



Brighton and Hove
Children and Young People's
TRUST



Working it out together: family matters in reducing offending

Dr Sajid Humayun, *Systemic Psychotherapist,
Family First Team, Brighton*

Helen Wilde, *Systemic Psychotherapist, Family
First Team, Brighton*

Lauren Herlitz, *Researcher, SAFE study, National
Academy for Parenting Practitioners*

Introduction

1. Evidence on family work and offending
2. Introduction to Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and its evaluation – the Study of Adolescents' Family Experiences (SAFE)
3. Comparing FFT with other family services for young offenders
4. A more detailed look at FFT and video footage of FFT in action
5. Discussion

Evidence on family work and offending (I)

- Family risk factors **double** the likelihood of offending
 - single strongest predictor of offending and also key protective factor
- Evidence based parenting programmes (e.g. Triple P, Webster-Stratton)
 - Extremely effective in reducing antisocial behaviour/conduct problems
 - Two thirds who complete report improved behaviour in child
 - Best preventative interventions we have available

Evidence on family work and offending (II)

BUT...

- Evidence primarily for under-12s
 - Will only work for those who turn up and complete
 - May not be the right approach for families with complex needs who are hard to engage
-
- Some evidence based family approaches for young offenders
 - Show reductions of up to 40% in reoffending from US
 - Some are currently being piloted in UK

What is Functional Family Therapy (FFT)?

- A family based, assertive outreach model
- Meetings take place usually in the family home at a time that suits them.
- Tailored to each individual family, weekly sessions typically over 3 – 5 months
- Significant reductions in reoffending in US as well reduced offending amongst siblings



Study of Adolescents' Family Experiences (SAFE)



- A randomised controlled trial of FFT.

Aim to recruit **100** families: **50** intervention (FFT + TAU)
50 control (TAU)

- Research team sees families over 18 months
- Families recruited from primarily from:
Brighton & Hove and West Sussex YOTS
- They are also recruited from other Brighton & Hove services:
Targeted Youth Support Services, Antisocial Behaviour,
Parenting teams, RUOK?, and Family Intervention Project.

Comparing FFT with other family services

- MST: strong evidence for reducing offending in US, currently being trialled here, fairly expensive
- Strengthening Families: 10 – 14, group based, some evidence for reduced aggression
- FIPs, promising but:
 - Reductions in ASB reported by caseworker, not independently
 - Based on small number of families
 - No evidence for long-term improvements yet
- However, FIPs may prove to be the vehicle for getting evidence based family interventions out in to the community

A more detailed look at FFT

- Evidence based treatment model from USA, developed by Jim Alexander, starting in 1971.
- **Systemic**: works with the many systems that young people are connected with
- **Multiphase**:
 - Engagement and Motivation
 - Behaviour Change
 - Generalization
- Goals to be addressed in each phase

The Family First Team

Team composition

- Three full time, one p/t Systemic Psychotherapists
- Full time team administrator
- Includes team manager (US known as 'site lead')

Clinicians are experienced and skilled in working with:

- Complex family dynamics
- Child and adolescent mental health issues
- Developmental delay in children and adolescents

Training and costs of FFT

Training

- Consultants from USA provide intensive training and supervision both in US and UK.
- 2 year period for site accreditation

Costs

- 140 cases per year as a team; cost per case £2,000
- Total staff costs per year £267,000
- Training and supervision costs per year £13,000
- Grand total £280,000

FFT – a manualised approach

Manualised:

**clear phase goals + high standards of training + supervision
= model fidelity**

Guiding principals, where to go when things get complicated

A framework that:

- Breaks complex problems down into manageable focuses of work
- Ensures a core approach of respect of families individual difference and culture
- Is family and relationally focused

Without a clear operational framework therapists can quickly become overwhelmed by complex family dynamics

Three stages of FFT

- Engagement and motivation
- Behaviour change
- Generalisation



Major techniques of Engagement and Motivation

- Interrupt and divert
- Selectively attend to problems
- Strength based relational focus.
- View problems as being relational, a result of things that happen between people
- Build balanced alliance (not taking sides)

Engaging 'hard to reach' families

- **77% have completed or are currently in therapy**
- **89% of scheduled sessions are attended**

Reducing negativity and blame

Change Focus Technique

Daughter: *Dad came home in a mood, shouted at Jen (sister), she started crying, then you had a go at me for standing up for her!*

Mum: *You get involved just to have a go at your dad, and Jen was out of order and how come I get the blame for being the one who has to sort all of this mess out? I come home and have to spend the first 10 minutes sorting you all out.*

Therapist: *You are all looking out for each other and trying to make sure things are fair between you. (To mum) It's not great to come home to arguing at the end of a day at work. And what you did stopped the arguing, it was effective.*

www.parentingacademy.org

shumayun@parentingacademy.org

helen.wilde@brighton-hove.gov.uk

lauren.herlitz@kcl.ac.uk