



EARLY
INTERVENTION
FOUNDATION

ADVICE

Early intervention: a guide for frontline police officers and PCSOs

A Home Office Crime Prevention Panel project



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This guidance has been produced in collaboration with the Home Office and the College of Policing.

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Forewords



Crime has fallen by more than a fifth under this government, according to the independent Crime Survey for England and Wales. However, we are not complacent. There were still over seven million crimes in the year to June 2014. So there is still much to do.

That is why the Home Office set up a Crime Prevention Panel of academics, industry leaders, charities and the police to bring fresh thinking and new ideas to the way we approach crime prevention. The Early Intervention Foundation is part of this Panel.

Early intervention is crucial to get to the root causes of involvement in crime and to prevent problems before they escalate. Spotting risks early on and putting the right multi-agency support in place can greatly improve outcomes for young people and can prevent them becoming involved in crime. This also makes sound economic sense.

The police have an important role to play. Quite often they will be the first agency to come into contact with a child or family in need of help. They are therefore in a key position to identify problems and, in partnership with other agencies, to help bring about the support that is needed.

Some police forces work well with their partners to ensure that help is provided at the earliest opportunity - but this is not the case everywhere. More advice is needed about how local areas are putting early intervention into practice, and on the contribution early intervention can make to crime prevention.

This Guide helps to fill that gap. It is an important source of information and practical advice for police officers. It guides them in how to engage effectively with young people, families and communities in order to spot potential problems. It provides advice about action the police might take themselves and how they can draw in support from other agencies. Although this Guide is aimed at front-line police officers, I encourage all officers to read it and to think about how they might use early intervention to help prevent crime.

I am pleased to welcome this Guide and I am grateful to the Early Intervention Foundation and others for all the excellent work which went into producing it.

The Rt. Hon. Lynne Featherstone MP
Minister for Crime Prevention



The Early Intervention Foundation's (EIF) aim is to shift spending, action and support for children and families from Late to Early Intervention, from picking up the pieces to giving everyone the best start in life. We want to see a pre-emptive approach which focuses on addressing the root causes of problems before they become entrenched. Not only can this shift in attitude and spending improve outcomes for the next generation and their families, it has the potential to reap significant financial savings. As a [What Works Centre](#), sitting alongside the College of Policing What Works Centre for Crime Reduction, we use evidence to inform policy and practice with the goal of driving improvements to children's outcomes and breaking inter-generational patterns of disadvantage and dysfunction.

Achieving the step change we want to see means that we need to change the behaviour of professionals working directly with children and families, so that early intervention becomes part of their day to day business. If we're going to reach all those who need help in a timely way, every professional who has contact with children, young people or families, from the school teacher to the GP; from the police officer to the job advisor, needs the tools to be able to spot risk factors and ensure that support is put in place. This is not just something for those who work in 'support' services or who have Early Intervention in their job title. The first worker in the door, whichever agency they may be from, must have the Early Intervention 'toolkit' they need.

We are delighted to have worked with the College of Policing, the Home Office, the Police and Crime Commissioners for Dorset, Staffordshire and Lancashire and many others to produce this practical guide for operational police officers and Police Community Support Officers. We intend this to be the first in a series of Guides for frontline professionals.

We have started with the police because, arguably, they see the need for Early Intervention more than any other agency. As the many case studies and film clips in this Guide will show you, frontline police officers don't need to be convinced. They see the impact when things go wrong, when risks aren't picked up and when help isn't offered soon enough. They also see the impact when things go right. There are plenty of inspiring stories in here and plenty of examples of excellent information sharing and multi-agency working. People join the police because they want to make a difference. When they join forces with other professionals who also want to make a difference, the results can be life-changing.

Carey Oppenheim
Chief Executive, Early Intervention Foundation



In common with other public services, the police are adapting to financial pressures that are redefining the realities of policing delivery. Part of the College's work over the last few months has been to establish how the demand on policing has changed. The analysis shows the incoming and ongoing work of the police and suggests an increasing amount of police time is directed towards public protection work.

In this new context, the role of the College of Policing, as a professional body, is to equip those in policing with the skills and knowledge to prevent crime, protect the public and secure public trust. The pressures on resources highlight more than ever the need for police to work with partners to solve problems, so that police focus their resources and efforts on effective crime prevention. This guide is a tangible example of this in action.

Officers and PCSOs are well placed to identify those in need of support and this guide provides practical examples for spotting risks and offering help. It offers the best information they need to help with early intervention and I would encourage all police forces to share it among officers and PCSOs. By working effectively with partner agencies we can become better at preventing crime and reducing demand on police in future.

Alex Marshall
Chief Executive, College of Policing

Early intervention: a guide for frontline police officers and PCSOs

FILM CLIPS

This Guide is the first in a series of guides for frontline professionals. It includes links to more information about the evidence base behind early intervention as well as practical examples of how local police officers are working with partners to spot risk factors and offer help to children, young people and families.



[Martyn Underhill,
PCC for Dorset](#)



[DCC Olivia Pinkney,
Sussex Police](#)

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We'd welcome your feedback

This is a live Guide. We'll be adding to it and refining it over time. We'd welcome your thoughts about how helpful it is, about things we've missed, or areas we could strengthen. We'd also love to hear about interesting or innovative practice in your area, which we can add to the case studies, or about your experiences of working with individual children, young people or families. Lastly, we'd be very interested to hear about any problems or barriers you're facing in trying to implement early intervention locally.

If you have any comments on the content of this Guide, please send them to Stephanie.waddell@eif.org.uk.

What is early intervention and why is it relevant for the police?

FILM CLIPS



[Sgt. Scott Archer,](#)
[Lancashire Constabulary](#)

“Ask any Police Officer and they will have vivid examples of families which are a problem for their neighbourhoods and community or where the children are already emulating their poor parenting role models. Early Interventions in these families are not only better for communities but also crucial to create the citizens of tomorrow who haven’t had the basic privilege of growing up in a decent household.”

Chief Constable Mike Barton,
Durham Constabulary

£5.2bn

Estimated annual cost of Late Intervention to deal with crime and antisocial behaviour. For more on the fiscal costs of Late Intervention, click [here](#)

To find out more about the **evidence base for early intervention**, see:

- The Early Intervention Foundation [Guidebook](#): an interactive tool to help you find evidence and advice on effective early intervention.
- The What Works Centre for Crime Reduction [Toolkit](#): easy access to the crime reduction evidence base
- [Project Oracle](#): London’s first children and youth evidence hub.

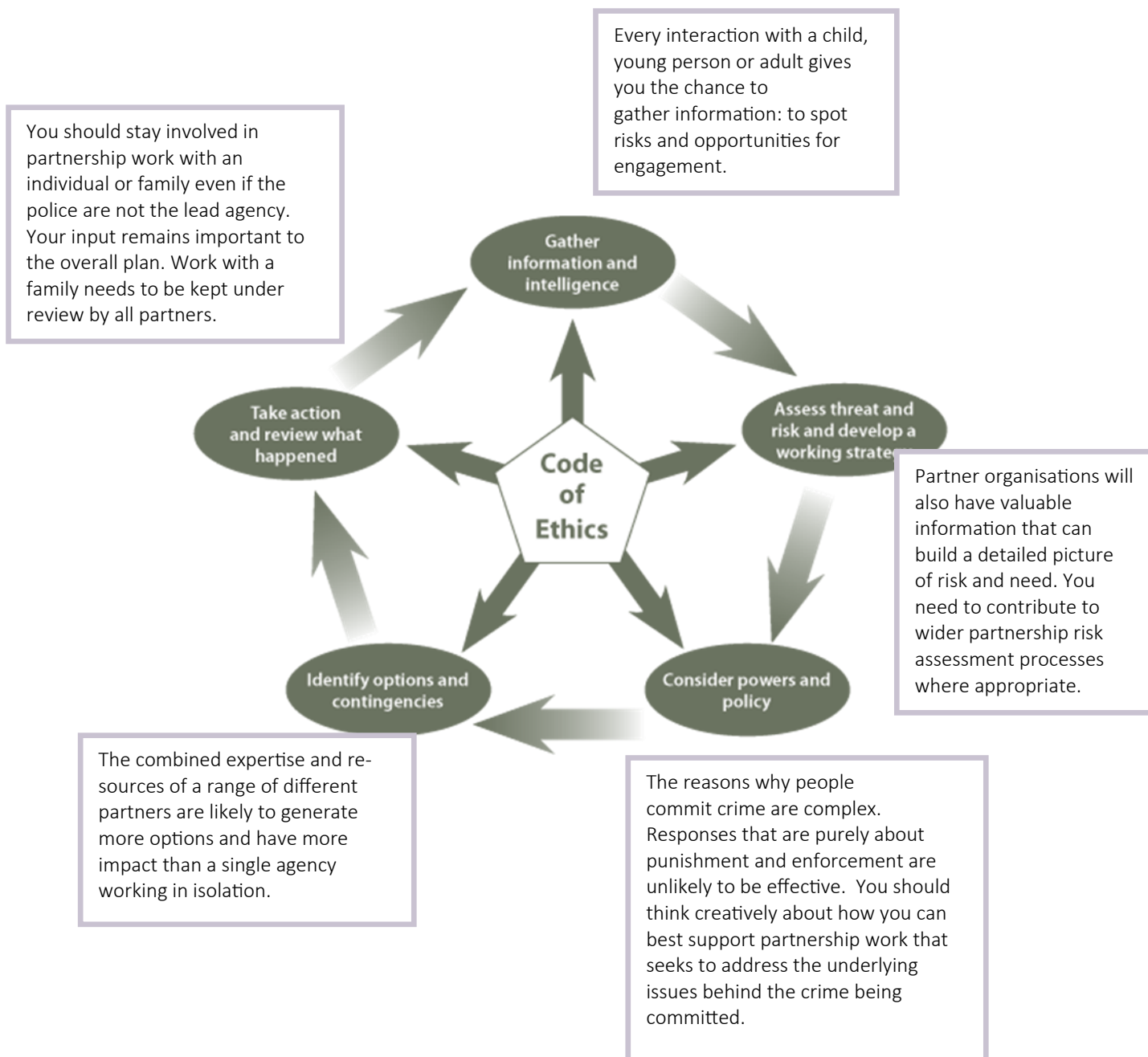
- *Early intervention can reduce demand on the police by preventing crime happening in the first place.* There is a strong body of evidence to show that the right help given at the earliest opportunity, can significantly improve the life chances of vulnerable children and young people, and steer them away from crime. This can deliver substantial economic and social benefits over time.
- *The police are well placed to identify children, families or individuals in need of support.* Police officers and PCSOs tell us that they know which children are at risk of involvement in crime. They see the parents whose ability to parent is affected by problems like substance misuse, criminality and domestic abuse, and the impact that this can have on children’s development and life chances. Sometimes the Police are the first agency to come into contact with families or individuals who need help.
- *Police data and intelligence can be critical to early intervention.* Sharing relevant information can enable partner agencies to get to the bottom of the problems that individuals or families face, and organise appropriate support packages.
- *This is not about the police doing everything or other people’s jobs.* It’s about working with partner agencies to prevent crime and reduce present or future demand on the police. Trusting, supportive partnerships can result in individuals and families getting help that enables them to change their behaviour and lifestyle and vastly improve the life chances for their children.

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**Your force may use the term ‘Early Action’. The principle is the same: identifying problems at the earliest opportunity and providing support to stop them escalating.*

Applying the National Decision Model

The National Decision Model should be the basis for all your professional decision making, including your assessment of risk and the needs of a child, young person, adult or family. It provides a useful framework for taking a problem-solving approach in multi-agency settings. **For more** about the NDM, see: [here](#)



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Identifying children, young people and families who need support

What to look out for

Risk factors such as poor home environments, domestic abuse, or parental substance misuse may be very apparent to you. Individual risk factors such as low empathy, aggression, or conduct disorder may not be so apparent. These may present as 'non-compliant' behaviour.

You need to be aware that aggressive or confrontational behaviour may be a result of early trauma, neglect or abuse.

Lack of engagement or resistance may be due to **communication difficulties**. To find out more, please click [here](#)

There is a strong association between **conduct problems** in childhood and later involvement in crime. To find out more, click [here](#)

Click [here](#) for CASE STUDY

- *The police may be the first agency to come into contact with an individual or family in need of support.* Every interaction you have with a child, young person or family – on patrol in communities as well as responding to call outs – gives you the chance to gather information about potential risks and opportunities to intervene before problems become more serious.
- *This information is very valuable to partner agencies* such as health or schools, and can help target limited resources: identifying vulnerable young parents for intensive home visiting for example.
- *A child, young person or family member may be experiencing multiple risk factors* in different spheres of his or her life. You may be the only professional who has sight of these risks. Do not assume that somebody else will pick them up.
- *Be inquisitive about what is going on in the family.* Is there a housing issue? Is substance misuse or domestic abuse a factor? Check police systems e.g. incident logs, intelligence.
- *Asking the simple question “Is there anything else I can do for you?”* when you have dealt with an incident may be more likely to get to the root of problems than any other question.
- *You should always see an under 18 year old as a child first and foremost,* and pay due regard to his or her safety and wellbeing.

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Identifying children, young people and families who need support

Understanding risk factors

There is a wealth of academic evidence on the risk factors for involvement in crime. The fact that risk factors are present in a person's life does not mean that that he or she will inevitably become an offender of course, and there are a range of protective factors that mitigate the risk, such as strong parenting.

You don't need to have an in depth knowledge of the research around risk factors. You just need to know the key things to look out for and have good lines of communication with partners so that you can discuss anything you are concerned about.

If you do want to read more about risk factors for offending, see David Farrington's 2006 article 'Childhood risk factors and risk focused prevention' in *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology* and the Youth Justice Board's report 'Risk and Protective Factors'.

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Recent damning reports including Louise Casey's [inspection report](#) and Alexis Jay's [investigation](#) into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham showed that professionals failed to take notice of the warning signs and act to protect vulnerable children. You need to make sure that you are aware of these warning signs and that you work proactively with other agencies to take action to protect children.

For information about the particular warning signs for **Child Sexual Exploitation**, please click [here](#)

KEY RISK FACTORS

Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor parenting skills• Family criminality• Family conflict• Poor housing
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low intelligence• Low empathy• Impulsivity
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disengagement• Low achievement
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deprived neighbourhood• Associating with antisocial peers• Feelings of alienation

"You just know that offenders' children will be the offenders of tomorrow..."

Staffordshire Focus Group participant

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Working with partners to assess risk and need

The **Common Assessment Framework (CAF)** or equivalent in your area must be completed once a child has come to notice as possibly needing support. The CAF helps practitioners assess children and young people's needs and strengths in order to ensure effective support.

You will not normally need to complete a CAF yourself, but you should always consider CAF when in contact with children, and know who can complete the assessment if necessary.

For more information on the CAF and similar risk assessment frameworks, click [here](#).

For more information about the MASH model, please click [here](#). Similar arrangements can be used for early intervention.

For practical advice on information sharing, please click [here](#).

For a list of likely multi-agency meetings in your area, click [here](#).

"It's very difficult for the Police to know what the real issue is driving criminal behaviour. We're not qualified to know what support a family needs. We need others to tell us that."
Staffordshire Focus Group participant

- *Combining Police intelligence with information other agencies hold can be an important way to identify families who may need support.* Health visitors or Children's Centres, for example, can try to identify which families may struggle after the birth of a baby, but this is much more powerful combined with police data about drug use, domestic abuse or offending.
- *You are unlikely to have the whole picture of a family in need of support.* Health, social services, schools and others will have valuable information. Sharing information will help you build a picture of the needs of a family and the opportunities to engage.
- *As a police officer or PCSO, you are legally able to share information if it is necessary to prevent crime.* You should consider each case individually when making decisions about whether to share information. If you are sharing with partners, you should make sure there's an Information Sharing Agreement in place. If there isn't one, then you could instigate the process.
- *Be bold in asking for information that you need to do your job effectively.* If barriers are put up, do not be afraid to challenge them.
- *There are likely to be a number of multi-agency meetings in your area* which assess risk and agree actions for work with individuals or families. It may not be possible to have a police representative at every meeting, but you should make sure you have a route to share relevant police information and that this is part of any risk assessment process.

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Identifying options and agreeing an action plan

“Instead of picking up the pieces, the Police must be part of the solution for families...This is about them being central to the operational partnership around families, sometimes leading, where enforcement is needed, and in a supporting role where more supportive approaches are required. Now more than ever, the police must be part of local multi agency teams that help families in a co-ordinated way, we cannot continue to allow a stream of different professionals to beat a path to the same front door.”

**T /Assistant Chief Constable Andy Battle,
West Yorkshire Police**

Police are often key partners in local work with families under the national Troubled Families Programme. For more information on the **Troubled Families Programme**, click [here](#).

UNDERSTANDING WHAT WORKS

It is important that you and your partners consider the likely effectiveness of the options available locally. The Early Intervention Foundation [Guidebook](#) contains information and advice on commissioning effective programmes, and the What Works Centre for Crime Reduction’s [toolkit](#) provides easy access to the crime reduction evidence base.

You and your partners might also consider evaluating the impact of local approaches, to add to the evidence base and to help you make the argument for ongoing investment. You can find more advice from the College of Policing about evaluating local approaches [here](#). Examples of local evaluations are available on POLKA or [here](#).

- *Responding to complex problems requires co-ordination across agencies.* There are often a range of options for supporting individuals with problems such as substance misuse, poor housing, and mental health issues, ranging from enforcement through to therapeutic, clinical or wider support services.
- *Some support services will be directly commissioned or delivered by the local authority or its partners, but some may be delivered by the voluntary and community sector through alternative funding.* You may want to work with partners to compile a directory of local services with information about the ways you can refer people to them, like this one from [Hounslow](#).
- *Increasingly, the police work with other agencies as part of ‘Team around the Family’ arrangements.* These involve a co-ordinated action plan for a family, usually with one agency taking the lead role. Whilst on occasion it might be best for the police to act as the lead agency, more often than not this will fall to one of your partners. Multi-agency teams should make sure that responsibilities and accountabilities are clear.
- *You should play a full part in discussions about options for working with a family, and consider creatively how the police can support the team effort.* For example, one of the barriers to early intervention is that some families refuse to engage with the support that is offered. It may be appropriate to use enforcement powers in ways that support the work of other agencies to engage families.

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Taking action and reviewing impact

“We have to remain collective in dealing with issues. Some agencies can drop away once another is taking the lead.”
Staffordshire Focus Group participant



- *It is important that the police stay involved and that work with a family remains a collective effort.* The case studies linked to this Guide have shown how an aligned approach across agencies can enable more effective support for families.
- *The police often function as the ‘eyes and ears’ out in local communities,* and are well placed to keep an eye on how young people and families are doing as the result of early intervention. Once an agreed plan or intervention has been put in place, police officers often play an important role in alerting other agencies if things are not progressing as intended.
- *Even when support to a family has been ‘stepped down’ because the situation has improved, police officers and PCSOs have an important role to play* in alerting other agencies or the lead worker if they see signs that things are deteriorating and the family is struggling again.

Click [here](#) for CASE STUDY

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Likely multi-agency meetings in your area

Multi-agency arrangements for working with children, young people and families will look different in every area and this can be a complex landscape. You may find this table useful as a guide to the sorts of arrangements in place across the country, but we would encourage you to spend some time mapping the arrangements in your area and the way the police contribute to them. This will help you prioritise involvement and ensure that you are getting maximum value from each, as well as making sure that relevant police information and intelligence is fed in. To go back to the main Guide, click [here](#).

	Description	Likely lead agency
Early Years service or Early Help Team	These teams co-ordinate support for children and families with additional needs during the early years (conception to age 5). They typically involve children’s centres, health visitors, school nurses, family nurses and local authority early years professionals. It is important that you have good links with these teams so that you can alert them if you encounter families with very young children or somebody who is pregnant and you suspect additional help may be needed. Children’s social workers will often only become involved if children are at significant risk, but there are a range of factors such as poor parenting skills, where family support or other services could improve things for children.	Local Authority Children’s Services
Integrated Early Support service or “Single Point of Entry” system	In some areas, early years support has been integrated with safeguarding, family support, youth services and the youth offending service. There is a single point of access for an initial assessment of the needs of a child, young person or family and a decision about whether multi-agency support is necessary. If this kind of integrated system is in place in your area, the police should be full and active partners.	Local Authority children’s services
Integrated Offender Management (IOM)	IOM arrangements look different in different areas, but allow partner agencies to come together to ensure that the offenders whose behaviour causes most harm locally are managed in a co-ordinated way. Police will be key partners within these arrangements.	Police or Local Authority Community Safety Team
Multi-Agency Gangs Unit	Many areas affected by gang activity have multi-agency teams in place to assess risk and agree action plans for work with those identified as being involved with a gang. These teams may be co-located. Police will almost certainly be a key partner in these arrangements, and may well be the lead agency.	Local Authority Community Safety Team or Police
Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	There may be a MASH in place in your area. This is a co-located multi-agency team, set up to improve the safeguarding response for children and vulnerable adults through better information sharing and partnership working. MASHs have an important role in facilitating early intervention through assessing risk and need and putting early help services in place where appropriate. Police involvement in a MASH is critical.	Local Authority Children’s Services
Targeted Youth Support	In some areas, family support, youth services and the youth offending service are brought together under a Targeted Youth Support banner. If this kind of integrated system is in place in your area, the police should be full and active partners.	Local Authority youth service or youth offending service
Troubled Families Programme (<i>Names may vary locally e.g. “Think Family”, “Stronger Families”</i>)	Most areas have family support teams delivering the national Troubled Families Programme. Many of these teams are multi agency and work in a “team around the family” way with some of the most complex families. Police are often key partners in this work.	Local Authority children’s services or youth offending service

The Troubled Families Programme

WHAT IS THE TROUBLED FAMILIES PROGRAMME?

The national Troubled Families Programme focuses on supporting families and resolving problems at the earliest possible opportunity. The programme is now moving into its second phase and will work with 400,000 families across the country over the course of the next 5 years. The criteria for a family to be included in the expanded programme will be broader than in the first phase, allowing more local discretion and flexibility. It is expected that every family will have at least two of the following problems:

- Parents or children involved in crime or antisocial behaviour
- Children who have not been attending school regularly
- Children who need help
- Adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion
- Families affected by domestic abuse
- Parents and children with a range of health problems

For more information, click [here](#).

Key pointers

- If you are involved in dealing with a family over an issue, consider the Troubled Families programme as a problem solving option.
- Know who your local Troubled Families lead is and ask for guidance. Make sure you know how you can refer families into the programme.
- Make sure you understand the criteria for inclusion in the programme. Consider the whole picture for the family and think about whether they might meet the criteria. The chances are that the families you are dealing with will meet some or all of them.

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WHY IS IT RELEVANT FOR ME?

The Troubled Families programme presents police forces with an opportunity to make early intervention 'business as usual' and to reduce demand by tackling the root causes of problems or by tackling problems before they escalate. The widening of the criteria means that most of the families presenting the greatest level of risk, vulnerability and demand on police resources should be included.

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