authority data on the cost and potential fiscal benefits of the TFP](#), 2016, p4

²⁹ [Ibid](#), p10

³⁰ Public Accounts Committee, [Troubled families: Progress review](#), HC 711, December 2016, para 5

³¹ HM Treasury, [Treasury Minutes: Government responses on the Committee of Public Accounts on the Twenty Sixth, the Twenty Seventh and the Twenty Ninth to the Thirty Fourth reports from Session 2016-17](#), March 2017, paras 5.2-5.4

³² DWP, [ESF Support for Families with Multiple Problems – December 2011 to August 2015](#), October 2015

³³ Public Accounts Committee, [Programme to help families facing multiple challenges](#), HC 688, March 2014, para 3

Some coordination took place after both programmes had been launched, such as the secondment of 150 Jobcentre Plus advisers to local authorities' Troubled Families teams.³⁴

1.3 Ecorys evaluation, 2016

The DCLG commissioned an [independent evaluation of the TFP](#) to 2015 by Ecorys, who led a consortium of research organisations.

Its [Final synthesis report](#) (2016) was based on analysis of data from 56 local authorities, encompassing around 25% of the 117,910 participants, and interviews with 495 families. The report noted that the TFP may have had statistically significant impacts in certain local areas, but this may have been balanced by negative impacts in other areas, making specific impacts hard to determine.³⁵

The report concluded that their research was unable to find “consistent evidence that the TFP had any significant or systematic impact” on “employment, benefit receipt, school attendance, safeguarding and child welfare” outcomes (defined as outcomes attributable to the programme 12-18 months after a family joined the TFP). This did not mean that families who participated in the programme had not, on some measures, experienced improved outcomes, but rather that observed outcomes for the TFP families were very similar to the outcomes for a matched comparison group of families.³⁶

Families on the programme were found to be more likely to report “managing well financially; knowing how to keep on the right track; being confident that their worst problems were behind them, and feeling positive about the future” compared to the matched comparison group.³⁷ However, this did not include any significant impacts on their self-reported levels of debt.³⁸

The report also found that the TFP helped to raise the profile of family intervention, supported the testing of new models of service development and commissioning in many local areas, expanded the workforce in some areas and paved the way for better joint working with Job Centre Plus at a local level. The evaluation noted the “wide variations” in local practice regarding training, caseload sizes, and exiting of families from the programme and said there was “mixed evidence” regarding the extent scaling-up had been achieved without sacrificing the quality of family support.³⁹

The evaluation said it had not been possible to undertake a full cost-benefit analysis.⁴⁰

In response, the Government emphasised that the evaluation found positive outcomes from the programme and that the next stage of the TFP would involve alterations in a number of ways, such as extending the length of time over which family outcomes will be tracked, from 12 months to 5 years.⁴¹

³⁴ [Ibid](#), para 3

³⁵ DCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP: Final synthesis report](#), 2016, p77

³⁶ [Ibid](#), p69

³⁷ [Ibid](#), p49

³⁸ [Ibid](#), p68

³⁹ [Ibid](#), p68

⁴⁰ [Ibid](#), p10

⁴¹ PQ HL2384 [\[Families: Disadvantaged\]](#), 25 October 2016

2. The TFP 2015-2021: Scheme

2.1 Announcement and design

In June 2013, the then-Coalition Government [announced](#) that a second programme would run from 2015/16.⁴² It was later confirmed that the Programme would run until 2020,⁴³ and, in January 2020, the Communities Secretary, Robert Jenrick, announced that the scheme would continue to March 2021.⁴⁴

The programme [intended](#) to help up to 400,000 families “achieve significant and sustained progress against all their multiple problems and make work and ambition for all families” by 2020.⁴⁵ The TFP also intends to “transform for the long term the way that public services work with families facing multiple disadvantages”.⁴⁶

Funding

A [total](#) of £1.085 billion of funding has been committed to March 2021.⁴⁷

The programme is primarily a payment by results scheme, where local authorities can claim payments when their work with families results in significant and sustained progress, or employment. Funding is allocated to local authorities based on the level of need. A total funding allocation for each local authority, as of March 2019, was provided in answer to a [parliamentary question](#).⁴⁸

Local authorities receive an upfront £1,000 attachment fee for each family with whom they agree to work and a £800 results payment for each family with whom they achieve an outcome. Each authority receives an annual Service Transformation Grant (most local authorities receive £200,000 each year) to support local delivery of the programme. The Government said that payment by results programme in the second TFP provides a “more modest reward...in recognition of there being a broader range of needs likely to be captured through the eligibility criteria for this larger cohort”.⁴⁹

The programme works with a number of other Government programmes, including, but not limited to, the [Strengthening Families Protecting Children](#) programme, [Reducing Parental Conflict](#) programme, the [Early Outcomes fund](#) and the [Trusted Relationships fund](#).⁵⁰

Identifying Families

The TFP intends to help 400,000 troubled families, but local authorities may work with a larger number than for which funding has been allocated in their area.

The [Financial Framework for the Troubled Families Programme](#) (April 2020), sets out the following eligibility criteria:⁵¹

⁴² DCLG and HM Treasury, [Troubled families programme receives extra £200 million boost](#), 24 June 2013

⁴³ [PQ 28956 \[on Families: Disadvantaged\]](#), 3 March 2016

⁴⁴ MHCLG, [Government Confirms Extra Support for Troubled Families to Succeed](#), 5 January 2020

⁴⁵ DCLG, [Supporting disadvantaged families: TFP 2015-2020: Progress so far](#), 2017, p7

⁴⁶ PQ 45100 [\[Families: Disadvantaged\]](#), 14 September 2016

⁴⁷ PQ 12258 [\[Families: Disadvantaged\]](#), 11 February 2020

⁴⁸ PQ 234231 [\[Families: Disadvantaged\]](#), 19 March 2019

⁴⁹ DCLG, [The first Troubled Families Programme 2012 to 2015: An overview](#), October 2016, p19

⁵⁰ MHCLG, [Building resilient families: Third annual report of the TFP 2018-19](#), March 2019, p3

⁵¹ This replaced DCLG, [Financial framework for the expanded Troubled Families Programme](#) (last updated January 2018) and the DCLG, [Financial Framework for the expanded TFP](#) (2015)

To be eligible for the Troubled Families Programme, each family must include dependent children⁵² and/or expectant parents and have at least two of the following six problems

1. Staying safe in the community: Parents or children involved in crime or antisocial behaviour
2. Getting a good education and skills for life: Children who have not been attending school regularly
3. Improving children's life chances: children who need additional support, from the earliest years to adulthood
4. Improving living standards: families experiencing or at risk of worklessness, homelessness or financial difficulties
5. Staying safe in relationships: families affected by domestic abuse
6. Living well, improving physical and mental health and wellbeing: Parents and children with a range of health needs.⁵³

The framework states that local authorities should prioritise families for inclusion on the basis that they are families with multiple problems who are most likely to benefit from a whole family approach and that they are families who incur the highest cost to the state.⁵⁴

The updated financial framework in June 2020 extended eligibility for the programme to expectant parents and it clarified eligibility criteria to encourage local areas to prioritise families affected by child sexual exploitation, gang and knife crime and those at risk of homelessness.⁵⁵

Previously, in 2017, the DWP said the next phase of the TFP would have a greater emphasis on worklessness and issues associated with it (such as problem debt and parental conflict).⁵⁶ The MHCLG encouraged local authorities to prioritise these issues in interventions.⁵⁷ In November 2019, the [Reducing Parental Conflict Programme](#) was offered in 30 local authority areas, and 148 local authority areas had access to practitioner training to support workers to manage conflict in family life.⁵⁸

Working with families

Local authorities are encouraged to take an integrated, "whole family" approach when working with families. Authorities must apply four principles set out by the MHCLG to be eligible to claim families as having worked with the programme and to make a claim:

- There will have been an assessment that takes into account the needs and voice of the whole family;
- There is an action plan that takes account of all (relevant) family members;
- There is a lead / key worker for the family that is recognised by the family and other professionals involved with the family; and
- The objectives in the family action plan are aligned to those in the local authority's Troubled Families Outcomes Plan (TFOP).⁵⁹

⁵² Defined as a person aged 0-15 or aged 16-18 and in full-time education and/or training and/or unemployed and living with their family—more detail is set out on MHCLG, [Financial framework for the TFP](#), April 2020, p19

⁵³ MHCLG, [Financial framework for the TFP](#), April 2020, p16

⁵⁴ [Ibid](#), p17

⁵⁵ MHCLG, [Improving families lives: Annual report of the TFP 2019-20](#), June 2020, p9

⁵⁶ DWP, [Improving lives: Helping workless families](#), April 2017, para 49

⁵⁷ MHCLG, [Supporting disadvantaged families- Annual report of the TFP 2017-18](#), 2018, p35

⁵⁸ MHCLG Blog, [Reducing Parental Conflict](#), 5 November 2019

⁵⁹ MHCLG, [Financial framework for the TFP](#), April 2020, p21

A Troubled Families Outcome Plan (TFOP) is required for all authorities delivering the TFP. This should set out what each local authority and its partners consider to be the indicators of eligibility and successful outcomes against the programme's six headline problems (crime and anti-social behaviour; poor health; domestic violence and abuse; children who need help; poor school attendance and worklessness).⁶⁰

Families spend, on average, an estimated nine months in the TFP.⁶¹ Once progress has been made, a typical "step-down" process from the Programme involves looking again at a family's goals, highlighting areas of achievement and areas to improve. Appointments with other agencies, particularly universal services like schools or JobCentre Plus centres, are then arranged.⁶²

The DWP provides a network of 300 work coaches to act as employment advisors to support families into work and share expertise with local workers.⁶³

2.2 Defining success

To claim a payment, a local authority must demonstrate that an eligible family has either:

1. Achieved significant and sustained progress against all problems identified at the point of engagement and during the intervention; or
2. An adult in the family has moved into continuous employment.⁶⁴

A claim can only be made where all children in the family have been attending for an average of at least 90% of sessions across three consecutive terms, though authorities have discretion to decide whether this applies to authorised absences and to alternatively use distance travelled where attendance started at a very low base (40% or less).⁶⁵

"Sustained and significant progress" should be defined locally and set out in the TFOP for each authority. "Sustained" must be a minimum of six months, and the school attendance outcome must be demonstrated across three consecutive terms before a claim can be made.⁶⁶

"Continuous employment" is defined in the [April 2020 Framework](#) as an adult in a family meeting one of the below thresholds:

- Working age/legacy benefits (such as Jobseekers Allowance): move off out of work benefits and be in employment continuously for 26 out of the last 30 weeks
- Universal Credit: reach the Administrative Earning Thresholds (AET)14 or above continuously for 26 weeks out of the last 30 weeks.
- Not required to actively seek employment (i.e. in legacy benefits under Employment Support Allowance / Income Support type arrangement): be in continuous employment for 13 weeks.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ [Ibid](#), p10

⁶¹ MHCLG, [National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015 - 2020 Family Outcomes – national and local datasets, Part 4](#), March 2019, p54

⁶² Ipsos MORI, [Troubled Families qualitative case study research: Phase 2: Wave 1](#), September 2018, p7

⁶³ MHCLG, [Financial framework for the TFP](#), April 2020, p22

⁶⁴ [Ibid](#), p22

⁶⁵ [Ibid](#), p13

⁶⁶ [Ibid](#), pp13-14

⁶⁷ [Ibid](#), p23

Box 3: Differences between the 2012-15 and 2015-21 TFPs

- The post-2015 scheme seeks to achieve “significant and sustained progress” against all problems identified at point of engagement or during the time a family is on the TFP, or for an adult to move into “continuous employment”. This compares to the original scheme’s aim to “turn around” families.
- The post-2015 scheme aims to work with 400,000 families, compared to the 120,000 in the 2012-15 scheme
- The payment-by-results system was retained, although it features a less generous pay-out per family to reflect broader criteria for inclusion.
- A small number of local authorities have moved to a new funding model, “Earned Autonomy”, in which all payments are provided up-front (see section 2.4 below).
- Each local authority is now subject to two spot checks during the lifetime of the programme. The spot checks now include a visit by a Department official, as well as scrutiny of local authority data systems. These visits include an interview of local authority keyworkers to assess local practice.⁶⁸
- In response to the [2016 PAC report](#), which was critical of how 2012-15 TFP was evaluated,⁶⁹ the DCLG [set out](#) several changes to the evaluation process for the TFP from 2015. These include regularly reporting throughout the programme and post-2022; measuring 60 outcome indicators; tracking outcomes up to 5 years after intervention; and establishing an independent advisory group to provide external support and scrutiny of the evaluation.⁷⁰

2.3 Developing local services

The TFP also aims to help local services transform the way that public services work with families with multiple problems and to reduce demand for reactive services by helping them adopt an integrated, “whole family approach”.⁷¹ This includes identifying families at risk more proactively, recording and sharing data between local services and improving relationships with schools, health and police.⁷²

In 2018/19, the UK Government made available support to 30 areas whose performance was below the national average across a number of measures, arguing that they had a “narrow approach to delivery of the programme, missing out on the benefits of spreading whole family working to broader public services”. It also developed a performance diagnostic tool to share good practice.⁷³ In 2019/20, the MHCLG said that there had been a “162% increase in successful family outcomes for lower performing areas between 2018-19”.⁷⁴

The MHCLG has published an [Early help system guide](#) (April 2020) to guide the “whole family” approach in an authority. Best practice is shared on the [TFP blog](#). [The Digital Economy Act 2017](#) allows for public service providers to share information in order to provide support for households facing multiple disadvantages. Section 2 of the accompanying [Code of Practice](#) explains this power in more depth.

⁶⁸ HM Treasury, [Treasury Minutes: Government responses on the Committee of Public Accounts on the Twenty Sixth, the Twenty Seventh and the Twenty Ninth to the Thirty Fourth reports from Session 2016-17](#), March 2017, para 3.2

⁶⁹ Committee of Public Accounts, [Troubled families: progress review](#), 20 December 2016, HC 711, recommendation 2

⁷⁰ HM Treasury, [Treasury Minutes: Government responses on the Committee of Public Accounts on the Twenty Sixth, the Twenty Seventh and the Twenty Ninth to the Thirty Fourth reports from Session 2016-17](#), March 2017, para 2.3

⁷¹ MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020: Findings](#), 2019, p7

⁷² [Ibid](#), p6

⁷³ MHCLG, [Building Resilient Families: Third annual report of the TFP 2018-19](#), March 2019, p11

⁷⁴ MHCLG, [Improving families’ lives: Annual report of the TFP 2019-2020](#), June 2020, p11

Ipsos MORI's [Survey of TFP keyworkers](#) in 2018, commissioned by the MHCLG, found the proportion of key workers employed by a specific TFP team fell from 29% in 2017 to 13% in 2018, with 39% working as part of a children, young people and families team and 38% in an early help service (usually defined as providing support prior to engagement with statutory services).⁷⁵ In terms of the support they provide each week to a family, 81% helped address parent/parenting issues; 58% adult mental health issues; 57% child mental health issues; and 54% school attendance.⁷⁶ Full results can be found in the report: [Survey amongst TFP keyworkers](#) (May 2019).

2.4 "Earned Autonomy" model

In 2018, 14 local authorities moved to an up-front funding model to test whether a different funding approach would better deliver family services.⁷⁷ This moved away from the previous payment by results model, where authorities received a proportion of funding once they had achieved significant and sustained progress or continuous employment with a family.

The selected areas were Barking and Dagenham, Brighton and Hove, Bristol, Camden, Cheshire West and Chester, Durham, Ealing, Islington, Kent, Leeds, Liverpool, Sheffield, Staffordshire and Westminster.⁷⁸

Ipsos MORI [research](#) commissioned by the MHCLG found that local authority respondents were "positive" about earned autonomy, noting that it created efficiencies, as they did not have to submit claims, and allowed them to pay their partners upfront, aiding planning and the maintenance of infrastructure. However, authorities also reported an administrative burden in handling the transition, requiring planning to reduce local risk.⁷⁹

2.5 Devolution to Greater Manchester

The [2016 Plan for Further Devolution to Greater Manchester Combined Authority](#) enables Greater Manchester to bring together funding from the TFP, including the service transformation grant and payment by results allocation for Greater Manchester, into a single pot. Funding totalled around £35 million for the three years from April 2017 and will be around £10.7 million in 2020/21.⁸⁰

In its position paper on the TFP in February 2020, the Authority said that there was "positive evidence of the impact that Troubled Families funding has had in improving the support offer available to many vulnerable families".⁸¹

The University of Manchester's Innovative Social Investment (InnoSI) network published [case study research](#) on the TFP in Greater Manchester in 2017. Following interviews with TFP staff and families, the authors argued that the TFP in Manchester had led to better information-sharing and co-production of family plans, but more support for mental health services was needed and the financial mechanism of payment by results "had some support from senior decision makers but at street level is seen as inhibiting collaboration".⁸²

⁷⁵ Ipsos MORI, [TFP: National evaluation: Survey amongst TFP keyworkers](#), May 2019, p18

⁷⁶ [Ibid](#), p24

⁷⁷ DCLG, [Financial framework for the expanded Troubled Families Programme](#), January 2018, pp4-5

⁷⁸ MHCLG, [Improving families lives: Annual report of the TFP 2019-2020](#), June 2020, p10

⁷⁹ Ipsos MORI, [TFP: Qualitative case study report: Phase 2: Wave 2](#), May 2019, Section 7

⁸⁰ Greater Manchester Combined Authority, [Troubled Families Funding](#), 14 February 2020, paras 1.1, 1.3

⁸¹ [Ibid](#), para 5.1

⁸² InnoSI, [Case study briefing: TFP in Greater Manchester](#), 2017, p2

2.6 Youth Crime Fund

In October 2018, the Government [announced](#) the creation of a Supporting Families Against Youth Crime Fund, which would be channelled through the TFP. The fund supported early intervention and prevention and was available over the financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20.⁸³

In February 2019, it was announced that £9.8 million would go towards projects in 21 areas to tackle knife crime and gang culture.⁸⁴

The Government said in June 2020 that preventing and tackling youth crime “continues to be a priority for the TFP” and had commissioned Ipsos MORI to evaluate the fund to inform future policy.⁸⁵

⁸³ MHCLG, [TFP: Supporting families against youth crime: Fund prospectus](#), 2018

⁸⁴ MHCLG, [£9.8 million fund to confront knife crime and gang culture](#), 22 February 2019

⁸⁵ MHCLG, [Improving families lives: Annual report of the TFP 2019-20](#), June 2020, p9

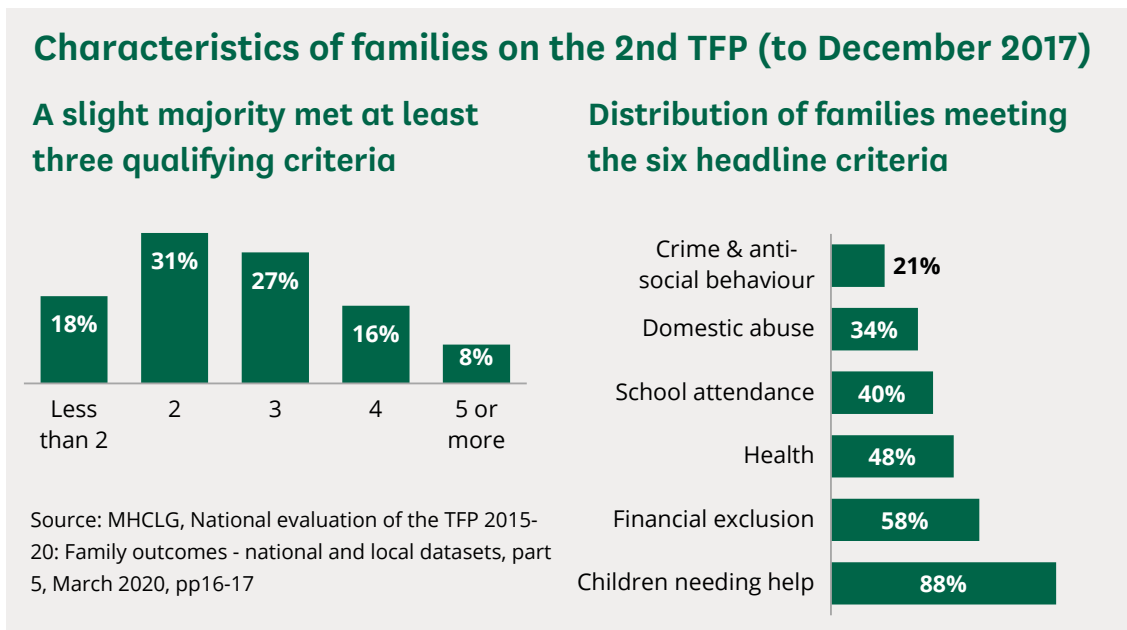
3. Characteristics and progress of "troubled families"

Under Section 3 of the [Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016](#), the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government is required to present the UK Parliament with a report on the TFP. Using data collected and submitted by local authorities to the MHCLG, the Department has published information on the characteristics of participating families, the problems that they have faced, and family outcomes. The most recent report, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015 to 2021](#), was published in June 2020. Previous reports can be found on the [MHCLG website](#).

3.1 Family characteristics

Qualifying criteria

The MHCLG noted that caution should be taken when interpreting these [results](#), due to the limited amount of data accessible by authorities on the health of families, and that some authorities may only record two criteria for each family (the minimum required). The below data is on 205,353 families.⁸⁶



The six eligibility criteria for families are:

- 1 Families at risk of financial exclusion, including adults out of work;
- 2 Children not attending school regularly;
- 3 Parents and children with a range of health problems;
- 4 Children who need help or are in need or subject to a child protection plan;
- 5 Families affected by domestic abuse; and
- 6 Adults or children involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.

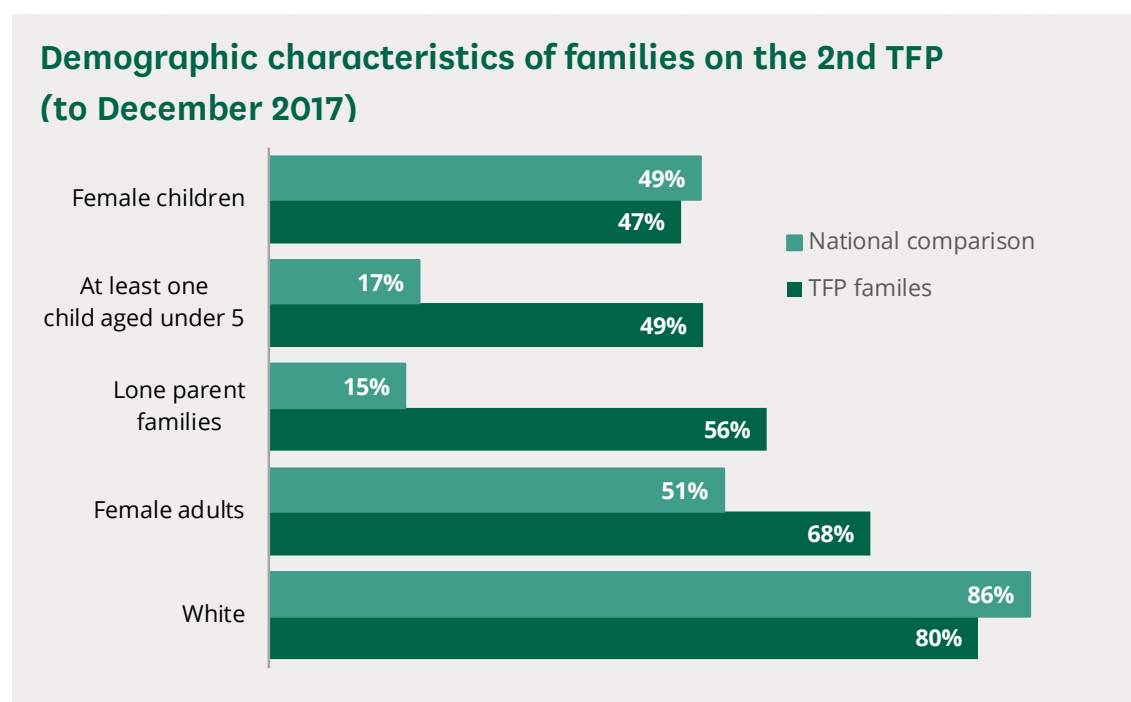
⁸⁶ MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020: Family outcomes—national and local datasets, part 5](#), March 2020, pp12, 14. This data is based on the survey undertaken for the previous year's report, for families joining the programme from September 2014 to December 2017: MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020: Family outcomes- national and local datasets](#), part 4, March 2019, p13

A slight majority of families (51%) met three or more of these criteria. 18% of families met fewer than 2 criteria. The MHCLG says this could be due to data quality issues, the reliance of local authorities on local discretion to include families with other needs on the programme, or because families met only one criterion.

The MHCLG has noted that the number of criteria each family meets was lower in the June-December 2017 cohort compared to the September 2014-June 2015 cohort: 33% in the earlier cohort met two criteria and 40% in the final cohort. This, the Department said, may reflect the fact that services worked with the families with the highest needs at the start of the programme and the needs of families has declined over time, or that services struggled more recently to deal with more complex families because of resource constraints.⁸⁷

Descriptive analysis

The chart below shows the demographic characteristics of those who joined the TFP up to December 2017.⁸⁸ Families on the TFP to this date had a higher proportion of female adults and were more likely to have a lone parent, have an adult claiming any form of benefit, and have a child aged under-five compared to the general population. The MHCLG said the programme is more likely to contain a higher proportion of lone parents and young children as the TFP targets these groups.

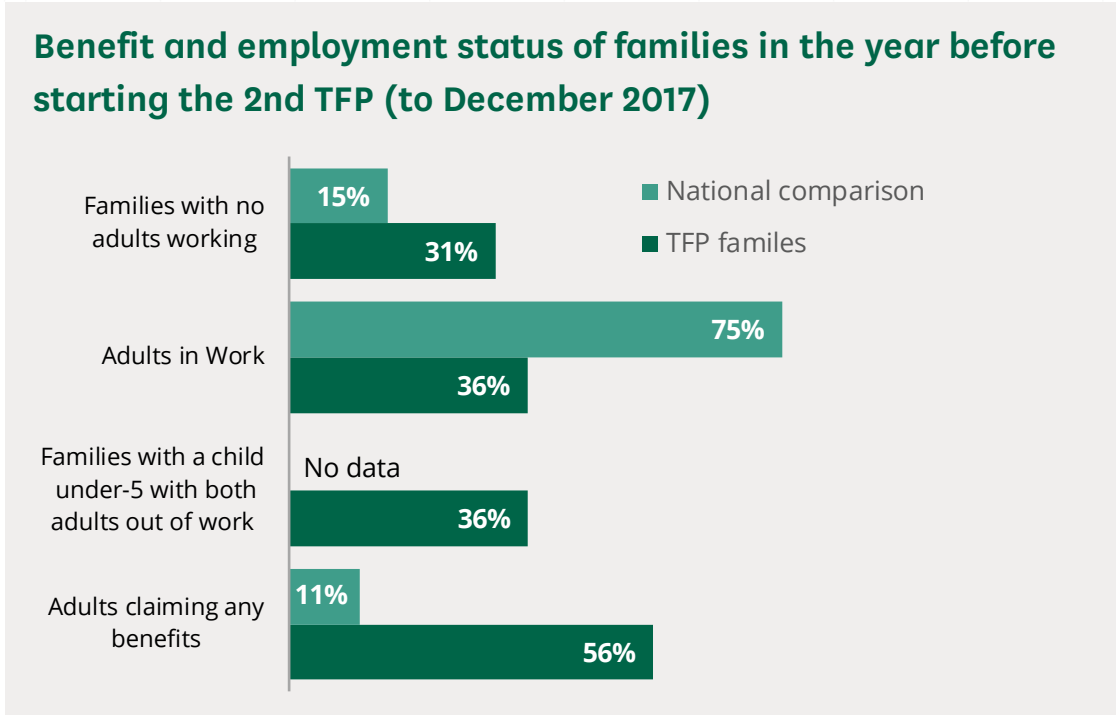


Note: Based on matched data for 248,528 families and 864,205 individuals. Base numbers vary for each measure. Source: MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020: Family outcomes—national and local datasets, Part 4](#), March 2019, pp17, 18

In the year before joining the TFP, 56% of families had at least one adult claiming one of: Jobseeker’s Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance, or Disability Living Allowance and Carer’s Allowance, compared to 11% in the population as a whole. 36% of adults were in work, compared to 75% across England.

⁸⁷ [Ibid](#), p17

⁸⁸ MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020: Family outcomes—national and local datasets, part 4, March 2019](#), Section A



Notes:

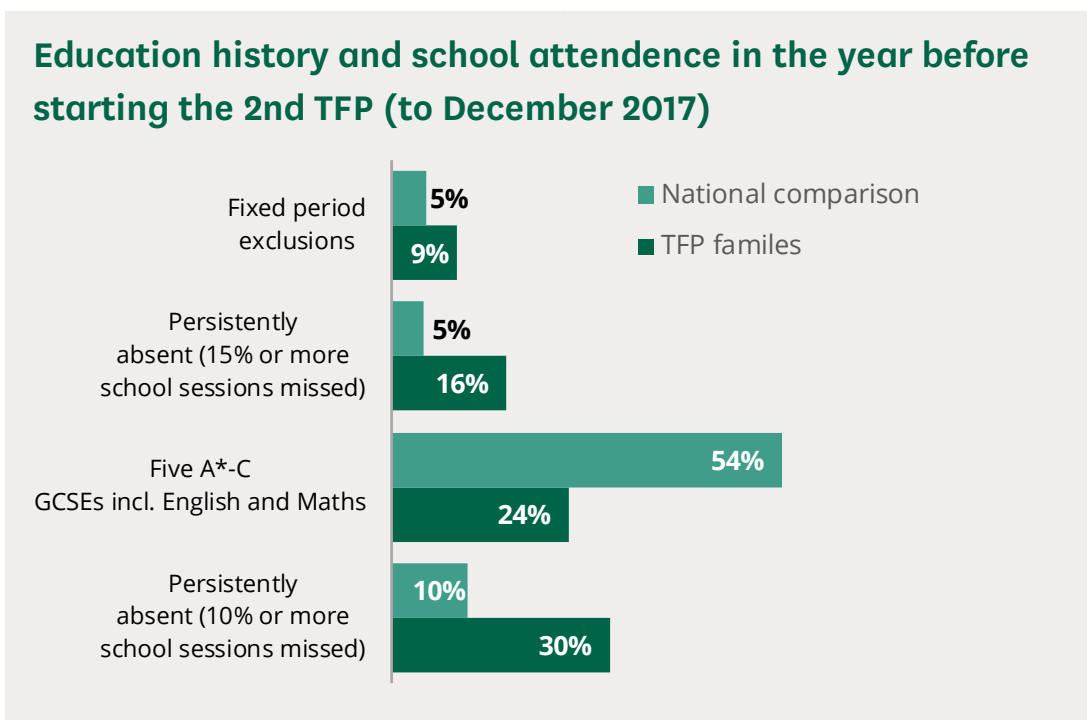
1. "Any benefits" are defined as Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and Carer's Allowance.
2. Families with both adults out of work includes single-parent families.
3. Adults in work is a figure for individuals, rather than families.
4. Base figures vary for each measure.

Source: MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020: Family outcomes—national and local datasets, Part 4](#), March 2019, p19

Educational performance of children

Data from the National Pupil database shows children in the TFP were nearly three times more likely to be persistently absent (defined as missing 10% or more school sessions) than the national prevalence.

A higher proportion of children on the TFP had, in the year to joining the TFP, received fixed period exclusions and permanent exclusions (0.1% nationally and 0.5% in the TFP). Around 24% of children on the TFP received five A*-C grades at GCSE, including in English and Maths, compared to the national average of 54%.



Note: Base figures varies for each measure.

Source: MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020: Family outcomes—national and local datasets, Part 4](#), March 2019, p21.

Around 32% of children were classed as a child in need in 12 months before joining the programme, compared to 3% nationally. 33% were classed as having a special educational need, compared to 15% nationally.⁸⁹

The MHCLG published separate figures on the educational performance for young children on the TFP for 2017, using the early years foundation score. In their reception year, children are assessed against 17 developmental criteria⁹⁰ as meeting one of three levels: emerging; expected; or exceeding. Children are scored against these criteria, with a minimum score of 17 (“emerging” in all criteria) and to a maximum of 51 (“exceeding” in all criteria).

Children joining the TFP perform less well than the general school population: 9% of children on the TFP score 17 points across all measures compared to 3% across in England. 22% of TFP children score 34 (the equivalent of meeting the “expected” level in all 17 criteria) compared to 28% in England.⁹¹

Health

In the year before starting the TFP, 42% of families on the TFP up to December 2017 had at least one individual with a mental health issue, and 16% had an individual dependent on drugs or alcohol. Comparative national figures are not available.⁹²

Crime & anti-social behaviour

In the year before starting the programme, 4.6% of adults on the TFP up to December 2017 had received a caution or conviction, compared to 0.5% nationally, and 2.5% of

⁸⁹ MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020: Family outcomes- national and local datasets](#), Part 4, March 2019, p22

⁹⁰ The categories include communication and language, physical development, personal, social and emotional development, literacy, mathematics, understanding the world and expressive arts and design.

⁹¹ MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020: Family outcomes—national and local datasets, part 5](#), March 2020, pp18-19

⁹² MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020: Family outcomes- national and local datasets](#), Part 4, March 2019, p23

children, compared to 0.4% nationally. 22% of families had been involved in a domestic abuse incident and 8% had an antisocial behaviour incident in the 12 months before joining the TFP. Comparative national figures are not available.⁹³

3.2 Outcomes

Headline family outcomes

The MHCLG's 2020 report on the TFP, [Improving families' lives: TFP annual report 2019 to 2020](#), said that 399,906 eligible families were being worked with by April 2020, and that, as of 5 April 2020, 350,105 families had reported successful outcomes (80%). Of these, 30,073 families have adults who moved into sustained employment (8%). Successful family outcomes figures are not measured against a comparison group, and the MHCLG says it is therefore unable to assess how many of those outcomes are a result of participation in the TFP. The Department undertakes spot checks to validate figures reported by local authorities.⁹⁴

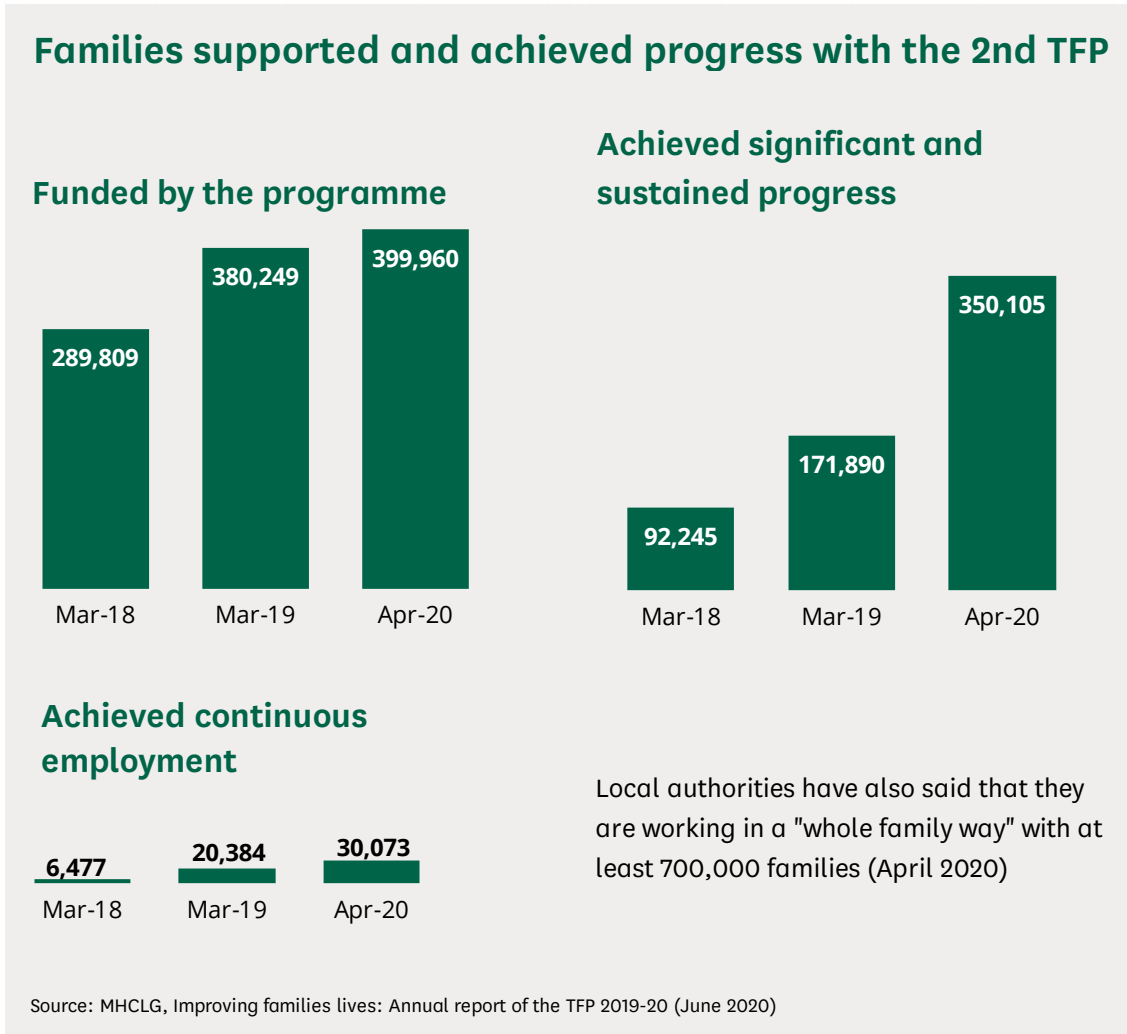
Case studies commissioned by the Department suggest that the TFP has helped in "building confidence, identifying existing skills, promoting financial benefits of working, job application skills, [and] supporting volunteering and training opportunities. This, the MHCLG said, suggests the programme is "adding value that cannot be picked up in the data analysis" (such as in employment).⁹⁵

Successful outcomes in each authority area were published in Annex A of the [MHCLG's June 2020 Annual report](#). Across 140 areas, 86 had reported successful outcomes of 90% or higher, and a further 31 at least 70%. 6 authorities had reported successful outcomes of less than 50%; Hampshire and Northamptonshire both reported rates of 27%. 103 authorities reported less than 10% of families had moved into sustained employment; the highest was Liverpool, at 41%.

⁹³ [Ibid](#), pp23, 24

⁹⁴ MHCLG, [Improving families' lives: Annual report of the TFP 2019-20](#), June 2020, p13

⁹⁵ MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020: Family outcomes- national and local datasets, Part 4](#), March 2019, p5



Sustaining outcomes: Children in Care

MHCLG analysis found that for families starting the programme between September 2013 and June 2016, 1% of children were looked after, 5% were on child protection plans, 26% on a child in need plan, and 69% were interacting with universal services (children may be recorded as having more than status). In the 13-24 months after the TFP start, of the children:⁹⁶

- Looked after prior the TFP, 78% had experienced a change in their social care status (changing to one of the four categories above);
- On a child protection plan prior to the TFP, 73% experienced a change in care status;
- On a child in need plan prior the TFP, 62% experienced a change in care status.

However, the MHCLG said it was not possible to conclude whether any of these changes were because of participation in the TFP and may instead reflect the fluidity of populations interacting with children’s social care.⁹⁷

Sustaining outcomes: Offending

MHCLG analysis suggests that for families starting the programme between September 2013 and June 2016, in the 13-24 months after the TFP intervention, the majority of

⁹⁶ [Ibid](#), p25

⁹⁷ MHCLG, [Improving families’ lives: Annual report of the TFP 2019-20](#), June 2020, p33

adults and juveniles who had been convicted or given a custodial sentence in the 12 months previous to the programme had not committed any further offences. For example, of the 19% of juvenile offenders who had been convicted, 74% committed no offence during intervention; and of the 11% of adults convicted, 78% committed no offence.⁹⁸

The MHCLG said that it was not possible to conclude that this was the result of participation in the TFP.⁹⁹

Progress of Troubled Families: Crime and anti-social behaviour

The proportion of individuals cautioned and convicted in the 12 months and 24 months after joining the programme was lower than in the 12 months before they joined the programme. However, when comparing Juveniles to Adults taking part in the TFP, in the year before and subsequent years after joining, there was a greater decrease in cautions and convictions for adults. These findings apply to families who joined the programme between September 2014 and April 2016.

The Department said that the data suggest the TFP is “having a small positive impact on the proportion of adults receiving custodial sentences”, as well as Juveniles, but said further research is needed to establish the reasons for this. It cited a joined-up approach between services or leniency of judges towards families on the TFP as potential reasons.¹⁰⁰

Proportion of individuals cautioned and convicted prior to joining the TFP and after (joining between September 2014 and April 2016)

	Adults and Juveniles		Adults (18+)		Juveniles (10-17)	
	Cautions	Convictions	Cautions	Convictions	Cautions	Convictions
12 months prior	1.8%	3.6%	1.7%	4.4%	2.1%	2.3%
12 months after	1.4%	3.3%	1.0%	3.7%	2.0%	2.7%
24 months after	1.0%	2.9%	0.7%	3.0%	1.5%	2.8%

Source: MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020, Family outcomes—national and local datasets, Part 4](#), March 2019, pp32, 33.

Domestic violence and abuse

The MHCLG estimated that around 22% of families on the TFP had at least one family member who had been affected by domestic abuse in the year before intervention. There was no significant change in overall levels of reported domestic abuse or violence in the three cohorts joining between September 2014 and June 2016.¹⁰¹

Progress of Troubled Families: Worklessness and financial exclusion

Progress data for up to 24 months after joining the programme was available for the first three cohorts of troubled families (i.e. families starting the programme between September 2014 and June 2016).

This shows that the proportion of working age adults on the TFP claiming Income Support and Jobseeker’s Allowance decreased, by 5% and 3%, respectively, whilst the proportion

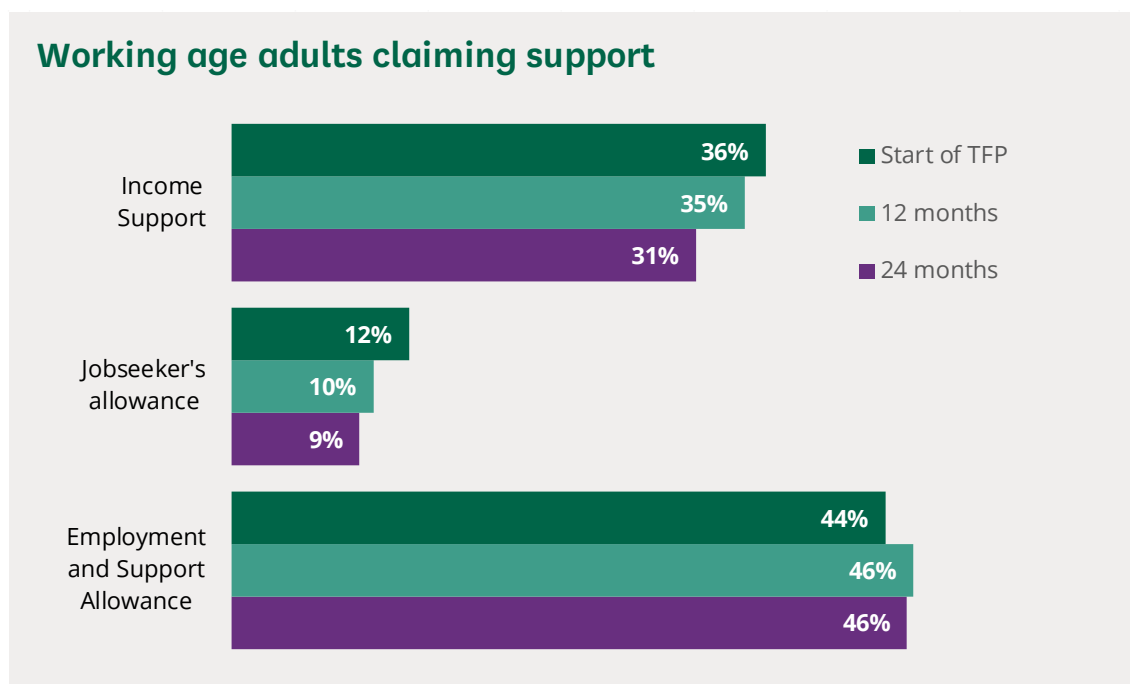
⁹⁸ [Ibid](#), pp35, 37

⁹⁹ [Ibid](#), p37

¹⁰⁰ MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020, Family outcomes—national and local datasets, Part 4](#) March 2019, p48

¹⁰¹ MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020: Findings](#), March 2019, p19

claiming Employment and Support Allowance increased by 2%. The MHCLG said around half of those adults who stopped claiming out-of-work benefits had “spells of employment”.¹⁰²



Source: MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020, Family outcomes—national and local datasets, Part 4](#) March 2019, p25

MHCLG analysis in 2019 noted that outcomes for out for work benefits should be treated with caution, as it does not include Universal Credit, but said that “overall, they suggest the programme is having no or limited impact on individuals claiming out-of-work benefits”. The Department said this may be because keyworkers focus on the other issues experienced by families, such as health, before encouraging people into work, and seek to ensure that families are claiming the benefits to which they are entitled.¹⁰³

Progress of Troubled Families: Education and school attendance

For the cohorts of TFP starting between September 2014 and June 2016, in the first two years after joining the programme, MHCLG data found that there was “no clear trend” in the proportion of school-aged children persistently absent from school, remaining in the region of 8-10%. Similarly, no clear trend emerged in the average proportion of school sessions missed over the same period, remaining in the region of 30%.¹⁰⁴

The Family Survey for 2020 suggested that 40% of main carers had no attendance concerns regarding their child in the 2015/16 survey, which rose to 63% in the 2017/18 follow up survey.¹⁰⁵

3.3 Family survey reports

Ipsos MORI publish accompanying surveys of families on the TFP. This is based on surveys of 1,200 families in 2015/16 and 600 of the same families in 2017/18, which were published as separate reports in [2017](#) and [2019](#). The family types surveyed included lone-

¹⁰² MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020, Family outcomes—national and local datasets, Part 4](#) March 2019, p27

¹⁰³ [Ibid](#), p42

¹⁰⁴ [Ibid](#), pp29, 30.

¹⁰⁵ Ipsos MORI, [TFP: National evaluation, Family survey- Additional analysis](#), December 2019, pp8, 14

parents, workless households, families with more than 2 children and all types of main carers. More detail for specific groups can be found in the [accompanying report](#).

Family survey respondents: Selected reported outcomes								
	Lone parents		Workless households		Families with 2+ children		All main carers	
	2015/16	2017/18	2015/16	2017/18	2015/16	2017/18	2015/16	2017/18
Employment & financial exclusion								
In Employment	22%	27%	-	-	19%	24%	27%	31%
Workless household	75%	70%	-	-	-	-	20%	25%
At least 1 out of work benefit	70%	64%	-	-	-	-	58%	51%
At least 1 in work benefit	88%	79%	86%	78%	90%	85%	84%	74%
Has a credit card	-	-	5%	12%	8%	16%	12%	20%
One or more loan products	60%	50%	53%	45%	61%	52%	60%	53%
Education								
Not been called into school regarding child's behavior	-	-	40%	54%	38%	48%	43%	51%
No attendance concerns regarding their children	37%	58%	38%	60%	-	-	40%	63%
Health								
Household has long-standing illness or disability*	79%	72%	-	-	-	-	77%	73%
Crime & anti-social behavior								
Had contact with police (not as a victim)	31%	11%	28%	14%	25%	16%	23%	14%
Had contact with police (as a victim)	21%	11%	-	-	19%	12%	17%	11%
Any action taken on anti-social behaviour	-	-	-	-	-	-	6%	2%

Notes:

*Lone parents were asked if they personally met this criterion.

Different numbers were surveyed for each group and year.

Source: Ipsos Mori, [TFP: National evaluation: Family survey- Additional analysis](#), December 2019, pp13-23.

Overall, the surveys found that:

- A larger proportion of the three groups of surveyed families were in employment.
- There was a smaller proportion of workless households.
- The proportion of households with at least one in work benefit being claimed fell in all four groups.
- A larger proportion had a credit card in all three groups asked this question.
- Proportionally fewer families reported having attendance concerns about their children in the three-family types asked.
- Of the three family types surveyed, proportionally fewer reported the household having a long-standing disability or illness.
- Falls were also seen in the proportion of all four family types who had had contact with the police (not as a victim) and the three surveyed family types proportionally reported fewer interactions with the police as victims of crime.

4. TFP: Costs and local service transformation

4.1 Cost benefit analysis

The [2019 National evaluation](#) presented MHCLG estimates of the cost savings of the TFP 2015-2020, which, it said, indicated that “there is a good economic and fiscal case to be made for the programme:”¹⁰⁶

1. Economic benefits (includes economic, social and fiscal benefits) The total net public benefit for the 2017/18 cohort is estimated to be £366m. This suggests every £1 spent on the programme delivers £2.28 of benefits.

2. Fiscal benefits (only budgetary impacts on services) The total net fiscal benefit for the 2017/18 cohort is estimated to be £147m. This suggests that every £1 spent on the programme delivers £1.51 of fiscal benefits, although not all of these will be cashable, particularly in the short term.

This analysis estimated the effects of the programme on the 124,000 families who joined the programme in the 2017/18 year, looking at the costs and benefits for each family in this cohort over five years. The MHCLG noted that this analysis was “based on only a limited set of outcomes” and only considered the impact on benefits over a five-year horizon, though benefits may continue for longer.¹⁰⁷

The Department said that these figures may be underestimates, for the impact of the programme on domestic abuse, homelessness and mental health and wellbeing were not established.¹⁰⁸

4.2 Service transformation

The TFP also intends to encourage the development of local services. The programme introduced guidance on service transformation in 2016 as the Service Transformation Maturity Model, which was revised to the [Early help systems guide](#).

Staff Surveys

Ipsos MORI also conducts [staff surveys](#) of TFP coordinators, keyworkers and employment advisers. The MHCLG summarised the findings from the December 2018 report of where the programme was working:

The staff surveys report improvements in multi-agency working, whole family working being adopted by additional local partners, and improvements in data systems and data sharing. The staff surveys reported that staff thought there were improvements in partnership working with children’s social workers, the voluntary and community sector and health visitors.¹⁰⁹

The Department also reported on the reported barriers to joint working:

¹⁰⁶ MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020: Findings](#), 2019, p5

¹⁰⁷ [Ibid](#), pp5-6

¹⁰⁸ MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020: Family Outcomes—national and local datasets](#), Part 4, 2019, pp51, 63

¹⁰⁹ MHCLG, [Improving families’ lives: Annual report of the TFP 2019-2020](#), June 2020, p8

Problems with data sharing and integration of IT systems remain a consistent theme in case study research and staff surveys despite some progress having been made. Another commonly reported barrier in both staff surveys and case study research is access to specialist services, particularly mental health services for both adults and children due to capacity issues. Troubled Families Coordinators also report resource pressures as a barrier to achieving outcomes with families¹¹⁰

A selection of findings from TFP coordinators are included below:

- In December 2018, 87% of surveyed coordinators said the programme was “effective at achieving long term positive change in families’ circumstances”, an increase from 77% in 2017. 99% said the TFP was “effective” in achieving whole family working. 85% said the programme was effective at achieving a focus on early intervention in their area.¹¹¹
- 51% of coordinators in December 2018 said the programme was “effective at reducing demand for statutory services in their area” and 37% “effective at delivery cost saving in their local area”.¹¹²
- Cuts and capacity problems were reported as the main challenges to the delivery of the TFP, being mentioned by 70% of TFP coordinators. 49% of coordinators also raised the payment by results as a “key challenge” and 42% said the TFP was “too data driven”. 50% of coordinators raised concern about “too much bureaucracy” in 2017, falling to 30% in 2018.¹¹³

A high proportion of keyworkers in December 2018 believed that the TFP “helps families avoid statutory intervention”, at 90%.¹¹⁴ Keyworkers reported that they wanted greater engagement with mental health services and housing services: 90% reported waiting lists for specialist health teams as a barrier to effective working and 67% highlighted separate IT systems.¹¹⁵

The staff survey results suggest that keyworkers recommended that the programme needed greater engagement with mental health services for children (57%), followed by those for adults (51%) and housing services (30%).¹¹⁶

Case Studies

Ipsos MORI also conduct case studies of the TFP, which is based on interviews with staff in selected local authority areas.¹¹⁷ The MHCLG summarised the most recent findings in its [2020 report](#), highlighting better data-sharing, early intervention and coordination but continued challenges related to funding and the potential integration of TFP workers into the wider system:

¹¹⁰ [Ibid](#), p8

¹¹¹ Ipsos MORI, [TFP national evaluation: survey among TF coordinators](#), May 2019, pp1, 10

¹¹² [Ibid](#), p13

¹¹³ [Ibid](#), p17

¹¹⁴ Ipsos MORI, [TFP national evaluation: Survey amongst TF keyworkers](#), May 2019, p8

¹¹⁵ [Ibid](#), P35

¹¹⁶ MHCLG, [Improving families’ lives: Annual report of the TFP 2019-20](#), June 2020, p22

¹¹⁷ Ipsos MORI, [TFP: Qualitative case study report, Phase 2: Wave 2](#), May 2019, pp21-2

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Local staff said that a shift to earlier intervention had led to greater identification of need. The case study sections on mental health and knife crime both report examples of good practice in seeking to identify needs early. Staff indicated that a certain amount of early help activity was dependent on funding received through the Troubled Families Programme

[...]

Practitioners have sought to make improvements to data sharing between agencies and partners since the first year of the evaluation in 2015. Since then, data sharing has led to progress in identifying families that require support, and aided partners to coordinate the services they provide to families.

[...]

Since 2015, the number of dedicated keyworkers delivering the programme has decreased and the number of other lead workers delivering the programme has increased significantly. This may indicate that the programme is being increasingly integrated into the wider system. The case study research also found evidence of more close working between children's social care and troubled families teams.¹¹⁸

Ipsos MORI summarised interview findings on the reported legacy of the TFP, relating to monitoring and children's care:

It was also believed that the Troubled Families Programme will leave a strong legacy because the programme's aims, ethos and principles align well with other key developments in family support and children's social care. For example, there is now a determination to revert the upward trend in the number of children taken into care and subject to a child protection plan, and a robust early help service is considered necessary to achieve this. Further, participants noted that Troubled Families Programme's emphasis on monitoring outcomes is also an important legacy, focusing local authorities on achieving measurable changes and improvements in families' lives and reflecting on how sustainable these are. [...] [I]t had also helped uncover considerable unmet demand.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ [Ibid](#), pp21-2

¹¹⁹ Ipsos MORI, [TFP: Qualitative case study report, Phase 2: Wave 2](#), May 2019, p67

5. Research, reports and commentary

5.1 Impact on Local Authority Funding

County Council Network (2020)

The County Councils Network's (CCN) 2020 report on services for children and families said that the TFP had been important in incentivising spending on preventive children's services, with "substantial mitigating reductions to local authority expenditure on early intervention overall". Without TFP funding, the CCN said, spending on preventive/early intervention services across all authorities in England would have been reduced by 22.5%, compared to 17.9%, from 2015/16 to 2019/20.¹²⁰

23 of the 36 member authorities of the CCN submitted an opinion on whether the TFP should be continued at the 2020 spending review. 86% (c.19-20) agreed it should, but 62% (14) said that central Government spending on the TFP should be reduced and local authority budgets for early intervention increased.¹²¹

5.2 Local delivery

Addressing structural causes of poverty and inequality

An article published by University of Derby academics, [Contingent Coping?](#), in 2018 argued that some local authorities had adapted the programme to better focus on the structural impacts of poverty and inequality, which the authors argued the central TFP does not address.

Based on a literature survey and a case-study of a single city and twelve families, the authors found that key workers innovated at the point of service delivery. Managers were found to be allowing key workers to make full use of discretionary funding to support families to mitigate the impact of material poverty and encouraged families to access the full range of statutory support available to them.¹²² The authors concluded that the TFP would only create "contingent coping" from structural causes of poverty families on the programme face.¹²³

Interaction with social services

An article researched by Sheffield Hallam academics, [Multiple needs, "Troubled Families" and social work](#), in 2019, based on a survey of 103 families, found that there was a history of "an extraordinarily high level of involvement with social services across generations among the families referred to the TFP". The authors found that such families were already working with children's social services before the TFP, but that

¹²⁰ CCN, [Recovering from COVID-19: Supporting children and families](#), May 2020, p6

¹²¹ [Ibid](#), pp14, 15

¹²² Charlotte Hagreaves, Philip Hodgson, Jayne Noor Mohamed and Alex Nunn, ['Contingent coping? Renegotiating "fast" disciplinary social policy at street level: implementing the UK TFP'](#), Critical Social Policy, 2018, p11

¹²³ [Ibid](#), p15

the TFP allowed a new role for social services in preventative services and in supporting better integration.¹²⁴

5.3 Focus of TFP on worklessness

Gingerbread (2017)

In response to the 2017 announcement of further funding for the TFP, Gingerbread, a charity for single parents, criticised the increased focus on worklessness as the root of family problems:

While Gingerbread welcomes the promise of better relationship support across family types, it questions the emphasis on 'worklessness' as an overriding obstacle to financial stability. While two-thirds of single parents work, the risk of working single parent families being in poverty sharply increased over the last year, emphasising that employment alone is not a solution to improving life chances. Today's policy paper doesn't address structural obstacles facing single parents out of work, such as lack of access to childcare, flexible work and training.¹²⁵

The DWP policy paper, [Improving Lives: Helping worklessness families](#) (2017) had argued that worklessness "overlaps with other disadvantages" that can be "both causes and effects of worklessness".¹²⁶

Stephen Crossley, Northumbria University (2015-)

Stephen Crossley, an academic at Northumbria University, has published several criticisms of both the first and second phases of the programme.¹²⁷ In 2018, he criticised the uneven nature of employment outcomes between different council areas:

Since the renewed focus on tackling 'worklessness' was announced in April 2017, 104,809 families were worked with on the programme. Of these, just 4,807 families entered 'continuous employment' in the last year. In just under three years, not a single 'troubled family' in Newham (out of 2858 on the programme) has met the 'continuous employment' criteria according to the latest figures. And yet, over a slightly longer period, over 1000 families met this criteria in Liverpool. The difference between such figures (and there are plenty of other inconsistencies) is not explained.

Dr Crossley also argued that the programme did not effectively address the structural issues which many families classed as "troubled" faced, such as the quantity and quality of local jobs and their suitability for carers, disabled persons or vulnerable adults.

He also argued that the smaller proportion of children being classed as children in need following TFP intervention was less than would be

¹²⁴ Sadie Parr and Carol Hayden, ['Multiple needs, "troubled families" and social work](#), People, Place and Policy, 13, 2019, pp29, 37-8

¹²⁵ ['Gingerbread queries "muddled thinking" behind new government programme'](#), 4 April 2017

¹²⁶ DWP, [Improving lives: Helping workless families](#), 2017, para 19

¹²⁷ For example, Stephen Crossley, [The TFP: The perfect social policy?](#), Centre for Crime and Justice, 2015

expected, given “the intensive, transformative approach” the TFP is said to offer.¹²⁸

5.4 Impacts of the TFP

Jonathan Porter, Professor of Economics and Public Policy at King’s College London, who had evaluated the first TFP in 2016, [argued](#) in 2016 that the impacts of the programme had been limited to children at serious risk:

The actual impacts of the programme are largely confined to children at serious risk. The most important and significant impact of the programme is to reduce the number of children going into care. The numbers involved are relatively small – less than one percent of those on the programme – and interpretation is difficult without knowing more about why children are not going into care.

He argued that an investment in children’s services should be a “priority” and “that won’t and shouldn’t be an extension of the Troubled Families Programme, but there are definitely lessons, positive and negative, from the programme”.¹²⁹

A similar point was raised by Stephen Crossley, writing for the Child Poverty Action Group in 2019, who argued the impact of the TFP had been limited:

The focus on the very small numbers of children being taken into care diverts attention from the findings that the programme appeared to have no impact on the proportion of children identified as being ‘in need’, who represent a far greater number of the children involved with the programme.

He also noted that there was a lack of evaluation in the programme’s impact on health issues within the families, or the impact on domestic violence, “despite these being two of the new criteria for being labelled a ‘troubled family’”.

He also called upon the Government to consider the impact of welfare reforms on disadvantaged families, including those on the TFP and better account for the structural problems experienced by families.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Stephen Crossley, [The TFP: Changing everything, yet changing nothing](#), Policy Press/University of Bristol, 4 April 2018

¹²⁹ [Troubled Families: Casey says evaluation proves government “absolutely right” to have backed programme](#), Civil Service World, 20 March 2019

¹³⁰ Stephen Crossley, [Learning to be poor? Poverty and the TFP](#), Child Poverty Action Group, April 2019

6. Future of the Programme

Funding

In March 2019, the UK Government had said that the future of the TFP after March 2020 would be considered in the 2019 Spending Review.¹³¹ In response to the coronavirus outbreak, a one-year [Spending Review](#) was held in November 2020.

The December 2019 Conservative Party Manifesto stated that:

A strong society needs strong families. We will improve the Troubled Families Programme and champion Family Hubs to serve vulnerable families with intensive, integrated support they need to care for children.¹³²

In January 2020, the UK Government announced that the TFP would continue for a further year, to March 2021.¹³³ The Spending Review in November 2020 announced a further £165 million to extend the TFP to 2021-22.¹³⁴

In January 2020, the Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield, welcomed the announcement of the extension but said it needed to be "closely followed by long term and extended funding commitments" in the forthcoming spending review. The President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services, Rachael Dickson, also called for a long-term financial strategy for the programme, which the organisation reiterated following the November 2020 Spending Review.¹³⁵ The Local Government Association in 2019 had also called for funding to be extended.¹³⁶

The County Councils Network (CCN) in May 2020 called upon the Government to "avoid using Payment-by-Results as much in order to reduce waste and ensure as much money as possible reaches direct services". The CCN argued that the Government could best incentivise spending on preventive approaches by creating a National Framework for Early Intervention, without ring-fencing grants but based on tackling a "menu" of early intervention priorities.¹³⁷

Coronavirus

The CCN in May 2020 [called](#) upon the UK Government to make TFP funds available "now to scale up family support services" and to set out a long term financial settlement in the forthcoming Spending Review, as it expected a rising pressure on services due to the Coronavirus

¹³¹ MHCLG, [Building Resilient Families: Third annual report of the Troubled Families Programme 2018-19](#), March 2019, pp13-14

¹³² [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), p.14

¹³³ MHCLG, [Government Confirms Extra Support for Troubled Families to Succeed](#), January 2020

¹³⁴ HM Treasury, [Spending Review 2020](#), CP 330, November 2020, para 4.29

¹³⁵ [Troubled families programme to get £165 million funding boost](#), Children and Young People Now, 5 January 2020; Association of Directors of Children's Services, [Comment on spending review 2020](#), November 2020

¹³⁶ Local Government Association, [LGA responds to the TFP evaluation](#), 19 March 2019

¹³⁷ County Councils Network (CCN), [Children's services funding and early intervention](#), May 2020, p52

outbreak.¹³⁸ The report said that councils were concerned that the payment by results funding may be difficult to access in councils who were not on the “earned autonomy” model:

Targeted Family Support has been better maintained largely due to the impact of the Troubled Families Programme. 70% of CCN Member Authorities said the programme had helped them to protect some early intervention spending.

However, the payment-by-results aspect of the programme has proved a bureaucratic means of obtaining funding. With indicators used to draw down funding such as School Attendance and Transition into Employment severely disrupted by the pandemic, councils are concerned about whether they will be able to access the £165m funding held centrally to support the programme during 2020/1.¹³⁹

The CCN also called upon the Government to ensure the TFP was more inclusive, in the expectation a wider range of families would access it after the Coronavirus pandemic.¹⁴⁰

Successor programme

The Housing, Communities and Local Government committee in May 2019 recommended that the Government announce a successor programme in advance of the 2019 Spending Review.¹⁴¹ A [one-year spending review was held in November 2020](#), in response to the coronavirus outbreak. In 2019, Rishi Sunak, then-Parliamentary Under-Secretary at MHCLG, described to the Committee the elements of the programme he wanted to see carried forward:

What the Secretary of State has said is that he is very keen to have a successor programme to Troubled Families [...]

What are the elements of it that I think are interesting? It is one of the few programmes in social policy that has a payment-by-results set up. There is some element of block grant, and combined with that there are various attachment fees and performance fees [...]

Clearly the emphasis on whole-family working has been [...] unambiguously positive. The key worker approach has been unambiguously positive. At the moment there is an interesting conversation to be had around whether more of the support should be targeted at the very early stage of young children's lives, from conception to two years old.¹⁴²

The Children's Commissioner for England, Anne Longfield, said in July 2020 that the Government should create a new, cross-department strategy to support children's development. This would set out how the TFP would work together with other Government programmes, such as the Early Years Foundation Stage and Children and Families hubs.¹⁴³ The

¹³⁸ CCN, [Councils fear a rise in vulnerable children needing support due to the lockdown](#), 22 May 2020

¹³⁹ CCN, [Recovering from COVID-19: Supporting families and children](#), May 2020, p3

¹⁴⁰ [Ibid](#), p5

¹⁴¹ House of Commons Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, [Funding of local authorities' children's services. Fourteenth Report of Session 2017–19](#), HC 1638, 1 May 2019, para 27

¹⁴² Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, [Oral evidence: Funding of Local Authorities' Children's Services](#), HC 1638 Monday 11 March 2019, Q201

¹⁴³ Children's Commissioner, [Best beginnings in the early years](#), July 2020, p36

Children’s Commissioner in 2019 previously said she would like to see the programme expanded to 500,000 households and an outcomes framework built more around children.¹⁴⁴

In the June 2020 Annual report, the MHCLG said some specific findings would “feed into discussions about the design of a successor programme”. These were that the programme was effective for families already in touch with services and families whose needs had not been identified before they start of the TFP. The Department also said that the programme worked best through two mechanisms: providing support alongside existing public services to families who have entrenched, complex needs and intervention with families who have lower identified needs and less contact with statutory services before joining the programme.¹⁴⁵

Ipsos MORI’s interviews with TFP workers for its 2019 case study report collected evidence on how they were preparing for the end of the TFP, which was then-expected to occur in 2020. Participants explained that local authorities would be unable to fill any funding gap, particularly in relation to early help given to families and work-progression. Staff had said they would seek to secure other sources of government funding and potentially pool resources with other authorities to target health and wellbeing.¹⁴⁶

In 2018, appearing before the Work and Pensions Select Committee, Iain Duncan Smith, the former Secretary of State and Work and Pensions, had said that the TFP was a “distraction” and its funding “might be well spent by supporting Universal Credit, which I think will do much of what it [the TFP] tries to do.”¹⁴⁷

Potential renaming

In the [2019 Annual Report](#), James Brokenshire, then Secretary of State at MHCLG, acknowledged issues with the initiative’s name, saying that “it obscures as much as it enlightens”.¹⁴⁸ Rishi Sunak, then-Minister for Local Government told the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee in 2019, that the name also needed to change:

Very clearly, the name needs to change. Out of 150 local authorities, there might actually only be two that actually call it the Troubled Families programme on the ground, for very obvious reasons.¹⁴⁹

The CCN also called for the TFP to be renamed and rebranded in 2020 to make the programme “less stigmatising and more inclusive”.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁴ Children’s Commissioner, [A Manifesto for Children](#), September 2019, pp3, 7

¹⁴⁵ MHCLG, [National evaluation of the TFP 2015-2020, Family outcomes—national and local datasets, Part 5](#), June 2020, p7

¹⁴⁶ Ipsos MORI, [TFP: Qualitative case study report, Phase 2: Wave 2](#), May 2019, pp68-9

¹⁴⁷ Work and Pensions Committee, [Oral Evidence: The Universal Credit Rollout, HC 366, 23 May 2018](#), Q616-18

¹⁴⁸ MHCLG, [Building Resilient Families: Third annual report of the Troubled Families Programme 2018-19](#), March 2019, pp6-7

¹⁴⁹ [Oral evidence: Funding of Local Authorities’ Children’s Services](#), HC 1638, 11 March 2019, Q201

¹⁵⁰ CCN, [Children’s services funding and early intervention](#), May 2020, p12

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