Scheme that helps troubled families hailed as success

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By Mike Benke

NEW figures show the lives of more 350 families with a number of problems have been turned around in the last three years.

The Troubled Families programme was launched by the Government soon after the 2010 election and is being hailed as a success in Swindon.

Families which had no working adults and youngsters with a long history of truancy and youth crime have been the focus of the project.

A slightly different approach to the project has been taken in Swindon compared with other areas in the country.

Charmaine Tarring, Swindon Borough Council’s Families First manager, said: “We have made sure it is everyone’s business. We have not just said one team deals with this, another with that.

“Our approach has been to that these problems affect many areas of the council. What makes this different is that previously each body would deal individually with their client so one would deal with truancy, another with unemployment.

“By working together we have been able to work with the families to make a much bigger difference.”

A family is considered turned around if a child has been back in school for a year, youth offending and anti-social behaviour has been significantly cut and an adult in the house has moved off benefits for more than three months.

“We don’t go knock on doors and announce ‘we are the troubled families team’,” said Charmaine.

“It’s more about approaching them and seeing what we can do and 99 per cent of the time these families want the help.

“Often they are just in a situation where they feel they can’t get out of so we give them that support.

“It is about helping them and then giving them the confidence to know that if they find themselves falling back in the future they can get themselves out.
“Not only is this beneficial to the family but from a council point of view it reduces the demand on services.”

The programme is such a success that it has just been extended by the Government so Charmaine and her colleagues can help a wider group of people.

She said: “There were often cases when we would see people but they would not fit the criteria of the existing programme.

“Now we can look at things such as domestic violence and drug use, not just youth crime, truancy and unemployment.

“We have a bigger target of families we need to reach but we have much more scope people who really need support.”

http://www.thisiswiltshire.co.uk/news/13356531.Scheme_that_helps_troubled_families_hailed_as_success/