

# Think Family:

## Improving the life chances of families at risk

*This report – published by the Social Exclusion Task Force on 10th January – aims to ensure that adult services support whole families not just individuals, and announces a £16m programme of local pilots, to be led by the Department for Children, Schools and Families.*

A 'think family' approach aims to encourage local services to adopt the following basic principles:

No wrong door – contact with any service offers an open door into a system of joined-up support, for example a probation officer or housing officer identifies the adult language difficulties of a client and refers them to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) training;

Look at the whole family – services working with both adults and children take into account family circumstances and responsibilities, for example an alcohol treatment service combines treatment with parenting classes while supervised childcare is provided for the children;

Provide support tailored to need – tailored and family-centred packages of support are offered to all families at risk, for example a Family Intervention Project works with a family to agree a package of support best suited to their situation;

Build on family strengths – practitioners work in partnerships with families recognising and promoting resilience and helping them to build their capabilities, for example family group conferencing is used to empower a family to negotiate their own solution to a problem.

In supporting and enabling local services to put these principles into action, local authorities with their partners are invited to apply

to become one of 12–15 Family Pathfinders that will run for three years from April 2008.

The Family Pathfinders – led by DCSF - aim to improve outcomes for families at risk through change at all levels of the system; from local strategy and governance to the delivery of more effective frontline services. They are intended to build on the lessons from innovative family-based services such as the Family Intervention Projects.

In addition, the report advocates early intervention and prevention within the existing system of support and extends tailored family services to reach a wider range of vulnerable families, in part through continued investment in existing projects shown to work including Family Nurse Partnerships and Family Intervention Projects.

In doing so, it aims to extend the logic of co-operation behind Every Child Matters to adult's services so that all services share responsibility for family outcomes, encouraging and empowering frontline staff to innovate and cooperate in response to whole family situations.

The full report is available at:  
[www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/upload/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social\\_exclusion\\_task\\_force/think\\_families/think\\_family\\_life\\_chances\\_report.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/upload/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/think_families/think_family_life_chances_report.pdf)

**“Good children’s services are critical, but adults’ services also have a crucial role to play in determining children’s achievements and future life chances...the next phase of our efforts to improve outcomes for children must therefore include adults’ services and recognise the importance of addressing the problems that parents face..”**