




Bristol Family Support Project

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Organisation:	Bristol City Council (learn more)
Number of properties:	28,903
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The Bristol Family Support Project (FSP) was set up in 2005 to work with mixed tenure households that are failing to comply with the terms of their tenancy or acceptable standards of behaviour.

It aims to engage with families that are perpetrating antisocial behaviour in their communities where a range of formal prevention action has or is about to commence.

The FSP provides an innovative, problem solving approach to tackling ASB whilst at the same time providing co-ordinated support for the most challenging families and addressing key issues of social exclusion.



Background

In September 2003 a national one day count of ASB complaints identified Bristol as an ASB 'hot spot'. The following year a crime and drugs audit found ASB to be the number one priority for residents across the city. As a result, the City Council was allocated additional resources by the Respect Task Force to become a 'trailblazer' area, and in the summer of 2004 a dedicated ASB team was set up, based within the Neighbourhood and Housing Services Department.

It soon became clear that one of the major issues facing the team was the impact of ASB from specific households. A small number of families were having a disproportionate and negative impact on the neighbourhoods where they lived. Existing services had been ineffective in tackling entrenched problems within families. A different approach was needed and Bristol, following a review of existing projects in Dundee and Manchester, took the decision to set up a [family intervention project](#).

The FSP was established within the ASB team in 2005 with funding from the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account. This was supplemented:

- in 2006/07 by funding from Bristol CC's Neighbourhood Renewal Area to reduce the impact of crime on families and communities, reduce the likelihood of offending and reduce the fear of crime by working with a specified number of families in these areas
- in 2007/08 by money from Bristol CC's Supporting People budget to work towards achieving their strategic objective of preventing homelessness.

Bristol operates a coercive model of intervention with three strands:

- support – to lever in services
- supervision - to ensure both the family and agencies are delivering
- enforcement – using sanctions where behaviour does not change.

Initially one key worker was appointed to provide outreach support to families. Since then the project has expanded to four key workers and one project coordinator. On average each family receives intensive intervention coordinated by the key worker for six months. This allows the project to work with 48 families a year across tenures.

75% of families referred to the project were identified as suffering from either:

- domestic abuse
- extensive problems relating to youth anti social behaviour
- a lack of basic parenting within the family.

In response, the project seconded a domestic abuse worker, a young person's worker and a parenting worker to work part time with referred families.

Delivering a family intervention project

Bristol reviewed existing service provision and discovered that a lack of coordination between mainstream service providers had led to gaps that some families fell through. The role of the FSP was to fill that gap through intensive intervention and coordination of services from mainstream service providers such as Social Services, the Youth Offending Team, Education and Health.

Project Objectives – Bristol FSP aims to reduce ASB, address social exclusion and assist targeted families in maintaining their tenancies using a proactive, holistic approach through support and enforcement by:

- defining boundaries for acceptable behaviour
- ensuring there is a clear process for formal enforcement action if necessary
- delivering an appropriate support package within a given timescale
- ensuring effective multi-agency support and partnership working occurs at strategic and case level
- successful and sustained engagement with targeted families utilising a flexible approach.

The Process – Bristol CC's FSP follows a clear process for intervention:

Stage one: Referral

- Formal action against the family is considered by the Anti-Social Behaviour Team and Police at a case conference.
- If the family meets the following criteria, a referral is made and a key worker assigned:
 - must live in Bristol
 - history of complaints of ASB including incidents occurring within the last six months
 - members of family are subject to, or being considered for, formal action against individuals or tenancy.
- The family is contacted, the process and implications (ie failure to engage may lead to formal enforcement action) are explained and a Family Group Conference (FGC) is arranged.
- In some cases a FGC will not be appropriate and the key worker will meet directly with the family to work on a behaviour contract or appropriate support.

Stage two: Family Behaviour Contract

A [Family Behaviour Contract](#) (FBC) is drawn up which:

- sets standards for acceptable behaviour and a [support plan](#) for each member of the family within a defined time period
- outlines the consequences of failing to comply with FBC (ie formal enforcement action).

Stage three: Family Group Conference

The FGC builds partnerships between the family, the community and service providers. As well as making decisions, the FGC is a forum for the family to come together to take responsibility for their past actions and their future under the umbrella of whole family and service accountability.

Stage four: Assessment and implementation

Assessment is carried out with the family and it is centred around identifying protective and risk factors with the aim of building on, and maintaining, the protective factors and reducing or eliminating the risk factors.

Support from the FSP can include home-based or group-based parenting work (supported by Barnardo's), help with maintaining the tenancy or work with young people. There is a weekly contact meeting between family and key worker to ensure compliance with the FBC through a process of monitoring actions and recording progress.

Evolution of the project

There are three different delivery models for family intervention projects:

- **outreach support** to families in their own home – low/medium support
- **dispersed unit** providing support in a non-secure tenancy located in the community but

without live in staff – medium/high support

- **core unit** providing 24 hour support in a residential unit where families with more complex needs live with project staff – high support

Initially only offering outreach support, Bristol's FSP has developed a dispersed unit for families whose behaviour is such that to remain in their own home would place an unacceptable burden on the community.

The unit was developed in partnership with Knightstone Housing Association. Knightstone's role was to secure capital funding to build a single unit of accommodation for use by the FSP and to have responsibility for its management and maintenance. The unit is able to take two families a year for intensive support. The families who will be referred to the dispersed unit are either already homeless because of their ASB or are trying to access accommodation but prevented from doing so by their history of ASB.

The Council is scoping out the need for the provision of a core unit for families with multiple and complex problems.

A number of specialist interventions and joint working arrangements have been developed to address some of the most common risk factors present in the supported families.

Positive Parenting - All caseworkers within the FSP have been trained on [Triple P - the Positive Parenting Programme®](#).

The programme works with families where children exhibit behavioural problems. It aims to develop parents' skills, knowledge and confidence to promote a positive environment to reduce incidents of ASB, levels of abuse and poor physical and mental health. The aim is to strengthen partnership working between all projects offering support to 'at risk' families and to provide consistency of service delivery regardless of whether parents access it at prevention, early intervention or 'crisis' level.

There are now six staff in the FSP trained to deliver parenting support on a group and one to one basis and the project intends to work cross-agency with the other projects to deliver parenting support across the city.

Jobcentre Plus - FSP has established a designated point of contact at Jobcentre Plus which enables it to make referrals and receive a fast-track service with the objective of getting household members into employment.

Health links - FSP is making links in the areas of teenage pregnancy and alcohol and drugs misuse. It has formed new links with the Bristol teenage pregnancy co-ordinator and hopes to develop some joint working around 'at risk' teenage girls engaged with the project, outreach support from sexual health workers and group work with teenage boys. Project staff are currently being trained in substance misuse and screening for young people in close collaboration with Safer Bristol and the Primary Care Trust.

Education and training

Young people involved with the project have begun working towards [ASDAN qualifications](#) in conjunction with the Young Person's Worker with a particular focus on healthy living and personal skills development. This will enable some of the most challenging young people from targeted households to work towards a nationally recognised qualification that can equate to half a GCSE.

Project outcomes

In order to assess the impact of the FSP a set of targets have been put in place to measure success. The table below shows outcomes against targets for the 14 households who completed involvement with the FSP during the period January to July 2007:

	Target (percentage of cases)	Achieved
Avoidance of eviction or sustained route back into settled accommodation	80%	100%
Prevention of formal action such as injunctions or Anti Social Behaviour Orders	70%	75%
Reduction in ASB incidents	65%	84%
Reduction in arrests	50%	75%
Increase in school attendance	40%	51%

In addition, the project measures its impact on the community through qualitative Community Impact Assessments conducted with witnesses and complainants who have been affected by the behaviour of families referred to the FSP. Assessments are case specific and are carried out at the point a referral is accepted and again at when the case is closed. The assessments are used to measure the distance travelled by each family in terms of the impact their behaviour has had on the community. Current performance shows a shift from 90% negative impact per family to 68% positive impact following engagement with the FSP.

The project [reports annually](#) to the board of the Neighbourhood Renewal Areas and a [qualitative and quantitative evaluation](#) was published in March 2008 of the neighbourhood renewal element of the project.

Value for money

The project costs £5,000 per family compared with average national costs of £8,000 for outreach services and £15,000 for more intensive intervention. Government estimates the costs to society of a family with severe problems could be £250,000 - £350,000 in a single year without this intervention. An [in-depth analysis of 17 families](#) found a reduction of 499 police and housing department reported incidents pre to post intervention, and equates this to a cost saving of approximately £200,000.

Lessons learned

Breaking down the barriers between traditional services

The coercive approach to family intervention was very different to that traditionally used by professionals such as social workers and was initially seen as draconian. However the FSP was able to demonstrate, early on, high levels of success from what was seen as very short, intensive engagement with problematic families.

The project's success enabled other service providers to meet their own objectives, such as [Every Child Matters](#). This capacity to deliver on joint shared objectives ensured that early in the life of the project a 'silo' approach to delivering services was quickly broken down. These strong links have led to meaningful partnerships and new working relationships between key providers Youth Offending Team, Primary Care Trust and Connexions.

Mainstream Funding

Most of the other family intervention projects in the country built in mainstream funding in at the start of the project to ensure long term commitment and the growth of the service. Bristol however relied initially on fixed term funding from Supporting People and Neighbourhood Renewal. The FSP is currently awaiting the outcome of a decision on mainstreaming the service's funding from the Local Area Agreement.

There is high level corporate support for the FSP and - while not guaranteed - the project is confident it will achieve mainstream funding, creating a platform for future developments.

Role of the key worker

Initial challenges were to change previous ways of working, grip the family issues and lever in the correct package of support from services who had failed to find a solution in the past. The challenge of achieving this sits with the key workers and their relationship with both the families and service providers.

Bristol's family support team come from different backgrounds – community safety, housing and social services – and so have different professional experiences and skills to offer. A key feature of the team is how those skills and experiences complement each other and allow for shared learning.

Mainstreaming the approach

A key message from the Project is the need to ensure that the techniques and approaches that the FSP have found successful are adopted as part of the day to day approach to delivering services to all users and not just those that have reached crisis point.

Feedback

Feedback from the families who have been through the project is very positive. There is a strong sense from those families that the system had failed them in the past and that they were 'crying out' for comprehensive, coordinated, intensive family support to deal with

issues of child abuse, substance misuse and violence.

The coercive nature of the Family Support Project, an enforcement and support approach, helps families clearly understand the implications of not changing behaviours. The twin track approach of support and enforcement can result in Anti Social Behaviour Orders being served, Anti Social Behaviour Contracts being put in place, tenancies demoted and ultimately, as in the case of two families, eviction.









However the project does not see eviction as the end of the process and will endeavour, as in the case of one high profile family, to offer support to turn the situation around. This family had a history of extreme anti social behaviour and were on numerous occasions offered the support of the project which they did not take up. Their tenancy was demoted and they were ultimately evicted.

The project is still trying to engage with them.

Awards

Bristol City Council was awarded Beacon Council status in 2007/08 for its work on preventing and tackling ASB - the FSP forms part of its overall approach to tackling entrenched ASB.

Supporting content

-  [Family Support Project - Information for Agencies](#) January 2007 - Bristol City Council 2.63Mb
-  [Family Support Project - Information for Families](#) January 2007 - Bristol City Council 2.65Mb
-  [Sample Family Behaviour Contract](#) Bristol City Council 92Kb
-  [Example of a Family Support Plan](#) Bristol City Council 90Kb
-  [FSP Annual Report to the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit 2006-07](#) Bristol City Council 261Kb
-  [Family Support Project Caseworker Job Description](#) May 2006 - Bristol City Council 70Kb
-  [Family support project - case study](#) 22 March 2007 - Bristol City Council 337Kb
-  [Bristol Family Support Project Evaluation Report](#) March 2008 - Bristol City Council 457Kb

From selected resources

-  [What are Family Intervention Projects?](#) HouseMark (13 Mar 08)
-  [Anti-social Behaviour Intensive Family Support Projects](#) Communities and Local Government (16 Oct 06)

More information on

-  [Bristol City Council](#)
-  [Knightstone Housing Association](#)
-  [Triple P](#)
-  [Barnardo's](#)
-  [Every Child Matters: Change for Children](#)

Browse for related documents

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