

Did the Troubled Families Programme (TFP) intervention contribute to positive change and outcomes being achieved for families worked with within a local authority, if so, how?

A Realistic Evaluation using parent and professional perspectives

Volume 1 of a doctoral thesis

APPLIED EDUCATIONAL AND CHILD PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORATE

By

Mr Yuvender Kumar Prashar



The School of Education,
University of Birmingham,
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Abstract

This research adopted a Realistic Evaluation approach (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) to elicit and refine the theoretical understanding of how the Troubled Families programme (TFP) may have facilitated positive outcomes for a proportion of service-users within one focus local authority.

A Realist Synthesis approach (Pawson, 2006) was undertaken to identify the context-mechanism-outcome configurations (programme theories) underpinning the TFP. These identified programme theories were presented to key stakeholders (parents and family support workers) to be validated, refined or falsified.

The theoretical basis of the TFP was refined to explicate how: *'a dedicated family support worker'*, *'delivering practical support'*, *'adopting a persistent and assertive approach with families'*, *'understanding families as a whole'* and *'establishing common purposes and actions'*, as theories, facilitate positive outcomes for families, as per the TFP success criteria.

The findings of the present research refined understanding of *'what works, for whom and under what circumstances?'* in relation to the TFP.

To this end, findings are discussed with respect to the implications for family support practices. In addition, the implications for the practice of educational psychologists with respect to the methodology adopted as well as the area of intensive family support are also discussed.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to all of the families that are experiencing adversity.

I hope that this research adds to the understanding of how best to support you towards the better futures you deserve.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I wish to thank my academic supervisor, Dr Huw Williams for his continual support, encouragement and wisdom throughout my time on the doctorate.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

The present volume of work expresses research undertaken in line with the requirements of the Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctoral Programme at the University of Birmingham. Broadly, the research aims to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of how Phase 1 of the Troubled Families Programme (TFP) supported families within one particular Local Authority (LA) to achieve *positive outcomes* and *sustained change*.

The research adopted a Realistic Evaluation approach (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) to elucidate and appraise the *programme theories* that are assumed within existing literature to underpin the TFP. Programme theories are defined as “*a set of explicit or implicit assumptions by stakeholders about what action is required to solve a social, educational or health problem and why the problem will respond to this action*” (Chen, 2012).

Situated within a Critical Realist ontological orientation and interpretivist epistemology, the research aims to report the programme theories that contributed to the successful outcome (reduction in antisocial behaviour, crime and raised child school attendance also known as ‘social targets’) achieved by a portion of the population of TFP service users (n = 84%) within one local authority. The identification and appraisal of these assumed programme theories was generated through a realist synthesis approach and empirical data collection via a series of realist interviews conducted with TFP service users and practitioners.

The realist synthesis is *an approach reviewing research evidence on complex social interventions, which provides an explanatory analysis of how and why they work (or don't work) in particular contexts or settings* (Pawson et al, 2004, pg. 4). Subsequently, these assumed programme theories were then shared with interviewees within the realist interview with a view to appraising them. Furthermore, the realist interview method also allowed for

new information to be added to the understanding of factors that contributed to success of the TFP for certain families.

Research rationale

The research developed through a mutual interest between the Local Authority, the Principal Educational Psychologist and I to conduct further exploration into the relative successes of the TFP. Furthermore, between the years 2012-2015, educational psychologists within the focus local authority were located within multi-agency support teams (MASTs) which were comprised of professionals and practitioners from a range of health, education and social care roles. At this time, within the focus local authority there was a strong emphasis on educational psychologists supporting the corporate interest of keeping families together. To this end, educational psychologists were becoming increasingly involved in working with parent support workers, social workers and other family support practitioners through direct supervision, informal peer supervision sessions and reflective practice sessions. Typically within these forums, other aforementioned practitioners would bring 'cases' to the attention of an educational psychologist with a view to gaining their perspective on what may be occurring and therefore which next steps may be conducive towards facilitating the desired changes.

To this end, it was deemed that by undertaking research that offered health/ social/ education oriented practitioners working within family support contexts, as well as educational psychologists, an enhanced understanding of what practices are optimal for producing positive and sustained change within families requiring support could be greatly beneficial.

Local Authority interest

One of the focus local authority's corporate interests lies with supporting families to stay together. This owes to the local social context in which there are high numbers of Looked-After Children (LAC) and relatively higher than national averages of unemployment. To this end, following Phase 1 of the TFP within the LA, a *payment by results* outcome of 84% of all the families that participated was achieved (Department for Communities and Local Government in *Troubled Families Programme, Progress Information*, 2015). This figure only represented the percentage of families worked with (total n = 810) that were successfully worked with to reduce reported incidents antisocial behaviour/ crime and improved child school attendance (n = 683). In addition, although not necessarily the focus of the present study, there were 127 families that were achieving continuous employment targets by the end of June 2015 within the focus local authority, representing a success rate of approximately 15%.

In line with this, the Principal Educational Psychologist, Head of Early Intervention services 5-18 years, and the Troubled Families Coordinator were interested in exploring ways to develop the effectiveness of the TFP with current and future families to be worked with.

To this end, I was commissioned to conduct research that would explicate why and how the TFP was effective for the aforementioned 84% of families related to the social targets. Consequently, it was viewed that such findings would also have implications for developing the TFP approach with other families for whom positive outcomes were desired.

Researcher interest

As a Trainee Educational Psychologist on placement within the LA, I have had first-hand experience of working with children and families that were recruited to the TFP. As a critically

oriented Psychologist, I am also interested in exploring the process of change and the factors that support/ hinder this. It could be argued that the TFP, as a social intervention is largely concerned with introducing change. To this end, there is clearly a role as both a psychologist and researcher to explore the hypothesised phenomena of the TFP influencing change for 84% of Phase 1 families within the Local Authority.

Defining Troubled Families

The majority Conservative Party United Kingdom government introduced a new approach to working with approximately 120,000 *Troubled Families* in 2010. In attempts to target support and resources to the most 'troubled' families, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG, 2012) defined Troubled Families as:

"Those who meet 3 of the 4 following criteria:

- *Are involved in youth crime or anti-social behaviour*
- *Have children who are regularly truanting or not in school*
- *Have an adult on out of work benefits*
- *Cause high costs to the taxpayer" pg. 9.*

It was anticipated by the DCLG that many families may present with 2 criterion and therefore still be 'troubled' to some degree. To this end, a further *filter* criterion was established whereby Local Authorities could apply discretion to include families who may have been experiencing additional difficulties, such as child protection proceedings, frequent police involvement and chronic issues with physical health (Davies, 2015, pg. 10).

To inform policy and intervention further, Louise Casey (Director General of the Troubled Families initiative) conducted 'non-formal' case study research to understand What multiplicity of problems means for families and how they got to be so troubled (DCLG, 2012).

Casey concluded through a series of interviews that there appeared to be some commonalities amongst the problems that these troubled families were experiencing. An outline of these is provided within figure 1 below.

Figure 1: The ‘trouble’ within Troubled Families (Casey, 2012)

Common factors present within Troubled Families	
Intergenerational transmission of difficulties	Anti-social family & friend networks
Large numbers of children	Abuse
Shifting family make-up	Institutional care
Dysfunctional relationships	Teenage mothers
Violence	Early signs of poor school behaviour
Anti-social behaviour	Depression / Poor mental health
Substance abuse	

In the report, Casey (2012) concluded that:

“The traditional approach of services reaching individual family members, at crisis point or after, and trying to fix single issues such as 'drug use', 'non-attendance at school' or 'domestic violence' in these families is most often destined to fail. Their behaviours and problems can be properly understood only by looking at the full cycle - and the full family.” (pg. 67)

Impact of Troubled Families Programme Phase 1

Within the focus local authority, at the end of Phase one of the TFP there was a reported success rate of 84% (DCLG, 2015). This figure represented the percentage of families that entered the programme that achieved positive outcomes following a six month period following intervention. At that time, the service director for Children and Young People was quoted within media saying: *“The Families in Focus programme has had a tremendous impact on families in anonymised local authority who are struggling to function properly for one reason or another.”* (Source – Focus local authority website, 2015)

In contrast to this, an independent evaluation of Phase one of the TFP was reported in October 2016 by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), which stated that:

“The key finding from the impact evaluation using administrative data was that across a wide range of outcomes, covering the key objectives of the programme - employment, benefit receipt, school attendance, safeguarding and child welfare - we were unable to find consistent evidence that the Troubled Families programme had any significant or systematic impact. That is to say, our analysis found no impact on these outcomes attributable to the programme, with observed outcomes for the Troubled Families Programme families being very similar to the outcomes for a matched comparison group of families.”

(DCLG, 2016 Pg. 69)

This evaluation adopted three different streams, including a process evaluation (how was the programme being delivered), an impact evaluation (quantification of the impact

the programme had on families worked with) and an economic evaluation (were savings made and was it cost-effective).

To this end, a tentative hypothesis begins to emerge that it is not whether the TFP works or not, but rather that it appears to work in specific ways and situations.

Local Authority Context

The LA in which the research was undertaken in is a city metropolitan borough within the West Midlands. The population comprises of approximately 250,000 residents from a range of ethnic, cultural, geographical and religious backgrounds.

In line with the Troubled Families agenda as set out by the DCLG in 2012, locally the LA has responded by setting a target of 'turning round' 2,840 families by 2020. Between the years 2012-2015 the LA has reported that it has turned around 810 families who were experiencing difficulties aligned to the TF criteria. To support this initiative, the LA works closely with housing providers, health services, police services and education providers to bring about 'sustained and significant change'. This initiative is referred to as the 'Families in Focus' programme.

The LA estimates that the cost of issues and difficulties persisting within families equates to approximately £75,000 per family. To this end, within the current economic climate of austerity, the LA is driven towards reducing the costs of public expenditure.

Local Authority – Troubled Families Financial Framework

Guidelines from the DCLG (2012) incentivised local authorities to identify families that would qualify as 'Troubled Families' by offering an 'attachment fee'. Between the years of 2012-2015 this fee gradually reduced from 80% to 40% of the overall £4,000 that would be paid for achieving positive results for families identified (i.e. payment by results scheme).

To this end, the only way that local authorities could gain funding to support ‘troubled families’ was to firstly identify them to gain an attachment fee and then achieve positive outcomes for them as set out within the TFP success criteria.

Chapter 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

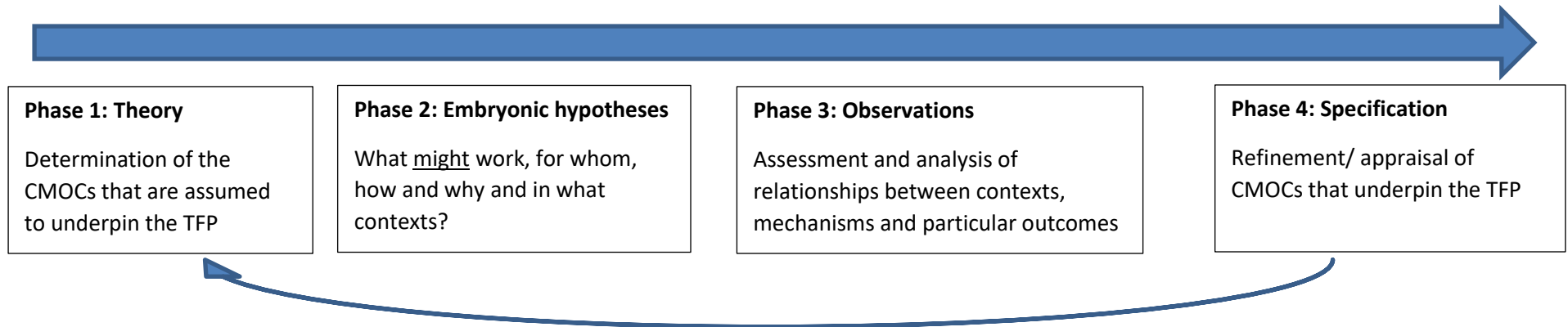
Research Design

Realistic Evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) is an approach to evaluation methodology that supports researchers seeking to understand and offer explanations on how social interventions (i.e. Troubled Families programme) work to address social issues (i.e. persistent school non-attendance, domestic violence, unemployment and crime) by asking questions such as *‘what works for whom in what circumstances and in what respects, and how?’* (Pawson and Tilley, 2004, pg. 2).

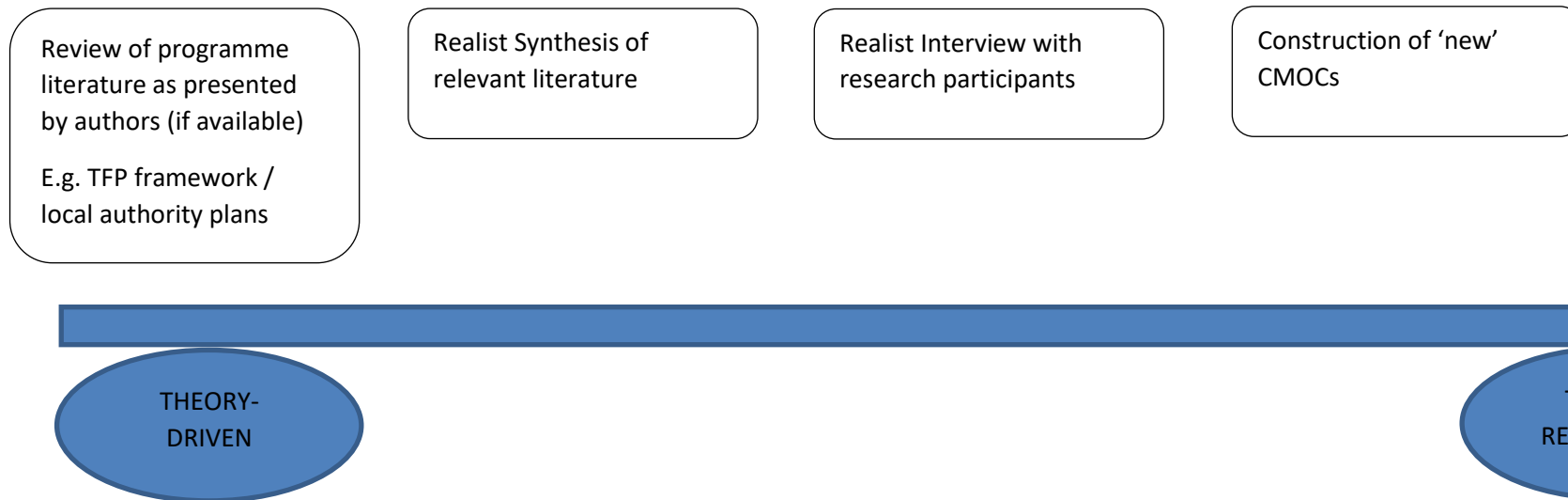
The Realistic Evaluation framework for conducting research is a theory-driven approach. RE assumes a critical realist position on social interventions by acknowledging that they are composed of *real* elements (*contexts*) which in combination with the actor’s cognitions, perceptions and actions (*mechanisms*) results in particular results (*outcomes*).

Figure 2 denotes the over-arching research design for the present study.

Figure 2: An overview of the research design/ phases for the realistic evaluation of the TFP



Actual activities administered within the study to correspond with the realistic evaluation cycle:



Fundamentally, the present study has a realist philosophy permeating throughout its design.

As the principal researcher, I have adopted the stance that there is indeed a real world that would exist independently from people being able to perceive it through a multi-sensory way. However, the realist philosophy states that how the real world is perceived by each individual that can lead to a clearer understanding of what the real world might actually be.

To this end, by adopting a realist stance, it is assumed that there is a social intervention called the Troubled Families Programme. However, the understanding of what the programme is and how it might work as an intervention is influenced by how individuals involved in it perceive it. The Realistic Evaluation approach (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) seeks to uncover how individuals perceive social interventions rather than the more traditional approach to evaluation that offers an appraisal on whether or to what degree an intervention was effective. In realistic evaluations, the term 'generative causation' is often referred to as an account of the reasoning behind the outcomes that a programme achieved (Pawson, 2006).

The synthesis of the contexts in which social interventions occur as well as the mechanisms that are then activated by these contexts (typically individual perceptions, reasoning, beliefs etc.) and the resulting outcomes are often presented within realistic evaluation as a series of context, mechanism and outcome configurations (CMOCs). It is these CMOCs that offer a way of understanding the theories that may be involved for producing certain outcomes within particular social interventions.

To aid in the understanding of the present study, an overview of key terminology is presented with a brief definition of each term.

Key terms:

Programme theory

A description of how an intervention is assumed to result in its expected outcomes and the conditions that are likely to influence this.

CMOC

A proposition stating what it is about an intervention that works (outcomes), for whom and in what circumstances (context-mechanisms).

Stakeholder/ subjects

The individuals directly involved in facilitating the intervention and/ or being the direct focus of the social intervention.

Programme/ social intervention

An organised system of activities that are designed to change/ improve the social experiences of targeted individuals/ groups in society, through an internalisation of social control.

Realist Synthesis

The synthesis of a wide array of literature and evidence that seeks to offer explanation for the conditions and mechanisms that may underpin the outcomes that are produced by a particular social intervention.

Realist Interview

The process of presenting the assumed programme theories to the interviewee (stakeholder) followed by a process of exploring their experience of the social intervention in order to confirm, falsify or refine theoretical understanding of how, why and for whom the programme works.

Middle-range programme theory

A level of theoretical abstraction of a social phenomenon that is specific enough to generate propositions to test whilst being generalisable to apply within different situations.

Chapter 3: AN OVERVIEW OF THE REALIST SYNTHESIS APPROACH

Review of the literature

In line with Pawson and Tilley (2006), the present study adopted a Realist Synthesis approach to develop middle range programme theories from a review of the literature associated with the Troubled Families programme. This initial process within the review begins to advance the understanding as to how Phase 1 of the Troubled Families programme may *work* to support families towards positive outcomes and changes.

The development of programme theories also generates tentative hypotheses as to what contexts enable certain social mechanisms, which in turn may lead to produce a particular set of outcomes. In addition, the development of these assumed programme theories permits the researcher to utilise a deductive and theory-driven approach within the data collection phase, as was implemented within the present study. Furthermore, the opportunity to appraise the assumed programme theories within the data collection phase also provides an opportunity to refine them to a greater degree than that which could be achieved via a review of the literature alone.

Aims of Realist Synthesis

In broadest terms, Realist Synthesis is an approach to the review and synthesis of evidence, which focuses on understanding the mechanisms by which an intervention works, or not (Rycroft-Malone, 2012). However, it is not concerned with producing generalisable truths but rather refinement of theory (Pawson et al, 2005).

A summary of the Realist Synthesis approach adopted within the present study, based upon Pawson (2006) can be seen in Table 1 on the next page.

Table 1: Overview of Realist Synthesis approach used within study (based on Pawson, 2006)

Identifying and defining the review question	<p>Review question was identified and defined through discussion with key stakeholders from the Local Authority (LA) who were associated with Phase 1 of the Troubled Families programme.</p> <p>A review of Phase 1 data that demonstrated the programme may have worked well to produce positive outcomes for 84% of families involved.</p> <p>Reviewing the Troubled Families framework and its unique implementation within the Local Authority to ascertain what was deemed to be the most supportive and recognised outcomes.</p>
Literature scoping and search phase	<p>Scoping, searching and identifying literature that explored the outcomes identified through discussion with stakeholders and review of LA approach to implementing Troubled Families intervention.</p> <p>For example – Examining if and how the TF programme might work to produce positive outcomes via the role the dedicated family worker plays. In addition, relevant literature would be appraised to <i>test</i> the theory that certain mechanisms are facilitated by the family worker within the TF programme and its related outcomes.</p>
Quality assurance	Evaluating the literature's quality and professional rigour to ensure robustness of synthesis.
Data and evidence extraction	The use of an analytic reading framework to collate relevant <i>data</i>
Synthesis of the data/ evidence	Utilisation of <i>data</i> to explore possible links between the contexts and mechanisms (reflected within the literature) to develop assumed programme theories that broadly explicate how the TF programme may support families towards achieving the positive outcomes and changes outlined within the LA's TFP framework.

Identifying and defining the review question

In keeping with the tradition of Realist Synthesis approaches, the review question was identified and defined in collaboration with key stakeholders and commissioners of the research study (Pawson, 2006). This included liaising with the Principal Educational

Psychologist of the LA, the head of children and families early help service and the Troubled Families lead co-ordinator.

During the initial discussions it became apparent that it was a corporate priority to keep families together whilst reducing the number of children entering the social care system. In addition, Phase 1 of the Troubled Families programme had reported a payment by results or success rate of 84%. The key stakeholders felt that this was a relative success but were also interested as to why the programme appeared to be successful in a significant proportion but not all cases. It was agreed that a focus on this particular phenomenon might also be useful towards developing the quality of practice with families within the next phase of the Troubled Families programme. To this end, in line with the tradition of Realistic Evaluation, the primary aim of the research was to refine the theoretical understanding around the particular contexts and mechanisms that support positive change for troubled families.

Initial scoping of the documentation and literature suggested that a synthesis of studies and articles related to how the Troubled Families programme and other related family intervention programmes might be successful in supporting them towards positive outcomes and changes such as employment, raising school attendance, reducing anti-social behaviour etc.

Consequently, it was agreed that a useful focus for the review question would be:

How the Troubled Families programme might work to enable families to produce positive outcomes and changes aligned with the criteria of the Phase 1 TF framework?

To this end, it was agreed that the review would aim to explicate:

- The *outcomes* that are essential in needing to be supported by the TF programme in order to enable families to produce positive changes.
- The *mechanisms* that are facilitated by the TF programme that enables these *outcomes* to be produced.
- The *context* conditions that enable these *mechanisms* to be initiated.

Identification of programmes

The initial scoping and subsequent review of the literature aimed to begin to formulate the programme theories that underpinned phase 1 of the TF programme, with a view to explicating how the TF programme might have worked for the 84% of families that achieved positive outcomes and changes (or payment by results) within the LA between the years 2012-2015.

To this end it was important to include literature that had been produced by both Local and National Government, as well as independent studies that had been conducted. However, when considering the various issues that define *Troubled Families*, it would have been a vast exercise to review all of the relevant literature concerned with producing positive change for families in relation to the criterion set out within the TF framework.

The criteria for being identified as a 'troubled family', as reported within the Troubled Families framework document (DCLG, 2012), are outlined within Table 2 below.

Table 2: Identification of 'Troubled Family' criteria (DCLG, 2012)

Troubled Family criteria (Phase 1)	Details
Involved in crime and anti-social behaviour	<p>– Households with 1 or more under 18-year-old with a proven offence in the last 12 months; AND/ OR</p> <p>– Households where 1 or more member has an antisocial behaviour order, anti-social behaviour injunction, anti-social behaviour contract, or where the family has been subject to a housing-related anti-social behaviour intervention in the last 12 months.</p>
Have children not in school	<p>Child has been subject to permanent exclusion; three or more fixed school exclusions across the last 3 consecutive terms; OR – Is in a Pupil Referral Unit or alternative provision because they have previously been excluded, or is not on a school roll; AND/ OR – A child has had 15% unauthorised absences or more from school across the last 3 consecutive terms.</p>
Have an adult on out of work benefits	<p>At least one parent within the family is in receipt of benefits related to unemployment/ worklessness</p>
Cause high costs to the public purse	<p>This factor is subject to discretion of local authority (referred to as local discretion)</p> <p>Includes factors such as drug and alcohol misuse, under 18 conceptions, health problems, domestic abuse, adults involved in gang-related crimes, and a child on a Child Protection Plan</p>

Within the context of Realistic Evaluation, it could be argued that the very criteria that define involvement within the TF programme are directly related with the outcomes it is trying to achieve as a social intervention.

These desired outcomes are outlined within Table 3 below, taken from the Department for Communities and Local Government's Troubled Families Programme, Financial framework (2012).

Table 3: Success criteria for Phase 1 of TFP (DCLG, 2012)

Troubled Family criteria (Phase 1)	Outcomes (Payment-by-results)
Involved in crime and anti-social behaviour	<p>At least a 60% reduction in anti-social behaviour across the household in the last 6 months.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Overall level of offending across all under 18-year-olds in the household has reduced their level of proven offending by at least 33% in the last 6 months, in comparison to their average level of proven offending in the previous 6 months.</p>
Have children not in school	<p>All children in the household who are in school, a Pupil Referral Unit or Alternative Provision have had fewer than three fixed term exclusion and less than 15% unauthorised absences in the last 3 consecutive terms;</p> <p>and</p> <p>All children in the household who are not on the school roll have moved into a school, Pupil Referral Unit or alternative provision, have had fewer than three fixed</p>

	term exclusions and less than 15% unauthorised absences in the last 3 consecutive terms.
Have an adult on out of work benefits	An adult in the household has volunteered for the Work Programme or has been attached to the European Social Fund Provision in the last 6 months An adult in the household to move off out of work benefits and into continuous employment.
Cause high costs to the public purse	These were not directly included in the payment-by-results scheme as they were recognised to be factors that assist in the identification of troubled families and are thus likely to improve if education, employment and crime factors are addressed.

In December 2012, the DCLG produced a document (*Working with Troubled Families: a guide to evidence and good practice*) that explored the factors that practitioners and families had reported to work for them. The five key factors outlined were:

1. *A dedicated worker, dedicated to a family*
2. *Practical 'hands on' support*
3. *A persistent, assertive and challenging approach*
4. *Considering the family as a whole – gathering the intelligence*
5. *Common purposes and agreed actions*

This framework produced by the DCLG was shared with all local authorities, nationally. Within Focus local authority, this was essentially embedded as *the* approach for working with families identified as being eligible for the TF programme. In essence, these were the underlying

assumptions as to why the TF programme was effective for troubled families that achieved positive outcomes / payment by results. Pawson and Tilley (2006) would describe these as being the *middle range programme theories* that are assumed to be related to how Phase 1 of the TF programme might work effectively.

To this end, the literature explored within the present synthesis included:

- Literature that explored the outcomes necessary to enable families to experience reduced worklessness / employment related issues, anti-social behaviour/ crime and children to be attending school.
- Literature that related to similar social interventions that aim to provide a dedicated family support worker (or similar designation) to aid with a multiplicity of issues, such as those recognised by the TF programme.
- Literature that related to the assumed programme theories, as reported by the DCLG (2012) on what an effective approach to working with troubled families encompassed.

The initial scoping of the wider literature revealed that social interventions such as the TF programme are not entirely novel approaches to assisting families experiencing multiple challenges. Similarly, programmes such as the Respect programme (a Government backed approach to assist in tackling anti-social behaviour) was implemented between the years 2006-2010 in the United Kingdom. More recently, The Families with Multiple Problems Programme was delivered between 2011-2015 and was tasked with tackling barriers that affected families to access work and employment.

For the remit of this particular study, it was pertinent to retain a focus on UK literature concerned with assisting families. In keeping with the Realistic Evaluation tradition of maintaining a theory-driven approach it was justified to predominantly keep to UK literature

as the *theory* behind the TF programme had UK origins. However, international perspectives were considered where following scrutiny it was considered that the literature may provide appropriate and relevant insights into possible theoretical context-mechanisms that are involved in effective intensive family support.

Search Strategy

A purposive search strategy was adopted in order to seek relevant literature from which the programme theories assumed to underpin the TF programme could be abstracted.

Initially search terms included; *troubled family/ families, family support, intensive family support/ intervention, change, positive outcomes, employment, anti-social behaviour, crime, youth offending, education and school attendance.*

Pawson (2006) suggests that the synthesis can become iterative in its nature whereby the uncovering of literature concerned with certain programme theories begin to identify and highlight potential further lines of inquiry and thus further subsequent searches of the literature may occur. To this end, although the initial searches were broad, insofar as they related to the assumed programme theories of the TF framework and working guidelines, the theories that derived from these initial searches were further refined and appraised via an iterative process of subsequent searches.

A selection of bibliographic and document databases were utilised for the initial literature search. These included; GOV.UK, ERIC- EBSCO, Web of Science, PsycINFO and Pro-Quest (Social Science).

Ensuring quality, relevance and rigour of review

All literature concerned with the use of social interventions/ family support to assist with a multiplicity of issues (as outlined in the TF framework) was explored to aid in the formulation

of TFP programme theories. This initial scoping was done via scrutiny of article abstracts to ensure pertinence and rigour.

Only research, literature and studies that appeared to contribute to the present study were included (I.e. the literature that contributed to the development/ refinement of programme theories). Methodological approaches were also scrutinised to ensure that only those studies or literature that appeared to be grounded within appropriate a robust techniques were included. To this end, the process of grading quality of literature can be deemed to be a subjective process that is driven by the researcher's interpretations. However, in order to assist the reader with understanding this process, an overview of this method is presented within Appendix 1 adapted from Wong et al (2013), RAMESES publication standards for Realist Synthesis.

Consequently, the review ensured that *context*, *mechanism* and *outcome* configurations or 'CMOCs' (Pawson, 2006) could begin to be developed that were also robustly grounded by credible and relevant literature.

Chapter 4: DECONSTRUCTING THE TFP – REALIST SYNTHESIS FINDINGS

Timmins and Miller (2007) would suggest that the emergence of programme theories that are thought to underpin the social intervention being investigated, are an appropriate starting point within the research enquiry. These are also referred to as the ‘embryonic programme theories’ which are reported within the present chapter.

Middle-range programme outcomes

As a national intervention, what Pawson and Tilley (1997) would describe as programme outcomes, has already been made explicit by the TFP- Phase one authors. Broadly speaking, these are concerned with:

- 1) Reducing level of recorded incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB) across household
OR reducing level of recorded youth offending from minors within the family
- 2) Reducing number of child/ young person (CYP) school exclusions OR reducing number of unauthorised absences from school thus raising overall level of school attendance
- 3) Adults move onto continuous form of employment or have been attached to the European Social Fund Provision in the last 6 months.

To this end, one of the functions of the Realist Synthesis is to identify and summarise the literature that support the validity of the above being key outcomes towards supporting families to function better.

Middle-range programme outcome 1 – Reducing ASB / level of youth offending

Since 1997, the UK government has made tackling anti-social behaviour a priority through its discourse and a range of legislation and policy developments (Flint and Nixon, 2005). Although definitions differ, one way of describing ASB has been forwarded by Deery and Jago (2010, pg.1) as: “drunken, rowdy and potentially life and property threatening behaviour”.

Furthermore, the growing emphasis on tackling ASB has seen some researchers argue that the boundaries between crime control and social control have become conflated within the care professions (Brown, 2004). This is, perhaps in most part, attributed to the sub-divisions of approaches that are frequently undertaken as a response to tackling anti-social behaviour, namely coercive approaches (punitive measures) or developmental measures (rehabilitative).

To this end, there has been an emphasis on early intervention, particularly with the youths and adolescents within families to not only reduce ASB but also prevent and reduce further youth offending through family-based intervention approaches such as Multi-Systemic Therapy (Henggeler, 1997; RAND Europe, 2006). In addition, it is demonstrated within the literature that early intervention with youths at risk of future ASB and delinquency may also reduce the risk of being imprisoned as parents, which is also a risk-factor for their children to offend (Farrington, 2003).

Nevertheless, there is literature that demonstrates the importance of reducing anti-social behaviour within families for several reasons, such as reducing the risk of delinquency in adulthood (Greenwood et al, 1998) and general social exclusion (RAND Europe, 2006). To this end, it can be argued that there are also economic benefits to tackling ASB early on, as well as societal benefits. In addition, there is considerable evidence within the international literature to suggest that early intensive intervention for families deemed to be at risk of

presenting with ASB can significantly reduce the chances of children entering the youth offending system when compared with a group of matched controls (Greenwood et al, 1998).

As mentioned previously, within the UK there is evidence to suggest that rehabilitative interventions can prove to be effective. For example, educative programmes that target at-risk youth appear to present with an association with a reduced level of offending (Feinstein and Sabates, 2005). To this end, within the UK, the Department for Education and Skills developed the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) to financially incentivise the retention of 16-18 year olds within educational programmes. It is hypothesised within the literature that a better level of education can be associated with better employment and financial prospects which in turn reduce the experience of worklessness and the propensity to offend or present with ASB (Schuller et al, 2002).

In contrast to the ethos of rehabilitative interventions, there is evidence to suggest that coercive interventions may also be effective when tackling ASB. Within the UK, Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) were introduced following the Crime and Disorder Act (1998). These were primarily administered to deter ASB without the need for any formal criminal proceedings to be undertaken. There appears to be a view amongst practitioner groups within the literature that ASBOs are an effective measure for reducing ASB (Campbell, 2002; Kirkby and Edmondson, 2012). Although over 10 years ago, the guidelines produced by RAND Europe (2006) for effective interventions for reducing ASB suggest that the grounds upon which the Troubled Families Programme's concern with reducing ASB is indeed legitimate. Preceding the development of the TFP, White et al (2008) purport that:

“A combined approach of enforcement and support was required to address the deep seated underlying problems of these families in order to reduce their ASB.”

(pg.10)

In conclusion, there appears to be a breadth of literature that suggests supporting families and particularly youths to reduce occurrences of ASB and crime can provide favourable outcomes for the family, community and economy. To this end, the reduction of ASB within families can be identified as a middle-range programme outcome that is thought to be supportive towards families achieving positive and sustained outcomes.

Middle-range programme outcome 2 – Reducing CYP school exclusion / unauthorised absence from school

Within the UK, school exclusions are a disciplinary measure typically administered by head teachers within schools as a response to what is perceived as seriously disruptive behaviour. They can either be permanent exclusions (pupil removed indefinitely from school) or fixed-term exclusions (between 1 and 45 days maximum of the school year). School exclusion processes are governed under the auspices of the Education Act (2002).

Research has highlighted the negative impact that school exclusion can be associated to have across the various dimensions of an individual's life, including reduced likelihood of employment in adulthood (Sutherland and Eisner, 2014), increased risk of becoming a NEET (Massey, 2011), increased risk of offending (Berridge et al, 2001), intensify the effects of institutional prejudice (Carlile, 2010), increase the intensity of any mental health difficulty experienced (Parker and Ford, 2013), an increased risk of truancy (Osler and Vincent, 2003) and overall increased likelihood of experiencing social exclusion (Munn and Lloyd, 2005).

There is international research from the USA that suggests there is an association between family functioning / cohesion and positive engagement with school and a reduced risk of presenting with youth ASB (Annunziata et al, 2006). The literature also highlights that good attendance and engagement at school can be associated with a positive sense of belonging and relationships with peers and staff (Hawkins, 2011). To this end, there appears to be a theorised rationale for keeping children and young people in school which benefits at the societal level as well the intra-psychic level.

As a consequence, it appears that the TFP concern with raising school attendance/ reducing school exclusions for children and young people is a supportive outcome for producing sustained and positive change within families.

Middle-range programme outcome 3 – Reducing worklessness / improving financial stability of family

There is strong evidence within the literature to suggest a positive association between unemployment / worklessness and with a number of adverse health outcomes (Jin, et al 1995).

At the level of the individual, unemployment has been associated with a reduced level of reported well-being (Clark and Oswald, 2002) and a lowered overall sense of life satisfaction when compared with matched control groups of employed counterparts (Winkelmann and Winkelmann, 1998). It is particularly concerning that research has also identified long-term unemployment to be associated with a greater incidence of suicide (Milner et al, 2013) and the highest reported rates of violence towards children within families that are operating below the poverty or where the father is long-term unemployed (Wolfner and Gelles, 1993).

To this end, further research has demonstrated the impact that unemployment can have on family functioning, particularly when this is accompanied by periods of financial hardship (Broman et al, 1990). In addition, global studies have demonstrated the apparent correlation between unemployment and lower marriage and birth rates as well as higher divorce rates within families (Lester, 2008). Furthermore, unemployment within families has been associated with a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of mothers which in turn can negatively impact on their maternal interactions with their children, thus producing increased levels of cognitive distress and depressive symptoms within children (McCloyd et al, 1994).

Within the community, unemployed individuals have reported a reduced sense of belonging to their local community when compared with employed counterparts, which suggests there may be important implications for community cohesion (Steward et al, 2009).

Contrastingly, there is evidence to suggest that children may experience better outcomes within childhood if they are cared for by one non-working parent (Pierre, 2000).

Clearly, there is compelling evidence that supports the TFPs concern with reducing worklessness within families. To this end, there is evidence that gaining employment for parents/ carers within troubled families appear to be an important outcome for sustained and positive change within families, the local community and the national economy.

The process of eliciting TFP programme theories

In order to achieve the previously outlined programme outcomes, the TFP authors have also presented what appear to be some embryonic programme theories (CMO configurations) within the TFP framework and other associated documentation. CMO configurations can be thought of as a “proposition stating what it is about an initiative that works, for whom and in what circumstances.” (Linsley et al, 2015).

For example, from reviewing the TFP frameworks and programme documentation, it is suggested that the following programme theories begin to organically emerge which Timmins and Miller (2007) suggest may constitute a sound basis of inquiry for testing, validation and falsification with stakeholders of the programme. The following family intervention factors are explicitly outlined as the key elements behind working with troubled families, and why the intervention is thought to be effective from the perspectives of families, practitioners and previous research into family interventions (Dillane et al, 2001; DCLG, 2012; Morris, 2012)

The following middle-range programme theory contexts-mechanisms become apparent through a review of the aforementioned programme's literature. Importantly, these have been made explicit by the DCLG as the contexts-mechanisms that are hypothesised to support the outcomes reported in the previous section. To this end, a further purpose of the realist synthesis is to review the literature to consider evidence that supports these expositions by the programme authors.

Within the section to follow, a summary of the evidence found in relation to the five intervention factors within the TFP that are hypothesised to be fundamental to positive change within family interventions are described. Each individual section summarising the evidence concludes with an outline of the programme theories that I have derived from the realist synthesis.

Middle-range programme theories – Contexts and Mechanisms (MRPTCM)

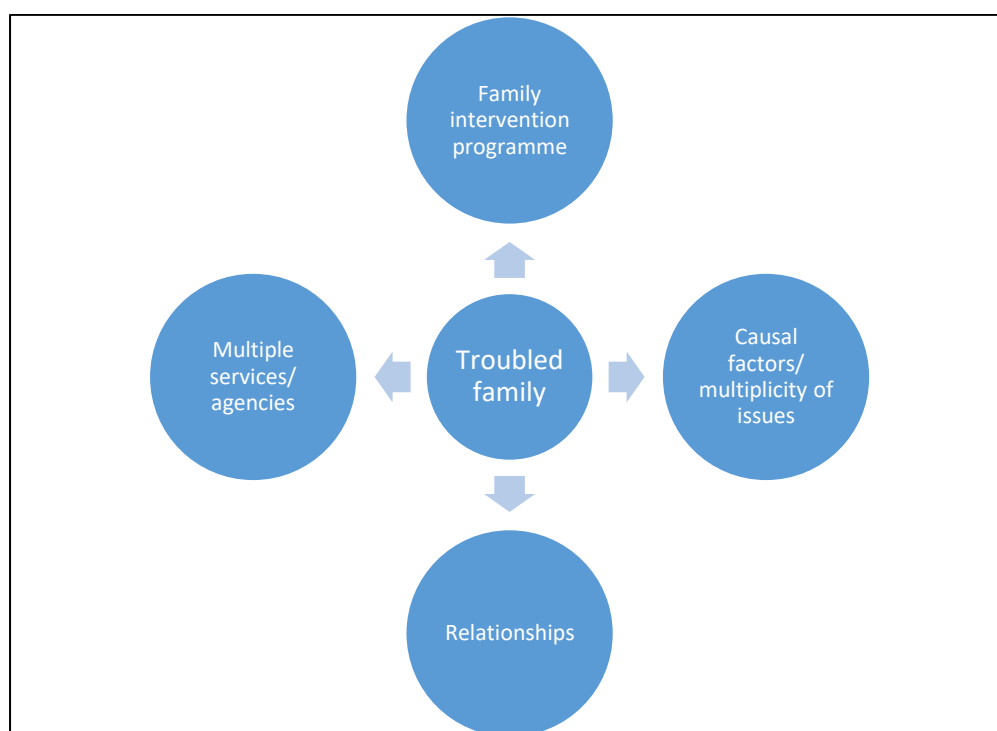
MRPTCM 1: The dedicated family support worker as an enabler for change

“The centrality of a single worker engaging a family strongly is a hallmark of TFP interventions... the foundations for subsequent work such as trust, engagement and motivation flow from the relationship between the key worker and the family.” (Davies, 2015, pg. 7)

The hallmark of several family intervention programmes, particularly within the United Kingdom is the allocation of a single point of contact or key worker for each family that is worked with. It is described within the literature that this approach can be conducive for supporting positive change within troubled families through a number of roles that the family support worker may undertake.

Batty and Flint (2012) undertook an extensive exploration of the contexts within which interactions between families and intensive family intervention occur, whilst also classifying the component aspects of the roles and support that is provided by the intensive intervention (family support workers). They conceptualised the contexts (fields of forces) within which they argued families are operating within and are also impacted by (Figure 3 below).

Figure 3: 'Field of forces' illustration for families facing multiple adversities (adapted from Batty and Flint, 2012).



Batty and Flint's (ibid) conceptualisation of the dynamic 'fields of forces' impacting on families captures the salient factors that not only adversely impact on them but also present as demands (i.e. engagement with multiple services/ agencies).

Following on from this conceptualisation, Batty and Flint (ibid) also explored the various roles that the family support worker undertakes in their efforts to support the various 'fields of forces' that impact upon troubled families. They concluded that there were five broad roles undertaken by family support workers which were:

- Engagement (building trust with the family)
- Assessment (through dialogue with family, home visits and liaison with other agencies)
- Developing support plans and contract with family

- Provision of support (either direct support, referral to other services or advocacy with other services)
- Exit planning from the intervention / support plan

Batty and Flint's (ibid) classification of the key roles of the family support worker suggests that the premise for a successful intervention is the initial engagement process with the focus family. Further research by Bunting et al (2015) has also supported this claim. Through adopting a biographical narrative approach, an exploration of parent's experiences of multiple adversities within troubled families concluded that reflexivity and time was important for family support workers to develop positive and meaningful relationships with service users (i.e. family members). It is suggested that this is attributed to the complexity of influences and histories of previous interactions with agencies that Batty and Flint (2010) elude to, as well the notion that facilitating engagement is a fluctuating process that is present throughout the involvement between family support worker and family.

Similar studies have also demonstrated several supportive factors associated with the family support worker that can lead to not only positive experiences, but positive outcomes for families involved with intensive support interventions/ programmes like the TFP.

Forrester et al (2008) conducted an evaluation of an intensive family preservation service to elicit what appeared to work well from both family and practitioner perspectives. The context-mechanisms deemed important in order for the family support worker to be effective within their role with families were: to have a non-judgemental and understanding approach, providing families with options rather than being dictatorial, maintain open communication, being available, reliable and upholding high frequency of face-to-face contact with the family, and having a perceived high knowledge base of child-care and overcoming adversity within

families. The pertinence of a non-judgemental approach adopted by family support workers is stressed in Hardy and Darlington's (2008) critical ecological study of what parents within troubled families valued from their intensive family support workers. Similar themes are reported by Morris (2013) related to the importance of families experiencing high levels of consistency, reliability and responsiveness from their family support workers in order to promote positive changes as outlined within the TFP. Furthermore, the importance of trust within the family and family support worker relationships is reported to be important in achieving positive outcomes for troubled families. Mason (2012) reports that parents who felt that they could trust their support worker were more likely to disclose information pertinent to form a robust assessment of the family's needs, in turn leading towards better outcomes overall.

Further evidence within the literature points to the importance of the family support worker acting as a 'therapeutic medium' for services users that are engaged in intensive family support programmes Parr (2015). Intrinsic to the development of a therapeutic alliance with the service user, Parr (ibid) reported that particular personal qualities (i.e. being flexible, honest, respectful, trustworthy, confident, warm, interested and open) were of greater importance to families than the qualifications/ level of experience of the family support worker. Parr (ibid) posits that it is these qualities within the family support worker that assist in engaging the service user and building trust and rapport which are fundamental to enabling positive change for families. Polkki et al (2016) present supportive findings via an exploration of child welfare client's perception of the critical factors associated with successful intensive family work. Broadly, the critical factors related to: time, trust, provision of practical support, facilitating communication among family members and professionals, and maintaining a child-centred approach.

Similar findings are reported within general therapeutic orientated literature whereby the positive feelings towards the practitioner influenced by the practitioner's personal qualities make the service user more inclined and motivated to participate in the 'treatment' phase of the social intervention (Karver et al, 2006). Furthermore, where family support workers share geographies, diction and speech to focus families may be a promotive mechanism for families to engage positively with the family support worker. This is also likely to be a supportive mechanism for families that may have experienced alienation from service historically and thus felt somewhat disillusioned by mainstream family support services, as reported by Batty and Flint (2012).

Lemma (2010) extends the idea that family support workers may adopt therapeutic roles by suggesting that through the creation of 'therapeutic spaces' between the family and the support worker, the focus service users can begin to reflect and rethink their lives and adversities in a way that then promotes engagement with interventions perceived to be appropriate to the presenting need. In some cases, service users have reflected on how the family support worker may be perceived by families, and therefore function, as substitute family members (Lemma, 2010).

Synthesising the literature related to the role of the FSW as an enabler for change suggests that there appears to be a context-mechanism-outcome configuration (CMOC) which can form the basis of an embryonic middle-range programme theory associated with the TFP to be tested through data collection. Table 4 below summarises this, as derived from the relevant literature discussed in the present section.

Table 4: Embryonic middle-range programme theory 1

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
Troubled Families Programme provides family experiencing multiple adversities with a dedicated family support worker to engage, assess and promote positive change for the focus family	Parents / families feel supported with negotiating the multiple 'fields of forces' that impact on them. Family support worker has time and reflexivity to allow parent/ families to rethink their adversities and 'open up' to relevant support options	Increased positive familial engagement with family support service. Increased likelihood of disclosures from family during assessment process leads to more robust assessment of need and therefore better tailored interventions and outcomes

MRPTCM 2: Offering practical hands-on support

"This approach reflects person-centred traditions in social work, which seek to locate work in those areas that are experienced by the service user as a priority."

(Adams et al. 2009; Howe, 2009)

Another family intervention factor outlined within the Troubled Families Programme guidelines for practice is the offering of practical or 'hand-on' support that targets intervention at those areas that are experienced by the family to be a priority. However, as the literature will show, the practical support that families identify and appear to value in bringing about positive/ sustained changes are varied and particular to the issues experienced within the family.

There appears to be supporting literature which outlines the importance that delivering practical and hands on support can have for troubled families. Forrester (2008) reported both parental and practitioner views which highlighted the importance of 'treatment within the natural setting' (e.g. home/ preferred venue for family). Both parents and

practitioners reported this to be a *practical* means of working to produce change rather than attending meetings which were located at alternative often clinical venues (as perceived by some families). By locating family support primarily within the home, it was reported by the parents and practitioners that the conditions for immediate and intensive support were conducive to generating a sense of both accessibility and responsiveness to the interventions being implemented (Forrester, 2008).

In addition, Forrester (2008) reports that for some families, just the suggestion or brief facilitation of practical strategies by the family support worker that could support positive changes within the home were greatly valued. For example, it was reported that where family support workers facilitated developing communication among family members this was conducive for building or enhancing relationships which in turn supported communication and activities focused on working towards change.

In line with this, Hardy and Darlington (2008) report in their exploration of what parents value from intensive family support services, that often practical support within the home (daily tasks, cleaning, refurbishments, budgeting etc.) can allow 'space' for the service users to develop their skills through modelling and thus raising their self-efficacy around those areas which are perceived to be challenging, whilst also reducing the experience of burden upon families experiencing a multiplicity of issues.

Mason (2012) offers similar findings in a study focused on parent's perspectives of using an intensive family support service, whereby the offering and delivery of practical support that meets pressing needs within the household are greatly valued by families as they often address fundamental needs (e.g. bedding, cleanliness and security of the property) which then create the space for parents to prioritise and address their own

personal needs and vulnerabilities. Similar themes are drawn from Boddy et al (2016) who reported through interviews with vulnerable families and their family support workers how useful the flexibility and range of tasks the support worker could deliver were deemed to be crucial towards stemming any further deterioration in the family's functioning.

Morris (2013) adopted a grounded theory approach with content analysis to report how families use and experience multiple interventions. The findings suggested that not only did practical and sensible support (e.g. coordinating appointments, providing transport) alleviate anxieties but it also worked to *connect* families. Often, the practical support may require team-work and communication between different family members and professionals which in turn may have assisted to change the narrative of the family and how they work with different professional groups. Furthermore, it was found that families appeared to value practical support at times that were identified as being high-stress points throughout their day/ week (e.g. before school or late evening). Mason (2012) echoes these findings through the various corroborating accounts of parents within troubled families who claim that it is often the mundane or ordinary acts such as: *'Making a cup of tea, helping out with a chore or just assisting in a time of crisis can bring the service user and their worker together.'* to promote positive collaboration and change going forward. To this end, the practical support becomes a medium through which experiences of trust, commitment, support and validation may be achieved for the family and their adversities.

However practical support can also mean the family support worker facilitating experiences that not only address the physical stressors within the family's home

environment but also aim to build the relational and social capital of parents/ carers (Bunting et al, 2015). To this end, the parents/ carers within troubled families are not solely supported for improving their parenting skills but also develop skills and knowledge (e.g. accessing funding and welfare support) that can allow them to overcome structural/ societal factors that marginalise them into a passive service-user role and therefore increase their experiences of personal agency and feeling empowered (Bunting et al, 2015).

Synthesising the literature related to the facilitation of practical support as an enabler for change within troubled families suggests that there appears to be a context-mechanism-outcome configuration (CMOC) which can form the basis of an embryonic middle-range programme theory associated with the TFP, to be tested through data collection. Table 5 below summarises this, as derived from the relevant literature discussed in the present section.

Table 5: Embryonic middle-range programme theory 2

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
Troubled Families Programme provides family experiencing multiple adversities with a dedicated family support worker who facilitates practical/ hands-on support	<p>Family experience reduced sense of burden within the household (anxieties are somewhat alleviated) as FSW has modelled/ scaffolded how to address common household tasks</p> <p>Family builds relationships with key worker, other family members and other professionals supporting the delivery of practical support</p> <p>Parents develop skills and knowledge to manage household demands with a child-focus permeating throughout</p>	<p>Parents, carers and families experience a raised sense of relational and social capital because of increased knowledge and skills base afforded through opportunities the FSW facilitates during practical support sessions which leads to better engagement with plans and increased chances of achieving positive outcomes as outlined by TFP success criteria</p>

MRPTCM 3: Adopting a persistent, assertive and challenging approach with families

This refers to the typology of TFP work being underpinned by a persistent, assertive and challenging approach when working with families (DCLG, 2012). This approach is fostered with a view to demonstrating a commitment and willingness from the intensive family support worker to positively enable change for the family.

To this end, a further aim of the realist synthesis was to determine the extent to which this middle-range programme theory context-mechanism is supported by a robust evidence base as well as considering the additional approaches that have been highlighted to be conducive for supporting troubled families.

Macleod (2000) in a meta-analytic review of social programs that aim to promote family wellness and functioning and/ or preventing child maltreatment offers significant findings in relation to identifying factors that appear to moderate program success. In the review, it was reported that the outcomes of those families that perceived their social support to be challenging in an empowering/ strengths-based approach were significantly better when compared with control/ comparison groups. Importantly, this suggests that there is evidence within the literature of a 'challenging' approach leading to positive change for troubled families, however there appears to some conceptual refinement with regards to how the family is challenged and the orientation that underpins the ethos of the support offered by the family worker.

Furthermore, Hardy and Darlington (2008) certainly offer evidence from their exploration of parental preferences regarding intensive family support work which is also in support of MRPTCM 3. They reported that a common theme identified through a series of interviews with multiple parents was the accessibility, persistence and frequency with which they had contact with their family support workers. Furthermore, it was this persistent and frequent contact that was reflected as being supportive for family's as it felt that there was a sense of continuity with the intensive family support work that was being undertaken. To this end, a persistent, accessible and reliable approach worked well to address the issues that were persisting for families (Hardy and Darlington, 2008; Mason, 2012).

Morris (2013) offers further evidence related to the pertinence of MRPTCM 3 as outlined within the troubled families' guidelines for delivery (DCLG, 2012). Following a series of interviews with families that had engaged with troubled families'

interventions, it was concluded that families valued and indeed achieved better outcomes in relation to the TFP outcome criteria when they were supported via a strengths-based approach with persistence through a high frequency of face-to-face contact between families and their workers. Expanding on this, families reflected on how being persistently supported by their workers allowed for a *“fairer assessment of family practices than other statutory agencies had in periodic inspections of the family and their home.”* (Morris, 2013). Furthermore, the persistence that underpins this approach to family support can lead to a mutual understanding of the importance of internal, external worlds, past history and current functioning for the focus family.

The importance of a persistent and frequent approach to delivering intensive family support is further outlined by Boddy et al (2016) who concluded that the continuity of involvement that underpinned intensive family support work appeared to significantly enable the family support workers to understand what *really* troubled families they worked with. Furthermore, the frequency and persistence with which families were worked with was conducive to creating a sense of ‘openness’ with the support worker. Boddy et al (2016) hypothesise that this ‘openness’ between the support worker and the family leads to a better assessment of needs, engagement with plans and feelings of being understood from the family’s perspective.

In an examination of the processes that appear to be conducive for family support workers to engage vulnerable (troubled) families, build meaningful relationships and drive positive change, Parr (2015) suggests that challenging service-users can have therapeutic effects, if facilitated appropriately. Parr (2015) reports that some service-users of an intensive family support service experienced challenge as a ‘non-

confrontational form of encouragement'. In this way, it was described by clients how they appreciated and accepted this approach due to the implicit assumption that they were being encouraged to not only better themselves but they were capable of growing as individuals, further implying the potential that each service-user had. To this end, Parr (2015) describes how parents were able to construe themselves differently and therefore perceive their 'troubled' circumstances from a different and more optimistic perspective.

The effectiveness of strengths-based, encouragement laden approaches to working with troubled families is echoed by Bunting et al (2015), whereby those families that were not progressing with an intensive family preservation service reflected on the inhibitive culture of risk averse / child protection practices that severed any prospect of forging positive relationships with the service-user and their family. Furthermore, Polkki et al (2016) reported an association between intensive family support worker and positive outcomes in cases where the starting point for meeting service-users' needs and vulnerabilities was through the assessment, identification and facilitation of their relative strengths.

Synthesising the literature related to a persistent, assertive and challenging approach to family support work as an enabler for change within troubled families suggests that there appears to be a context-mechanism-outcome configuration (CMOC) which can form the basis of an embryonic middle-range programme theory associated with the TFP, to be tested through data collection. Table 6 below summarises this, as derived from the relevant literature discussed in the present section.

Table 6: Embryonic middle-range programme theory 3

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
Phase 1 of the Troubled Families programme works with families identified in a persistent, assertive and challenging way	<p>Service users feel empowered by the FSW's focus on their strengths to positively negotiate the adversities/ vulnerabilities being experienced</p> <p>Service users are 'challenged' via a non-confrontational form of encouragement that implies potential for growth and thus supports a sense of personal agency</p> <p>The continuity and high frequency of involvement between FSW and family leads to a more robust understanding of family practices which in turn promotes a mutual understanding of families' needs</p> <p>A mutual understanding of needs between the FSW and family creates a sense of openness which supports engagement with plans and ongoing dialogue</p> <p>The persistence and high frequency of involvement between FSW and family leads to timely responses to acute crises or emergent difficulties for family</p>	<p>Family is more able to work towards positive outcomes as referenced within the success criteria for Phase 1 of the TFP.</p> <p>Family members develop skills following increased sense of personal agency</p> <p>FSW better able to apply interventions that is effective and relative to families' needs.</p> <p>Reduction in prevalence of longstanding difficulties for the family, thus leading to better outcomes overall.</p>

MRPTCM 4: Considering the family as a 'whole'

This refers to the importance of recognising the interrelated nature of the family experience, whereby the intensive family support worker works with the whole family to generate an understanding of the multiple needs that may exist. This in turn promotes a whole-family plan and intervention approach which reduces the risk of multiple agencies working with individual needs of the family in a fragmented and ineffective way.

To this end, a further aim of the realist synthesis was to determine the extent to which this middle-range programme theory context-mechanism is supported by a robust evidence base and the particular context-mechanisms that support troubled families to achieve the positive outcomes as outlined within the TFP success criteria.

There is evidence within the literature to suggest that approaches to intensive family support that consider the holistic needs of the family as experienced are perceived to be valued by service users as well as reporting effectiveness (Forrester, 2008).

Further evidence within the literature around parent's perspectives of effective intensive family support suggests a context-mechanism whereby support service delivery that targets multiple adversities through holistic family assessments are then better placed to work with the continuum of needs that are expressed (Hardy and Darlington, 2008). In addition, it is reported that holistic family assessment practices promote a unique understanding of the each family unit that is worked with (Hardy and Darlington, 2008).

However, the integrated way of working with families as espoused within the tradition of intensive family support in social care policy is reported to be effective for aiding the

support worker to achieve a perception of the families' needs that extends beyond the superficiality of official or standardised assessment practices (Batty and Flint, 2012).

The term 'family' as a concept, its defining characteristics and features has been explored and described within the literature in different ways. Morris (2013) argues within their study that families are often not solely composed of the basic social unit often described as the nuclear family (i.e. a pair of adults and their dependent children). To this end, Morris (2013) describes how often families are not *thin* experiences insofar as the complex and broader family practices that occur within society today. Subsequently, intensive family support that then only engages with those within the household and thus perceived as the family may well be missing key influences within the broader family contexts that have a direct impact on the capacity of the intensive family support intervention to facilitate change.

Often within intensive family support there may be an emphasis on administering individual assessments on each family member to consider individual needs. To some extent, the parents/ carers or other responsible adults are usually at the forefront of family intervention work with support workers and other agencies and therefore it is useful that their own vulnerabilities are also understood (Bunting et al, 2015). Whilst there is further evidence to suggest this is valued (Morris, 2013), those needs are often presented as separate to family life which does not produce any transferable family learning. However, where intensive family support workers were perceived to be tailoring their roles and practices in response to a robust understanding of 'the family', their practices and experiences, there was increased willingness from families to work productively with their support workers and other professional agencies. Where family

workers develop a nuanced understanding and authentic response to the subjective realities of troubled families, it was reported by practitioners that this influenced them to work in an empathic and family-centred manner (Bunting et al, 2015).

It is argued that family support enters the families' 'world' at a particular moment in time, often during or following a crisis. To this end, the analysis of needs that is undertaken by the intensive family support worker may not be a true representation of the family's needs and how they have emerged over time. To this end, Bunting et al (2015) highlight the importance for intensive family support workers to view the family's adversities within a chronological context whilst also exploring how the family's needs may have exacerbated or reduced through the co-occurrence of differing promotive and demotive factors associated with their overall family functioning.

Typically, within family based interventions such as the Troubled Families Programme, the primary interface for the family support worker to promote engagement and change from the family is typically with the parents/ carers. To this end, there are numerous examples within social care policy and practices that target change at parental level within the family context to effect positive changes. Sanders, (1999) outlines the foundations of the Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) that is designed to reduce the prevalence of social/ emotional difficulties in children/ young people through intensive parent training. Within the paper, it is reported that the emphasis on the self-regulation parental skills is central to the effectiveness of the programme. In addition, the flexible delivery modalities offer the parents/ carers different mediums through which the training can be accessed (e.g. telephone or face-to-face). Triple P also supports parents to access the training through a variety of community-based

support services that are perceived to destigmatise participating in parent training/development programmes.

To this end, Synthesising the literature related to understanding the 'whole family' as an approach to effective intensive family support work, as espoused within the troubled families programme, suggests that there appears to be a set of context-mechanism-outcome configurations (CMOC) that can form the basis of an embryonic middle-range programme theory associated with the TFP, to be tested through data collection. Table 7 below summarises this, as derived from the available and relevant literature discussed in the present section.

Table 7: Embryonic middle-range programme theory 4

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
Phase 1 of the Troubled Families Programme delivers intensive family support that is underpinned by a robust / holistic understanding of the focus family.	<p>Families have a single point of access that allows for the assessment, identification and intervention for multiple adversities that are being experienced.</p> <p>Integrated family support worker develops a nuanced understanding of the 'whole family' that extends beyond standardised assessment procedures.</p> <p>Both family support worker and family members are informed of the interrelated nature between individual vulnerabilities and overall family functioning</p> <p>Families feel they can access appropriate support services in a destigmatised way</p>	<p>Family feels their whole needs are understood and therefore more likely to engage with interventions/ support services available.</p> <p>Families are likely to experience a reduction in adversities experienced</p> <p>Family support workers understand the holistic needs of the family and are therefore able to work with a continuum of needs.</p>

MRPTCM 5: The establishment of common purposes and agreed actions between the family and intensive family support worker

This refers to the expectation for a contract of actions and goals to be drawn between the family support worker and the family which is reviewed regularly with a view to promoting change and progress. The plan would also clearly stipulate the 'rewards' for achieving and sustaining positive changes (financial incentives, resources, home

furnishings etc.) as well as the consequences of non-participation on the families' behalf (escalation to higher tier of social care involvement, additional referrals to other agencies).

Following a systematic review of the literature, there appeared to be a paucity of literature associated with exploring the process of agreement between family support workers and families. In some respects, the process for achieving a sense of shared purpose and agreed actions is likely to follow from other context-mechanisms that have been reported within previous sections of the realist synthesis.

However, it is inferred from the literature that one possible mechanism that is activated as a result of a family's engagement with the TFP is the shared understanding of the need for long-term intensive support to support longstanding needs within the family (Forrester, 2008). This viewpoint is echoed in the work of Bunting et al (2015) who report through parent's experience of successfully completing intensive family support work that 'a shared vision between the family and their worker is fundamental to successful social work'.

With a plan of action containing clear goals and expectations from both parties agreed between the family support worker and the focus family, it is suggested within the literature that this contributes to a sense of motivation, experiences of achievement, and empowerment that may not have been associated with the adversities the family is experiencing (Hardy and Darlington, 2008). In cases where families are regularly engaged in a process of monitoring and reviewing progress with their support workers, it is reported that the perception of progress for the family can be an important mechanism for facilitating positive outcomes (Batty and Flint, 2012).

The literature reports there to be a need to balance the establishment of clear goals and what is needed or expected from families involved in intervention work whilst also maintaining respect of how parents, carers and their families perspective's on their current set of circumstances (Morris, 2013; Thoburn et al., 2011). However, from experience, families can often construe their difficulties in ways that then inhibit their agency to/ for change. To this end, it is reported that family support workers may need to review self-perceptions from family members that do exclude a positive self-concept of parenthood / childhood and therefore risk creating goals that the service-user then feels they cannot achieve (Morris, 2013). Polkki et al., (2016) describes how grand goals within family intervention often have an increased chance of success where the support worker reflects on the concrete sub-goals needed to be achieved in order to sustain gradual progress. To some extent, the needs, goals and expectations of intensive family support interventions should be largely underpinned by a person-centred ethos. To this end, individuals / families are engaged with on the basis of what matters most to them rather than imposing pre-formulated plans that are removed from the real lived experiences of service-users (Burnett and McNeill, 2005).

Additional literature has also demonstrated the utility of collaborative approaches to intensive family support work. (Howe, 1998) reports on how intensive family support interventions can often be the interface between significantly different parts of society. The social fabric that then binds the support services with the most vulnerable families helps those individuals to feel supported, accepted, valued whilst also providing experiences to build skills, increase confidence and enable personal growth.

To this end, synthesising the literature related to the need for establishing shared purposes and agreed action for effective intensive family support work, as espoused within the troubled families programme, suggests that there appears to be a set of context-mechanism-outcome configurations (CMOC) that can form the basis of an embryonic middle-range programme theory associated with the TFP, to be tested through data collection. Table 8 below summarises this, as derived from the available and relevant literature discussed in the present section.

Table 8: Embryonic middle-range programme theory 5

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
The Troubled Families programme is underpinned by a consistent approach to assessing, monitoring and reviewing the needs of families worked with through mutually agreed intervention plans	<p>A shared understanding of needs integrated into the plan increases a sense of validation for family</p> <p>Family experiences achievement via concrete sub-goals that increase motivation to sustain positive changes being made</p> <p>Family support worker motivated to continue working with family as they respond to intervention plan and achieve positive outcomes</p> <p>Progress being made within family intervention creates and develops sense of self-concept and personal agency related to parenthood for parents/ carers</p>	<p>Family works collaboratively with the family support worker to facilitate positive change</p> <p>Family members feel more competent to negotiate adversities that are being experienced</p>

Following the realist synthesis, it can be argued that there appears to be clear and robust supporting literature and evidence underpinned the programme theories of the TFP.

A summative overview of all of the embryonic middle-range programme theories derived from the realist synthesis are presented in Figure 4 overleaf.

In keeping with the method espoused by Pawson and Tilley (1997), it is these literature supported theories that are to be shared and examined with stakeholders of the Troubled Families Programme to enhance the understanding of these theories may work in the 'real world' if indeed, at all.

Figure 4: Overview of the embryonic programme theories derived from the Realist Synthesis

Programme Theory	Contexts	Mechanisms	Outcomes
The dedicated family support worker as an enabler for change	Troubled Families Programme provides family experiencing multiple adversities with a dedicated family support worker to engage, assess and promote positive change for the focus family	<p>Parents / families feel supported with negotiating the multiple ‘fields of forces’ that impact on them.</p> <p>Family support worker has time and reflexivity to allow parent/ families to rethink their adversities and ‘open up’ to relevant support options</p>	<p>Increased positive familial engagement with family support service.</p> <p>Increased likelihood of disclosures from family during assessment process leads to more robust assessment of need and therefore better tailored interventions and outcomes</p>
Offering practical hands-on support	Troubled Families Programme provides family experiencing multiple adversities with a dedicated family support worker who facilitates practical/ hands-on support	<p>Family experience reduced sense of burden within the household (anxieties are somewhat alleviated) as FSW has modelled/ scaffolded how to address common household tasks</p> <p>Family builds relationships with key worker, other family members and other professionals supporting the delivery of practical support</p> <p>Parents develop skills and knowledge to manage household demands with a child-focus permeating throughout</p>	Parents, carers and families experience a raised sense of relational and social capital because of increased knowledge and skills base afforded through opportunities the FSW facilitates during practical support sessions which leads to better engagement with plans and increased chances of achieving positive outcomes as outlined by TFP success criteria
Adopting a persistent, assertive and challenging approach with families	Phase 1 of the Troubled Families programme works with families identified in a persistent, assertive and challenging way	<p>Service users feel empowered by the FSW’s focus on their strengths to positively negotiate the adversities/ vulnerabilities being experienced</p> <p>Service users are ‘challenged’ via a non-confrontational form of encouragement that implies potential for growth and thus supports a sense of personal agency</p> <p>The continuity and high frequency of involvement between FSW and family leads to a more robust understanding of family practices which in turn promotes a mutual understanding of families’ needs</p>	<p>Family is more able to work towards positive outcomes as referenced within the success criteria for Phase 1 of the TFP.</p> <p>Family members develop skills following increased sense of personal agency</p> <p>FSW better able to apply interventions that are effective and relative to families’ needs.</p>

		<p>A mutual understanding of needs between the FSW and family creates a sense of openness which supports engagement with plans and ongoing dialogue</p> <p>The persistence and high frequency of involvement between FSW and family leads to timely responses to acute crises or emergent difficulties for family</p>	<p>Reduction in prevalence of longstanding difficulties for the family, thus leading to better outcomes overall.</p>
Considering the family as a 'whole'	<p>Phase 1 of the Troubled Families Programme delivers intensive family support that is underpinned by a robust / holistic understanding of the focus family.</p>	<p>Families have a single point of access that allows for the assessment, identification and intervention for multiple adversities that are being experienced.</p> <p>Integrated family support worker develops a nuanced understanding of the 'whole family' that extends beyond standardised assessment procedures.</p> <p>Both family support worker and family members are informed of the interrelated nature between individual vulnerabilities and overall family functioning</p> <p>Families feel they can access appropriate support services in a destigmatised way</p>	<p>Family feels their whole needs are understood and therefore more likely to engage with interventions/ support services available.</p> <p>Families are likely to experience a reduction in adversities experienced</p> <p>Family support workers understand the holistic needs of the family and are therefore able to work with a continuum of needs.</p>
The establishment of common purposes and agreed actions between the family and intensive family support worker	<p>The Troubled Families programme is underpinned by a consistent approach to assessing, monitoring and reviewing the needs of families worked with through mutually agreed intervention plans</p>	<p>A shared understanding of needs integrated into the plan increases a sense of validation for family</p> <p>Family experiences achievement via concrete sub-goals that increase motivation to sustain positive changes being made</p> <p>Family support worker motivated to continue working with family as they respond to intervention plan and achieve positive outcomes</p> <p>Progress being made within family intervention creates and develops sense of self-concept and personal agency related to parenthood for parents/ carers</p>	<p>Family works collaboratively with the family support worker to facilitate positive change</p> <p>Family members feel more competent to negotiate adversities that are being experienced</p>

Critique of Realist Synthesis approach

To ensure quality to the realist synthesis, publication standards reported by the RAMESES criterion were applied (see Appendix 1).

Pawson (2001) offers a convincing argument for the application of realist synthesis within social research. He suggests that:

“The process of systematic review, research synthesis, meta-analysis, or whatever we eventually choose to call it, is absolutely vital to evidence-based policy-development. It embodies the key principle of building initiatives by learning from past successes and failures. It involves no battles with gatekeepers, no sampling of stakeholders, no idle control groups, no observation of subjects, no long-term follow-ups, and indeed no programmes to run and maintain (and is thus remarkably cheap!).” pg. 18

However, Pawson (ibid) further suggests that in this literature bound approach, inevitably the researcher may find themselves explicating the same programme theories which appear to be present from domain to domain that is explored. However, this could be argued to be strength in some aspects. Although findings from each realist synthesis may not be generalisable, Pawson (ibid) states that they can generate theoretically transferable ideas or ‘theories’ that can be tested within varied contexts and stakeholders, for their utility.

As the sole researcher, it would be extremely difficult to conduct a comprehensive search of all relevant literature within the time and capacity constraints involved. However, to assist with this, the realist synthesis was conducted in line with key principles of being theory-driven, iterative and in collaboration with the key stakeholders of the research.

In addition, my own search within the literature found there was a paucity of published realist syntheses and therefore there is a limited reference base from which to ensure a degree of standardisation of this emerging method. On the other hand, this flexibility afforded to both the researcher and the stakeholders is valued within the realistic evaluation tradition of being adaptable to the complexities of real-life implementation of research and the dynamic contexts in which social interventions are operationalised.

Within the present study, it can be argued that the programme outcomes are fairly robust, as they are made explicit by the programme authors. I.e. to reduce the number of school exclusions OR raising school attendance etc. To this end, the resulting CMOCs (context, mechanism and outcomes configurations) are fairly reliable, valid and robust as they have originated from carefully screened literature that has directly emerged from the explicit middle range programme outcomes that the programme authors have explicitly stated.

However, there is always an element of researcher bias, and it ought to be reflected upon within the realist synthesis process as the scrutiny of the literature is a highly subjective process. To ameliorate the effects of this, the emergent CMOCs from the realist synthesis were shared with my academic research supervisors for consistency to the application of the appropriate method. It ought to be highlighted that the aim of the realist synthesis is not to report on every possible CMOC that may be associated with the effectiveness of the Troubled Families programme (as to do this would be arguably an impossible task).

Chapter 5: DATA COLLECTION (REALIST INTERVIEW)

With the aim of Realistic evaluation (RE) being to illuminate as to what works well, for whom and why, then it is important that the *who* part of the central tenet, is explored appropriately. To this end, the data which is gathered from the participants of the evaluation will influence how the resulting CMOCs are generated, and may or may not refine, refute or appraise the assumed programme theories.

Although Realistic Evaluation is not aligned to a particular methodology for collecting data, the method selected should be through the evaluators need to respond to the questions in hand. (I.e. a clear and relevant thread between the researchers question, ontology, epistemology and methodology)

As RE is a theory-driven approach, it was decided that this should permeate throughout the research design of the present study. Therefore, theory-driven realist interviews were conducted with key participants within the TFP to generate data. This data was then analysed using a deductive form of thematic analysis to examine how what the interviewees were reporting compared to the embryonic programme theories that were derived from the realist synthesis phase of the present study.

Data collection design

The present study utilises both exploratory and explanatory elements of a case study design (Yin, 1984), in so far as *exploring* a particular phenomenon within a dataset (I.e. 84% of families achieved positive outcomes within the TFP) and generating an *explanation* for the phenomenon observed within the data (I.e. why or how the attached family support worker role was important for achieving positive outcomes?)

The data generated is retrospective as it has been gathered at one point in time following the event of interest to the researcher (i.e. phase one of the TFP).

Research participants

"Social programs are undeniably, unequivocally, unexceptionally social systems.

They comprise, as with any social system, the interplays of individual and institution, of agency and structure, and of micro and macro social processes."

(Pawson and Tilley, 1997, pg. 63)

In line with the above statement, the participants selected for the evaluation should represent the range of possible stakeholders that could have been influential to enabling the observed changes of the social programme to have occurred.

Within the local context of the present study, the key interplay for the delivery of the TFP occurred between families (mostly parents) and the family support workers.

Ideally, the present study would also have included the views of the individuals who were in management or head of service roles associated with the delivery of Phase 1 of the TFP. However, this was not able to be conducted as there had been some migration of staff. Consequently, the interviews conducted involved only parents and front-line practitioners.

To this end, the present study appears to comply with the types of stakeholder (researcher, practitioner and subjects) and the types of information that would be essential for a realist interview (CMOCs), as described by Pawson and Tilley (1997). This is illustrated within figure 5 below. An outline of participants is provided in appendix 10.

Figure 5: Types of stakeholders espoused by Pawson and Tilley (1997) and those included within present study

Stakeholder	Information accessible	Research participant	Included within study
Subject	Mechanisms	Parents and children	Two parents from different families
Practitioner	Potentially contexts, mechanisms and outcomes dependent upon level of training and understanding of programme development	Family support workers, TFP coordinators, Head of early intervention/ child and family service	Two family support workers
Evaluator	Embryonic CMOCs derived from the realist synthesis	Researcher	One researcher with two academic tutors

Parent participants were recruited purposively. The selection of parents was based on the following criteria:

- Involvement with Phase 1 of the TFP from 2012-2015 within the focus local authority.
- Achieved positive outcomes from the TFP support received.
- In addition, it did not matter whether they had re-engaged with the intensive family support services following the end of phase 1 as the present study was adopting a retrospective case study design.

Similarly, the recruitment of practitioners was based upon the following criteria:

- Supported a TFP family to achieve positive outcomes within Phase 1 of the TFP within a front-line role (i.e. family support worker or parent support advisor)

Ethical considerations

To ensure that the study complied with robust ethical standards, measures were undertaken to reflect research practices that were in accordance with the University of Birmingham's Code of Practice for research and ethical guidelines provided by the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2010) and the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011).

All potential participants were provided with a research study information and informed consent form (Appendix) which offered a description of the study, commitments as participants, rights to withdraw and the means to do so, and how their information was to be used and stored.

Realist Interviews were completed at a location convenient and comfortable for the interviewee. All interviewees were given the option to ask questions prior to signing the informed consent forms.

In compliance with the stated anonymity and confidentiality measures within the informed consent forms, all names, places and any other identifiable features were removed from final data transcripts and codes were assigned in their place. Therefore the research was also in compliance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

Interview process

In keeping within the Realistic Evaluation method, Pawson and Tilley (1997) outline a qualitative approach known as a realist interview for constructing, what they term as *realistic data*. The basic structure for the realist interview process is outlined diagrammatically in the figure 6 below.

Essentially, the role of the realist interview is to collect data via a theory-driven approach that seeks to 'inspire/validate/falsify/ modify' hypotheses about how programmes and interventions work (Pawson, 1996).

The realist interview is composed of two fundamental processes that underpin the principles of constructing realistic data, as described by Pawson and Tilley (1997). These are:

- The *teacher-learner function* – this involves the researcher explicitly teaching the embryonic programme theories which have emerged through the realist synthesis to the subject before they are then in a position to teach the researcher about how those components within the programme worked to mechanise change.

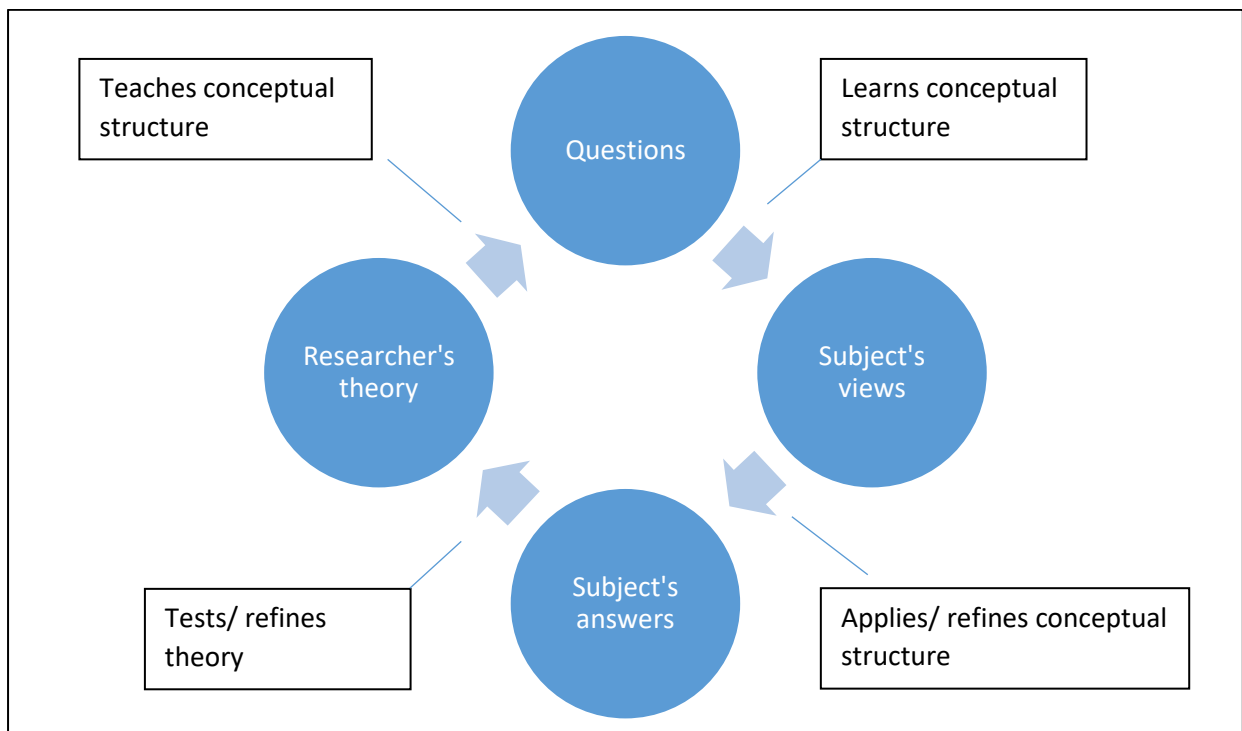
(E.g. Researcher: "This is why I think the TFP works well...")

- The *conceptual refinement process* - this is the process within the realist interview whereby the subject delivers their own thoughts in the context of, or correction to, the researcher's own theory in order to appraise, validate and/or refine the programme theory (Pawson and Tilley, 1997)

(E.g. Subject: "I understand your thinking about how the TFP worked positively for me and my family, but in my experience of those conditions, it worked more like this...")

Within the actual interviews, the initial part of the interview involved directly sharing with the participants the reasons why the TF authors thought the programme might work well. In order to explore their views further, the interview schedule as shown in appendix 5, provided a semi-structured format to displaying the assumed programme theories in their embryonic CMOC form before then asking exploratory questions in order to refine, validate or falsify the assumed programme theory.

Figure 6: Realist Interview process (adapted from Pawson 1996)



No pilot interviews were conducted due to the restrictive sample size and low response rate for participation from both parents and family support workers. To this end, this is accepted as a potential limitation of the present study.

Challenges

Inherently, with any type of real world research there are difficulties experienced along the research journey. The greatest difficulty experienced was the recruitment of participants. Following Phase 1 of the TFP, some of the families that achieved positive outcomes were no longer involved with the local authority's early help child and family support service. This presented an information governance issue whereby these families' details could not be shared for the purposes of the present research, as they had not consented for their details to be accessed following completion of Phase 1 of the TFP. To resolve this issue, family support workers were contacted to identify potential parent participants based on the

inclusion criteria. Once parents had granted verbal consent a face to face meeting was arranged to discuss the research study further and what participation would entail.

One parent and two family support workers refused to participate in an interview. To this end, on the basis of time constraints, I was only able to interview two parents and two family support workers on an opportunistic basis. All participants within the study were female.

Chapter 6: DATA ANALYSIS – HYBRID THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Realistic Evaluation and data analysis

Whilst particular approaches for data analysis are not explicitly stipulated within the Realistic Evaluation method (Pawson and Tilley, 1997), there are several positions within the literature that argue for qualitative means of data analysis with respect to the primary medium for data collection being the realist interview.

As stated previously, Realistic Evaluation is a theory-driven approach. To this end, as an approach it is primarily concerned to firstly considering the theories that underpin the social programme/ intervention being evaluated, then findings a means to test and/ or refine these theories (data collection) and then seek to explicate the context, mechanism and outcome configurations (CMOCs) that facilitate the change the intervention is implemented to achieve (analytic generalisation).

To this end, with the present study adopting this stance, I opted to select a method of data analysis that would enable the recognition of whether stakeholders (parents and family support workers) personal accounts of what worked well and why throughout their experience of Phase 1 of the TFP either validated, falsified or refined the programme theories that have been made explicit by the programme authors and those that have been subsequently elicited from the wider literature during the realist synthesis phase. Furthermore, as realist interviews were conducted in order to gather data, it was important that my method of data analysis also allowed for theory-neutral or novel understandings to be explored. For these purposes, a hybrid thematic analysis approach to data analysis was undertaken.

Transcription of recorded interview data

The realist interviews conducted with parents and family support workers were audio-recorded using a Dictaphone.

Following the completion of interviews, the recordings were transcribed and checked twice to ensure reliability of the final transcripts.

Hybrid Thematic Analysis approach

The approach implemented to analyse the raw data collected from realist interviews was hybrid thematic analysis, as outlined by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006). The rationale for selecting this methodological approach was made on the basis of its integration of theory-driven deductive analysis through the use of a-prior coding templates and data-driven inductive analysis. Within the realist evaluation tradition, the emphasis on theory validity throughout the process lends itself to matching well with deductive approaches to data analysis. Furthermore, the opportunity for new or refined context, mechanism and outcome configurations (CMOCs) to emerge from the stakeholder's data is appropriate for inductive analysis.

Deductive analysis (Theory driven)

There are several ways to conduct thematic analysis (King and Hurrocks, 2010). However for the purpose of conducting the deductive thematic analysis as stated previously, Template Analysis was adopted within the present study. As the data collected within the realist evaluation comprises of interview transcripts, Template Analysis offers a flexible and relevant approach to developing a set of themes prior to the coding of the dataset (within the present study these are the CMOCs reported from the Realist Synthesis) which can then be applied to the data (realist interviews) in order to be revised/ refined (Brooks et al, 2015).

To this end, a template was produced from the CMOCs identified from the Realist Synthesis to form the basis for a Template Analysis approach. As the aim of Realistic Evaluation is to confirm, validate or falsify theory then the CMOCs identified from the Realist Synthesis can be incorporated into a template which can then be used to deduce whether the experiences reported within the realist interviews are concurrent. To this end, the template represents a set of a priori themes (or theories) to be tested for within the interviewee data.

Appendix 11 presents the template utilised to analyse interviewee accounts for confirmation, refinement for falsification of programme theory.

Inductive analysis approach

Due to time and resource constraints, as well as accounting for the richly dynamic environments that social interventions occur within, Pawson and Tilley (1997) would argue that it is not possible to uncover every CMOC via the Realist Synthesis phase of the study. To this end, an important aspect of the realist interview data is the opportunity for the researcher to explore novel programme theories that stakeholders report from their own subjective experiences within the focus intervention (E.g. Troubled Families Programme).

To this end, the realist interview data was also analysed using an inductive analysis method, as espoused by Braun and Clarke (2006). Any novel codes identified through the inductive analysis were then used to either conceptually refine the programme theories derived from the realist synthesis or generate potential new CMOCs.

An overview of the Template Analysis approach (King, 2012) to deductive thematic analysis and inductive thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006) applied to the realist evaluation method (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) of the present study is outlined within figure 7 below.

Figure 7: Overview of Template Analysis approach (King, 2012) used to guide deductive thematic analysis and inductive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) as applied within present Realist Evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997)

Template Analysis to guide deductive thematic analysis	Realistic Evaluation activity
1. Researcher familiarises self with the data to be analysed.	Interview transcripts are transcribed and read through by primary researcher
2. Preliminary coding of data through the application of <i>a priori</i> themes to generate template.	Embryonic programme theories (CMOCs from Realist Synthesis) inform the production of an <i>a priori</i> theme / theory driven template.
3. Apply the initial coding template across data set	Realist Template (CMOCs from Realist Synthesis) are applied to the data set
4. Organising emerging themes into clusters and begin to define the relationships between them (I.e. hierarchical, lateral or integrative)	Realist data is analysed via the coding template to evaluate whether interviewee responses are aligned to the underlying programme theories as espoused by programme authors and within wider literature.
5. Revise and or modify themes within the coding template as data suggest the need to do so on an iterative, transcript by transcript basis	CMOCs are either revised, validated or falsified through interviewee responses (Conceptual refinement)
6. Finally ensure that all data that is relevant to the study's research question is coded for. 'New' themes are evaluated as either being irrelevant or included for further exploration via inductive analysis.	Unaccounted for programme theories are presented through inductive analysis and thus offer potential 'other' theories to be tested.

Critique of Hybrid Thematic Analysis

As an analytical methodology within research, thematic analysis also has its limitations.

Firstly, the researcher's role in generating codes and identifying them within the data is a highly subjective process which, if administered incorrectly can risk significant bias during the interpretation of data and the subsequent themes that are then generated.

However, the use of a hybrid thematic analysis approach makes it permissible to test the a priori themes (or theories) identified from the Realist Synthesis through a deductive analysis approach. Whilst also allowing for the generation of new ideas as to how the TFP may work through adopting an inductive analysis approach with participants open responses.

There is also the issue of how a theme is identified or what qualifies as a theme. The approach undertaken within the present study was to conceptualise the CMOCs identified from the Realist Synthesis to be themes as they represented some level of patterned response or meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Owing to the critical realist epistemology adopted, Braun and Clarke (2006) comment on how analysis can be undertaken to differing 'depths', namely semantic or latent levels of analysis. The present research can be described as adopting a latent level of analysis as it is concerned with uncovering the CMOCs that underpin the semantic content that is experienced and reflected upon by stakeholders of the programme.

To this end, the quality of the analysis undertaken is considered to be relatively good as cited academic guidelines (Braun and Clarke, 2006; King, 2012) have been followed. However, as is the case with any interpretative analysis, my own constructions, experiences and cognitions as the researcher is likely to have influenced the interpretation process and thus elicitation of themes (or theories).

Chapter 7: FINDINGS

The following section summarises the findings from the present realistic evaluation. Within this section, an overview of the embryonic programme theories that were identified via the realist synthesis will be presented along with the findings from the data collected from the realist interviews. To this end, the present section will demonstrate how the data collected from the realist interviews has developed a refined, locally contextualised understanding of how the embryonic programme theories may underpin the successful outcomes achieved within Phase 1 of the Troubled Families Programme. Extracts from the realist interviews will be included throughout to evidence claims made in relation to theory validation and refinement.

An overview of the embryonic and amended programme theories are presented within a series of tables to follow. Texts within the right-hand columns that have been presented as underlined demonstrate where the embryonic CMOC has been validated. Text within the right-hand column that is highlighted denotes conceptual refinements to the corresponding embryonic CMOC.

Table 9: Overview of amendment to the role of the dedicated family support worker CMOC

Embryonic programme theory (elicited from realist synthesis)	Refined Programme Theory (elicited through realist interview)
<p><u>OUTCOME:</u> Increased positive familial engagement with family support service.</p> <p>Increased likelihood of disclosures from family during assessment process leads to more robust assessment of need and therefore better tailored interventions and outcomes</p> <p><u>CONTEXT:</u> Troubled Families Programme provides family experiencing multiple adversities with a dedicated family support worker to intensively engage, assess and promote positive change for the focus family</p> <p><u>MECHANISM:</u> Parents / families feel supported with negotiating the multiple 'fields of forces' that impact on them.</p> <p>Family support worker has time and reflexivity to allow parent/ families to rethink their adversities and 'open up' to relevant support options</p>	<p><u>OUTCOME:</u> Increased positive familial engagement with family support service and the development of a trusting relationship with a neutral support agent.</p> <p>Increased likelihood of disclosures from family during assessment process leads to more <u>robust assessment of need and therefore better tailored interventions and outcomes</u></p> <p><u>CONTEXT:</u> <u>Troubled Families Programme provides family experiencing multiple adversities with a dedicated family support worker to intensively engage, assess, promote and maintain current positive changes for the focus family in a destigmatised way.</u></p> <p><u>MECHANISM:</u> <u>Parents / families feel supported with negotiating the multiple 'fields of forces' that impact on them via an incremental package of support</u></p> <p><u>Family support worker has time and reflexivity to allow parent/ families to rethink their adversities and 'open up' to relevant support options by assuming several roles including; 'problem-holder', 'prompter' and 'gatekeeper'</u></p>

The dedicated family support worker CMOC was clearly highlighted both within the findings of the realist synthesis and the realist interview data where both parent and family support workers were in agreement that the FSW role was a key factor related to families being able

to achieve positive outcomes / success criteria for payment-by-results for Phase 1 of the Troubled Families Programme (TFP).

Throughout each of the four realist interviews conducted, consistent references were made to the role the family support worker played towards the key outcomes of increasing the family's engagement with the family support services and facilitating a robust understanding of the family unit's needs in order to provide the appropriate and relevant support.

"Any issues I had, I addressed them to Kay (pseudonym for FSW). To be honest she was dealing with all of my issues at that point because I didn't know who to turn to. She took on anything... she was like my saviour" Parent extract

"I think [we're] very important because you move families on and you watch them progress and, you know, change." Family support worker extract

From the data, within the contexts of family support workers working intensively with focus families, there appeared to be several roles that the family support workers were perceived to assume. These differing roles appeared to be mechanisms that were activated and potential contributing factors for positive engagement with families, robust assessment of family needs and implementation of appropriate interventions.

The range of roles identified from the interview data for family support workers included: 'problem-holder', 'prompter' and 'gatekeeper'.

"I didn't know what to do, so Kay (FSW) was like, don't worry, we'll sort this out. She reassured me and I felt like she was going to hold it so I didn't need to worry anymore" - Parent extract

“To be one step ahead, preparing them for whatever the situation is going to be by giving reminders and prompts.” - Family support worker extract

“We would go to meetings together and ask me what I needed and then they would go and find the service or support for my problem to address it” –Parent extract

Furthermore, it was interesting that there appeared to be a corroborating construal of the role the family support worker can play as a dissociated outsider or a neutral party, which appeared to be highlighted as a factor that contributed to parent’s working effectively with their family support workers.

“She was like somebody outside who is not related to my past, erm, or the school and someone that I can trust and you know, I just felt like if I ever got struggles or if there was something I was unsure about no matter what it was, I could turn to her to find the answers together” – Parent extract

“I believe in my situation, she didn’t know me. She couldn’t... she didn’t judge, she was just brought into my situation so she saw the situation, not my past nor the person that I am” – Parent extract

Contrastingly, within the family support worker perspectives, they identified some different context-mechanisms that appeared to be conducive in their experiences of achieving and/ or sustaining positive outcomes for the families they worked with during Phase 1 of the TFP.

There appeared to be a corroborating theme related to family support workers adopting an authoritative role with families that they worked with.

"Obviously you have to maintain professional boundaries but I think obviously you're open with them and you tell them exactly what needs to be done to maintain change.... You're honest and you're firm and they like that and respect you more"

Table 10: Overview of the amendment to the utility of practical/ hands-on support CMOC

Embryonic programme theory (elicited from realist synthesis)	Refined Programme Theory (elicited through realist interview)
<p><u>OUTCOME:</u> Parents, carers and families experience a raised sense of relational and social capital because of increased knowledge and skills base afforded through opportunities the FSW facilitates during practical support sessions which leads to better engagement with plans and increased chances of achieving positive outcomes as outlined by TFP success criteria</p> <p><u>CONTEXT:</u> Troubled Families Programme provides family experiencing multiple adversities with a dedicated family support worker who facilitates practical/ hands-on support</p> <p><u>MECHANISM:</u> Family experience reduced sense of burden within the household (anxieties are somewhat alleviated) as FSW has modelled/ scaffolded how to address common household tasks</p> <p>Family builds relationships with key worker, other family members and other professionals supporting the delivery of practical support</p> <p>Parents develop skills and knowledge to manage household demands with a child-focus permeating throughout</p>	<p><u>OUTCOME:</u> Parents, carers and families experience a raised sense of relational and social capital because of increased knowledge and skills base afforded through opportunities the FSW facilitates during accessible practical support sessions which leads to better engagement with plans and increased chances of achieving positive outcomes as outlined by TFP success criteria</p> <p><u>CONTEXT:</u> Troubled Families Programme provides family experiencing multiple adversities with a dedicated family support worker who facilitates practical/ hands-on support to divert from maladaptive generational trends</p> <p><u>MECHANISM:</u> <u>Family experience reduced sense of burden within the household (anxieties are somewhat alleviated) as FSW has modelled/ scaffolded how to address common household tasks</u></p> <p>Family builds relationships with key worker, other family members and other professionals supporting the delivery of practical support through experiencing achievement and raised self-concept</p> <p>Parents develop skills and knowledge to manage household demands with a sense of pride and a child-focus permeating throughout</p>

The findings from the realist synthesis and the realist interview data reinforced the assumption that the ethos of delivering practical and hands-on support within the family environment was an effective approach to facilitating positive outcomes for families within phase 1 of the TFP.

One family support worker highlighted within their experience that the delivery of practical/ hands on support was important for building trust with different members of the family unit whilst also gaining a direct perspective of the family's lived experience.

"We were there in the mornings if they needed that routine and support. We were there taking them to interviews or to their job centre appointments if they were anxious. We would experience things that they would experience so were part of them. The children would recognise us and would speak with us and we would gain their trust." – Family support worker extract

Another extract from a family support worker suggested that there instances whereby the delivery of practical/ hands on support was required as an immediate response due to the vulnerability that they key adult may be experiencing, which in this case appeared to be related to lack of motivation.

"Errrm Mum had the capacity to do it but didn't have the motivation to do it. She would get the stuff and go and buy the cleaning products and we would clean one room at a time. Some people will think well they should do it themselves and we should just model it but I think sometimes we actually have to physically get it done" – Family support worker extract

However, following on within the same interview, the family support worker added that these experiences were developing for parents that they worked with. They describe that through delivering practical/ hands on support alongside the parent, they were able to model

appropriate parenting strategies which in turn appeared to increase the independence with which the parent then subsequently operates with.

"We've physically done the routine with them. So you can show them mum that they can actually do it, it's not hard, yes you have three children but actually if you put time and routines in place then it works. This is the physical hands on support that parents need and then they'll start doing it themselves." – Family support worker extract

There was a corroborating stance offered by a parent interviewee who highlighted how the practical support they had received from their family support worker was important for developing their organisational skills associated with effective parenting which in turn appeared to impact their sense of personal agency and locus of control related to the difficulties they were experiencing within the family unit.

"With her (FSW) support, I think and with the kids strategies she showed me to use... I think I'm more organised when compared to then.... I think her helping me through choices let me see that I had choices and that I could make them and make things better." – Parent extract

Furthermore, one family support worker emphasised how the delivery of practical/ hands on support can be a medium through which maladaptive generational trends within families can be addressed.

“Erm, some of the families we worked with it was what they knew as a child so it was breaking a cycle. So to be actually hands-on and visually showing them these things and sort of walking them through, they probably never had that as a child.”

– Family support worker extract

Another family support worker described the intrinsic reward that the parent's/ family members may experience following some practical support that has delivered a quick change within the family environment which may the instil a sense of focus within the family to maintain the change and continue to engage and progress with support.

“I think when people can see that their house is tidy then they can take pride. They can see that the garden's been tidied up or that it might be a time in their lives where in the property people may not have always lived like they were [...] sometimes it's just a bit of help to get out of it that will enable them to stay focused.” –Family support worker extract

A parent highlighted within their interview that in their experience the receipt of practical support was a convenience for them. To this end, practical/ hands on support enabled the parent to have capacity to engage in other high priority activities and opportunities.

“Practical support was very important. At the time I had a very young boy, he was in nursery and it was such a convenience to have her (FSW) as I had my hands full. If I had appointments she would sit there and babysit.” – Parent extract

Table 11: Overview of amendments to the utility of a persistent, assertive and challenging approach CMOC

Embryonic programme theory (elicited from realist synthesis)	Refined Programme Theory (elicited through realist interview)
<p>OUTCOME: Family is better able to work towards positive outcomes as referenced within the success criteria for Phase 1 of the TFP.</p> <p>Family members develop skills following increased sense of personal agency</p> <p>FSW better able to apply interventions which are effective and relative to families' needs.</p> <p>Reduction in prevalence of longstanding difficulties for the family, thus leading to better outcomes overall.</p> <p>CONTEXT: Phase 1 of the Troubled Families programme works with families identified in a persistent, assertive and challenging way</p> <p>MECHANISM: Service users feel empowered by the FSW's focus on their strengths to positively negotiate the adversities/ vulnerabilities being experienced</p> <p>Service users are 'challenged' via a non-confrontational form of encouragement that implies potential for growth and thus supports a sense of personal agency</p> <p>The continuity and high frequency of involvement between FSW and family leads to a more robust understanding of family practices which in turn promotes a mutual understanding of families' needs</p> <p>A mutual understanding of needs between the FSW and family creates a sense of openness which supports engagement with plans and ongoing dialogue</p> <p>The persistence and high frequency of involvement between FSW and family leads to timely responses to acute crises or emergent difficulties for family</p>	<p>OUTCOME: Family is better able to work towards positive outcomes as referenced within the success criteria for Phase 1 of the TFP as there are fewer opportunities for resistance to intervention due to persistence from FSW.</p> <p>Family members develop skills following increased sense of personal agency and experiences of gradual change</p> <p>FSW better able to apply interventions which are effective and relative to families' needs due to low caseloads with highly intensive involvement and contact.</p> <p>Reduction in prevalence of longstanding difficulties for the family, thus leading to better outcomes overall.</p> <p>CONTEXT: Phase 1 of the Troubled Families programme works with families identified in a persistent, assertive and challenging way</p> <p>MECHANISM: Service users feel empowered by the FSW's focus on their strengths to positively negotiate the adversities/ vulnerabilities being experienced</p> <p>Service users are 'challenged' via a non-confrontational form of encouragement that implies potential for growth and thus supports a sense of personal agency, particularly in cases where adults within the family have a reduced capacity to facilitate change or where family units appear to have 'given up'.</p> <p>The continuity and high frequency of involvement between FSW and family leads to a more robust understanding of family practices which in turn promotes a mutual understanding of families' needs</p>

	<p>A mutual understanding of needs between the FSW and family creates a sense of openness and respect for FSW which supports engagement with plans and ongoing dialogue</p> <p>The persistence and high frequency of involvement between FSW and family leads to timely responses to acute crises or emergent difficulties for family and therefore reduced delay in response and support being implemented</p>
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The interview data suggested that both parents and family support workers had identified that intensive family support that was underpinned by persistence, assertiveness and challenging approaches contributed positively to families that achieved positive outcomes as outlined within the success criteria of Phase 1 of the TFP.

A particular context-mechanism outlined by the family support workers was the opportunity afforded to conduct intensive, persistent and frequent work with troubled families due to Phase 1 generating lowered caseloads, which in turn appeared to be conducive to facilitating change within the family unit.

“We only had 12 cases maximum. We could give that intense work, we could go in at 7am and we could send 3 or 4 hours and then go to the next family. We had that dedicated time and then we could actually implement changes” – family support worker extract

There appeared to be some validation of an association between family workers being assertive/ challenging towards families and producing positive outcomes for troubled families.

“They (families) know that we’re not doing the softly, softly approach and we’re not doing the ‘well if you do this then maybe...’ You’re honest and firm and they like that and respect you more.” – Family support worker extract

“It always comes back to being honest with them and quite clearly you can’t sugarcoat things or pussyfoot around them because in the long run it doesn’t work [...] you end up don’t gain their respect or trust and you can’t work.” – Family support worker extract

Another factor identified from the interview data suggested that the persistent nature of intensive family support within Phase 1 of the TFP may have been perceived to be effective for motivating families to be contemplative of change.

“With persistence, some families will be like ooh I can’t do it. But I will go in every other day and they do, do it because they get sick of me or they realise they need a change” – Family support worker extract

Another family support worker identified that persistence appeared to be an important element of the approach to supporting families during Phase 1 as many of the ‘Troubled Families’ were perceived to have been involved with professional family support services for prolonged periods of time due to generational issues. To this persistence not only challenged resistance from families but also allowed the family worker to build positive relationships and achieve a bettered understanding of the family’s needs.

"You have to be assertive because a lot of the families that were identified are families that had been in the system for a long time and it's been generational issues [...] I think the families quite like it (persistence) because they know you are going to still be there [...] so they stop being as resistant then because they know you're going to be there and coming back again" – Family support worker extract

A parent identified within their interview that where they experienced reduced capacity to manage the multiple adversities they were encountering within their family, the option of receiving support that was persistent and assertive was a factor associated with producing positive change in their circumstances.

"Why persistence? Because they were problems that needed to be addressed and they were obvious problems, but I was on the moon and not able to pay attention to them. She was like well these are obvious and they need to be addressed. I was in a situation where I couldn't and didn't know how to do daily things but she was there to say well this is a problem, do you think we should deal with this?" – Parent extract

Another parent construed challenge from the family support worker to be an important contextual factor that impacted on their motivation positively.

"Sometimes I felt challenged. I see this positively though because if I did lay back then where would I be? I don't think I would have turned around." – Parent extract

Table 12: Overview of amendments to the considering the family as a whole CMOC

Embryonic programme theory (elicited from realist synthesis)	Refined Programme Theory (elicited through realist interview)
<p>OUTCOME: Family feels their whole needs are understood and therefore more likely to engage with interventions/ support services available.</p> <p>Families are likely to experience a reduction in adversities experienced</p> <p>Family support workers understand the holistic needs of the family and are therefore able to work with a continuum of needs.</p> <p>CONTEXT: Phase 1 of the Troubled Families Programme delivers intensive family support that is underpinned by a robust / holistic understanding of the focus family.</p> <p>MECHANISM: Families have a single point of access that allows for the assessment, identification and intervention for multiple adversities that are being experienced.</p> <p>Integrated family support worker develops a nuanced understanding of the 'whole family' that extends beyond standardised assessment procedures.</p> <p>Both family support worker and family members are informed of the interrelated nature between individual vulnerabilities and overall family functioning</p> <p>Families feel they can access appropriate support services in a destigmatised way</p>	<p>OUTCOME: <u>Family feels their whole needs are understood and therefore more likely to engage with interventions/ support services available.</u></p> <p>Families are likely to experience a reduction in adversities experienced due to each individual's needs being recognised and supported.</p> <p><u>Family support workers understand the holistic needs of the family and are therefore able to work with a continuum of needs.</u></p> <p>CONTEXT: <u>Phase 1 of the Troubled Families Programme delivers intensive family support that is underpinned by a robust / holistic understanding of the focus family.</u></p> <p>MECHANISM: Families have a single point of access that allows for the iterative assessment, identification and intervention for multiple adversities that are being experienced.</p> <p>Integrated family support worker develops a nuanced and empathetic understanding of the 'whole family' that extends beyond standardised assessment procedures.</p> <p>Both family support worker and family members are informed of the interrelated nature between individual vulnerabilities and overall family functioning</p> <p>Families feel they can access appropriate support services in a destigmatised way</p>

The data collected from the interviews suggested that 'considering the family as a whole' or holistic family needs assessments were important to achieve positive outcomes for families within Phase 1 of the TFP. Furthermore the interview data collected assisted in *refining* the theoretical understanding as to the specific context-mechanisms that appeared to be associated with holistic family assessment practices and positive outcomes.

Within one of the parent interviews, the participant described how the context of completing a holistic assessment of her family's needs facilitated a greater understanding of her children's wellbeing and the interrelated nature of those with her own needs, which in turn the parent reported to find educative with respect to how she could then cater for her children's needs.

Researcher – *“Did you complete any assessments or have any discussions with you FSW about the needs across all of your family? If so, did you / your family find this beneficial in producing positive outcomes?”*

“Yes, for the wellbeing of my children. I think ignoring these issues would have affected the children and also in the long run would affect me progressing. So I think that was a main thing and if I didn't address these issues, I wouldn't be as confident as I am now or in control of my situation.” – Parent 1 extract

“She (FSW) would see my children and get other services to see my children and put on paper what they are thinking about and I had to see what my children were saying and realise that my children have a say so, it taught me.” – Parent 2

Another parent highlighted how for their family's needs to be understood as a whole it was beneficial when their family support worker invited additional professional services to become involved, where appropriate.

“Yes, we were understood as a whole because she (FSW) was helping me with employment and work experiences. All of the services knew I had children [...] then those services would help me and support all of our wellbeing and not just my needs” – Parent extract

However, an alternative experience was shared by a family support worker who felt that it had been difficult to ascertain a holistic understanding of family needs. Further exploration of their interview data suggested that there were assessment practice limitations, capacity issues and time constraints.

"I don't believe we had an assessment that was robust enough to capture all of the family. [...] I think capacity as well, the amount of families you have got to work with, and without sounding negative I think we didn't have the opportunity to explore everybody in the family." - Family support worker extract

Table 13: Overview of amendments to the importance of common purposes and agreed actions CMOC

Embryonic programme theory (elicited from realist synthesis)	Refined Programme Theory (elicited through realist interview)
<p>OUTCOME: Family works collaboratively with the family support worker to facilitate positive change</p> <p>Family members feel more competent to negotiate adversities that are being experienced</p> <p>CONTEXT: The Troubled Families programme is underpinned by a consistent approach to assessing, monitoring and reviewing the needs of families worked with through mutually agreed intervention plans</p> <p>MECHANISM: A shared understanding of needs integrated into the plan increases a sense of validation for family</p> <p>Family experiences achievement via concrete sub-goals that increase motivation to sustain positive changes being made</p> <p>Family support worker motivated to continue working with family as they respond to intervention plan and achieve positive outcomes</p> <p>Progress being made within family intervention creates and develops sense of self-concept and personal agency related to parenthood for parents/ carers</p>	<p>OUTCOME: Family works collaboratively with the family support worker to facilitate positive change through a mutually agreed plan</p> <p>Family members feel more competent to negotiate adversities that are being experienced</p> <p>CONTEXT: The Troubled Families programme is underpinned by a consistent approach to assessing, monitoring and reviewing the needs of families worked with through mutually agreed intervention plans</p> <p>MECHANISM: A shared understanding of needs integrated into the plan increases a sense of validation for family and fosters a sense of partnership</p> <p>Family experiences achievement via person-centred concrete sub-goals with incentives that increase motivation to sustain positive changes being made</p> <p><u>Family support worker motivated to continue working with family as they respond to intervention plan and achieve positive outcomes</u></p> <p>Experiences of personal successes and overall family progress being made within family intervention creates and develops sense of self-concept and personal agency related to parenthood for parents/ carers</p> <p>Parents feel motivated by the need to de-escalate their situation</p> <p>Family has a plan of how to achieve better outcomes for the family unit</p>

The data collected from the interviews contributed to further development for the theoretical understanding of how establishing common purposes and agreed actions as a key family

intervention factor was important towards achieving positive outcomes for families within Phase 1 of the TFP.

Within one particular interview, a parent emphasised how a person-centred approach to exploring needs and agreeing actions was a way of working with their family support worker.

“She (FSW) would always ask me ‘what is bothering you, what is the issue?’ [...] it was never like well you need to do this. Even with solutions she’d be like well do you think this would work better? [...] she would always go with what I felt I was comfortable with” – Parent extract

A further context factor was identified by a parent who described that where mutually agreed goals led to successes there appeared to be an increased sense of agreeableness towards the family support worker and increased motivation to maintain progress.

“We agreed the actions and if I could see whatever we agreed on was working in my situation, so the more it worked the more I wanted to agree and the more I wanted to do to make it better.” – Parent extract

Within the context of working with mutually agreed actions and establishing common purposes for the involvements between the family and their support worker, one parent identified that this fostered a sense of partnership which was beneficial in their experience.

“She (FSW) was relaxed. She didn’t force me; she would say her bit and what would benefit me. It was like a partnership.” – Parent extract

From a family support worker perspective, in their experience they reported the importance of developing common purposes and agreed actions that were simple, meaningful and which offered quick experiences of success in the short-term to demonstrate effectiveness of engaging with the family support service and therefore agreeing with future plans.

“They’re (families) going to be resistant if you set up a plan they are not interested in so you’ve got to pick something that in their situation you can get a quick improvement on so that they can see the benefit and see it’s worthwhile engaging and agreeing with the plans.” – Family support worker extract

A further factor identified to be associated with encouraging common purposes and actions to be agreed and indeed achieved between the family support worker and their family was the role of incentives. Interestingly, family support workers reflected on their perceptions of incentives being linked with material benefits for families. However, family support workers identified the payment-by-results framework to be a key incentive and therefore a potential context-mechanism to be associated with working effectively with families.

“There was quite a bit of money at one time going with the project. We could say to the family if you get this tidied up we can get you this nice new carpet [...] and things to enable them” – Family support worker

“People knew what their remit was and knew it was getting money in for the local authority. Also in some ways it got quite competitive, people enjoyed the targets, it got quite competitive amongst the various areas of who has got the most into work or how many have addressed attendance [...] we were determined to reach targets” – Family support worker

There was also information within the interview responses that suggested additional context-mechanisms that were related to delivering family support through common purposes and agreed actions. To this end, there was evidence of an interplay between family support workers adopting a persistent approach to family intervention (as outlined within programme theory two) and the process of working out common purposes and agreed actions.

Researcher: “In your experience, how were agreed actions between you and your families maintained?”

Family support worker: “Being persistent, checking on progress and giving them support [...] be persistent and try and offer alternatives, be one step ahead, preparing them for whatever the situation was by giving reminders, prompts and telephone calls.”

Further potential CMOCs

In addition to those context-mechanism factors that were identified and further refined by the interviewee responses, there appeared to be some additional factors identified by participants that they associated with achieving positive outcomes during Phase 1 of the TFP.

This included:

- Family support worker receiving frequent and quality professional supervision
- Family support worker reported incidental support whilst they were located within a multi-disciplinary team to be conducive to furthering their understanding of needs within the family and therefore how to collaborate and intervene more effectively.
- Some instances, family support worker views 'troubles' within families which may be biased towards their own value judgements and expectations rather than the criterion-set within the programme
- Where families already have existing and supportive networks around their family (i.e. school and work) then this was reported to be supportive in enhancing overall support package for the family unit
- A family support worker reported how the payment-by-results framework facilitated a competitive climate among colleagues and different areas within the city, to this end, it was reported that this motivated family support workers to strive to achieve positive outcomes for the family which were driven by personal targets.
- The willingness of the family appeared to be an important context for family support workers who reported that they were far more inclined to persist and support families where families were demonstrating steps to progress and act upon professional advice given.

The aforementioned potential context-mechanism factors derived from the realist interview data collected from participants. In keeping with the tradition of realistic evaluation, CMOCs are essentially propositions as to how a social intervention induces its intended outcomes upon the actors (individuals) involved. To this end, potential CMOC's can emerge through propositions that the subjects of social interventions report. As Manzano (2016) states:

"The unit of analysis is not the person, but the events and processes around them, every unique programme participant uncovers a collection of micro events and processes, each of which can be explored in multiple ways to test theories." (p. 9)

Chapter 8: OVERVIEW OF REFINED PROGRAMME THEORIES

This section presents the findings for the current research that was undertaken.

Although there may not be direct evidence from realist interviews that are in support of certain CMOC's / programme theories as identified within the realist synthesis, they still remain within the final programme theories to be presented. This is in keeping with the realistic evaluation position that it is thought to be impossible to identify all of the potential CMOCs associated with a social intervention and therefore it is extremely unlikely that realist interview data will reflect every possible CMOC identified (Pawson and Tilley, 1997), particularly in instances where the sample size for data collection are relatively small, as is the case within the present study.

Each of the refined programme theories elicited within the present study are presented within the series of figures to follow.

Key: (c) = context, (m) = mechanism, (o) = outcome

Figure 8: Programme Theory 1- The dedicated family support worker

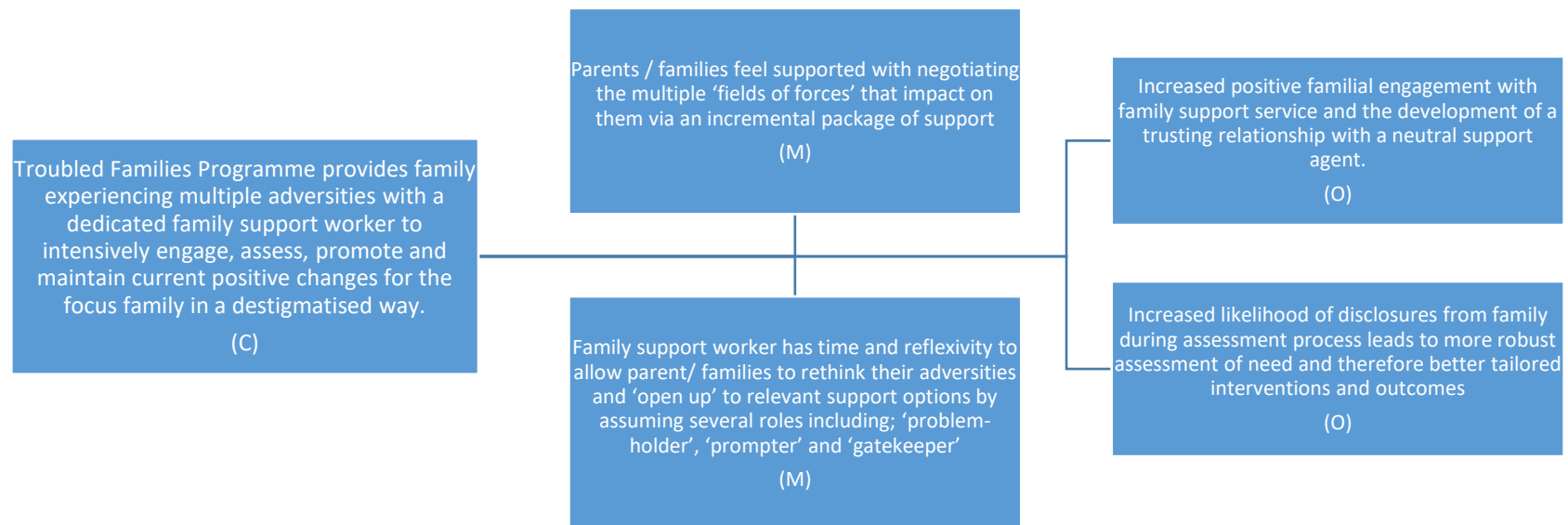


Figure 9: Programme Theory 2- Practical, hands-on support

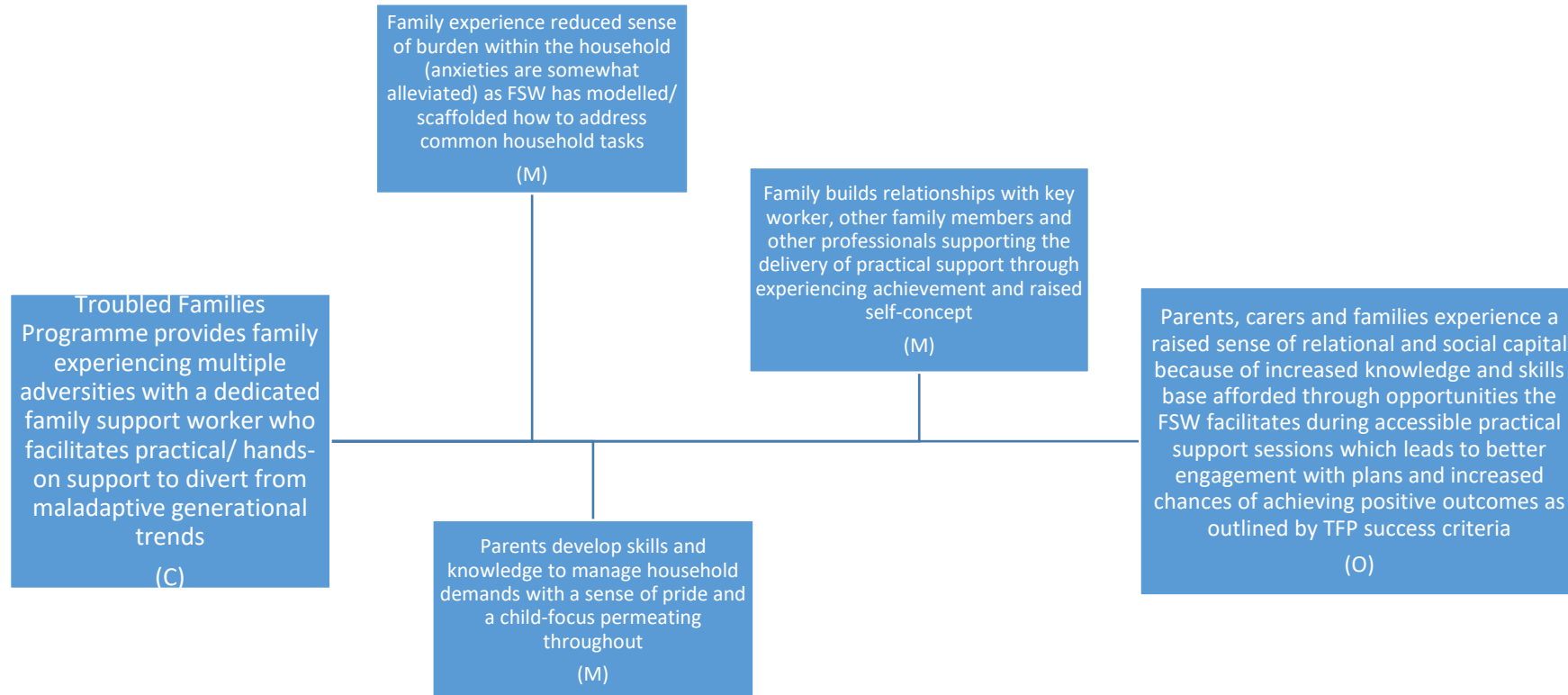


Figure 10: Programme Theory 3- Persistent, assertive and challenging approach

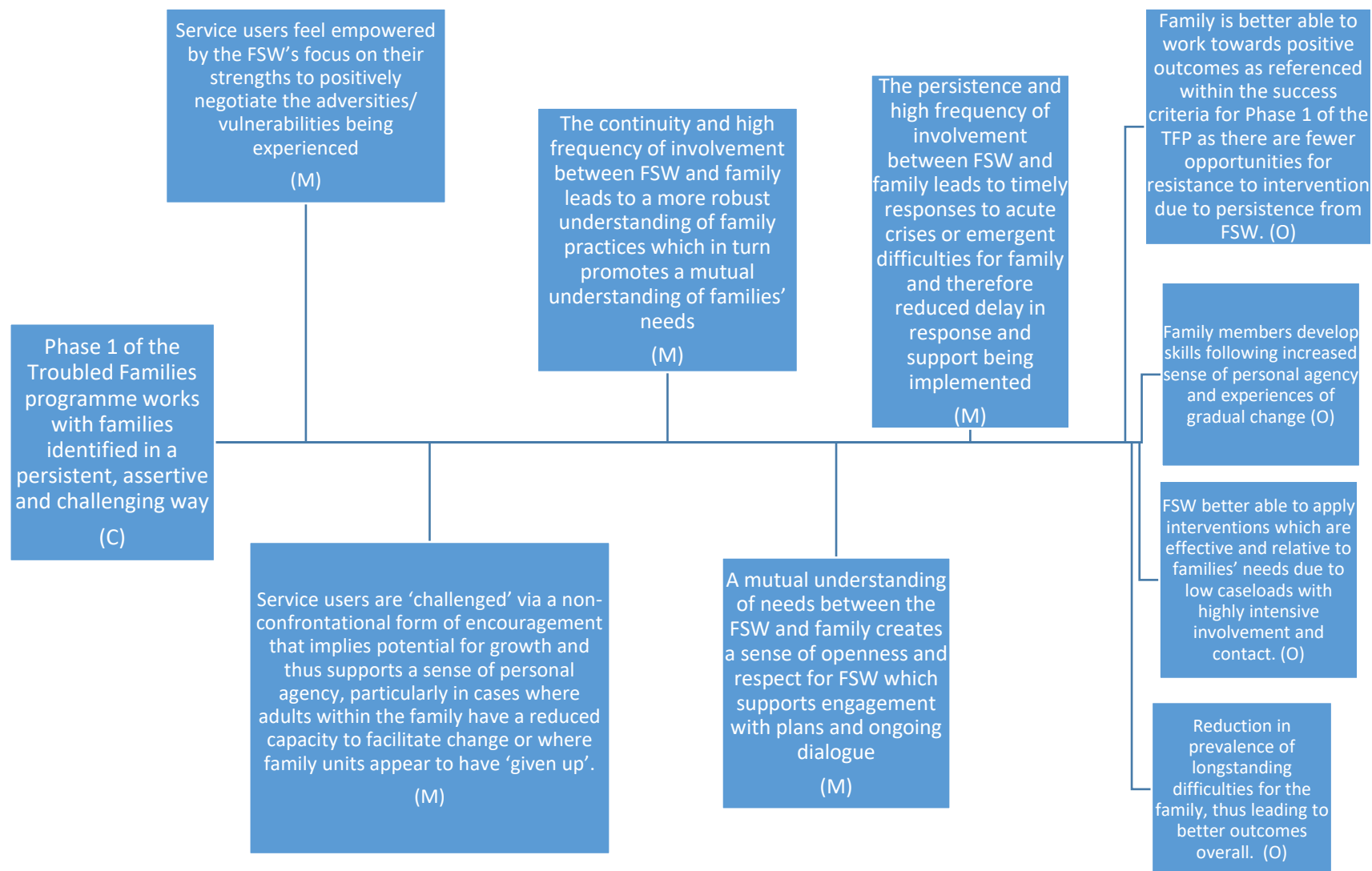


Figure 11: Programme Theory 4- Family as a whole

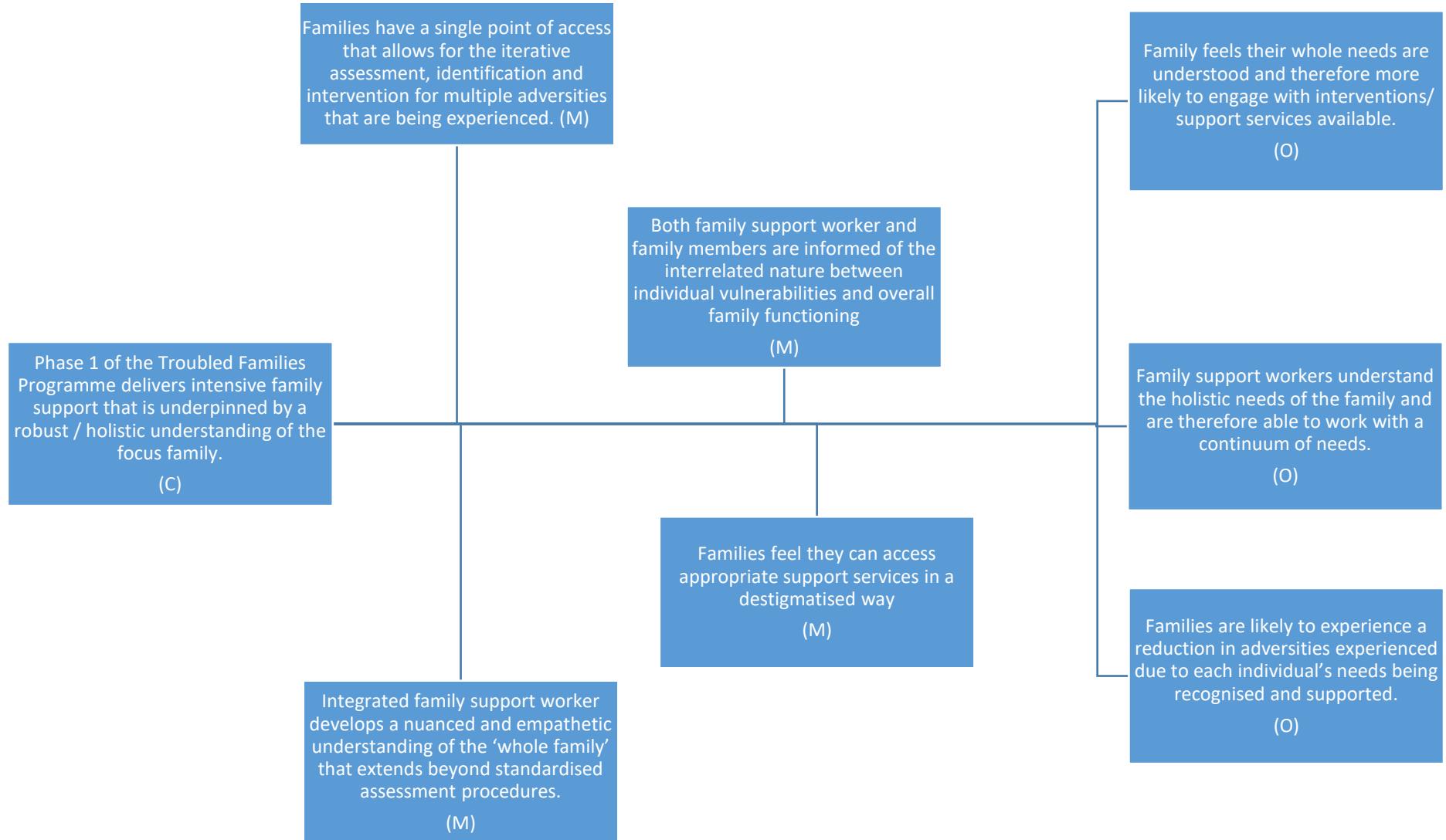
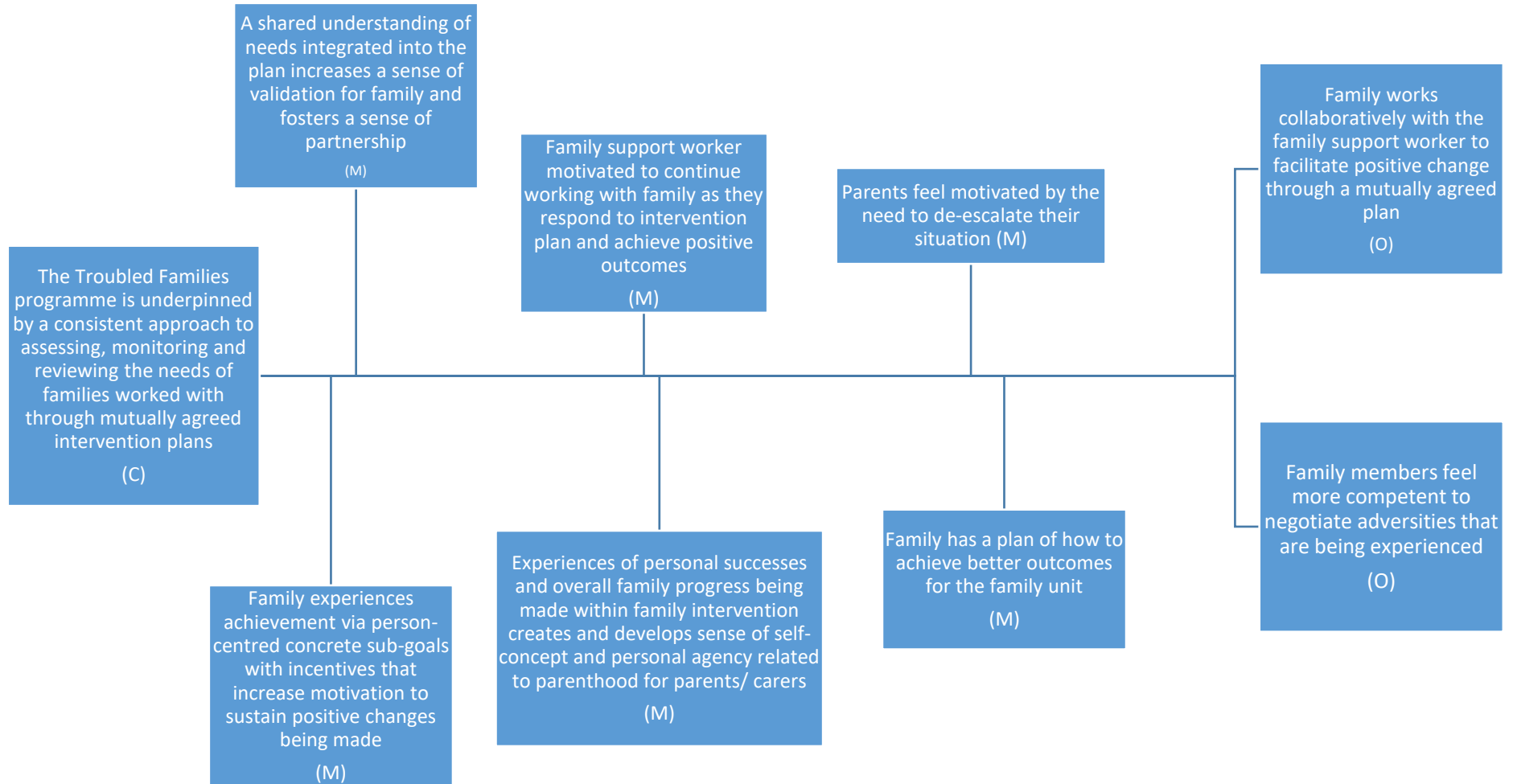


Figure 12: Programme Theory 5 - Common purposes and agreed actions



Chapter 9: DISCUSSION

Aim of study

The aim of the present realistic evaluation was to understand whether Phase 1 of the Troubled Families Programme contributed to the 84% success rate within the focus local authority and, if so, to understand to a greater level the theoretical premises of what worked well, for whom and why.

Summary of findings

Within the initial phase of the research, a realist synthesis was undertaken to elicit and test the extent to which the five intervention factors (or programme theories) that underpin the TFP approach to family support are valid. The realist synthesis presented a range of promotive context-mechanisms that appeared to be associated with progressing ‘troubled families’ towards positive outcomes.

Programme theory 1: The dedicated family support worker

The present study highlighted that both within the literature and the data collected from stakeholders, there is sufficient and robust evidence to suggest that presence of a dedicated family support worker within the TFP approach is important in producing positive outcomes related to achieving the success criteria as set out within the TFP framework.

The data gathered from interviews within the present study suggests that the context factor of ‘troubled families’ being allocated a family support worker appears to facilitate a wide array of promotive mechanisms, including:

- Parents / families feel supported with negotiating the multiple ‘fields of forces’ that impact on them via an incremental support approach

- Family support worker has time and reflexivity to allow parent/ families to rethink their adversities and 'open up' to relevant support options by assuming several roles including; '*problem-holder*', '*prompter*' and '*gatekeeper*'

To this end, the present study offers a contribution to how the role of the family support worker is understood and experienced from the service user and support worker perspective, in several ways that emulate the findings of Batty and Flint (2012).

Furthermore, the importance of the family support workers orientation and ethos was highlighted within the literature and the data collected from TFP parents and practitioners. A strong emphasis appeared to be placed on family support workers adopting a relationally-based approach to working with service-users that formed the basis of rapport and then effective engagement (Forrester, 2008; Hardy and Darlington, 2008).

From these context-mechanisms, some key outcomes that were highlighted by the family support workers and the parents involved with Phase 1 of the TFP were:

- Increased positive familial engagement with family support service and the development of a trusting relationship with a neutral support agent
- Increased likelihood of disclosures from family during assessment process leads to more robust assessment of need and therefore better tailored interventions and outcomes

To this end, the present study managed to test and refine the assumed theoretical underpinnings of how allocated family support workers may be a promotive context to facilitate effective intensive family support/ intervention.

Programme theory 2: Practical, hands-on support

The present study highlighted that both within the literature and the data collected from stakeholders, there is sufficient and robust evidence to suggest that locating support to those primary areas of need / delivering practical hands-on support within the TFP approach is important in producing positive outcomes related to achieving the success criteria as set out within the TFP framework.

The data gathered from interviews within the present study suggests that the context factor of families in the TFP receiving practical, hands-on support via their family support worker appears to facilitate a range of promotive mechanisms, including:

- Family experience reduced sense of burden within the household (anxieties are somewhat alleviated) as FSW has modelled/ scaffolded how to address common household tasks
- Parents develop skills and knowledge to manage household demands with a sense of pride and a child-focus permeating throughout
- Family builds relationships with key worker, other family members and other professionals supporting the delivery of practical support through experiencing achievement and raised self-concept

From these context-mechanisms, a key outcome related to delivering practical, hands on support that were highlighted by the family support workers and the parents involved with Phase 1 of the TFP were:

- Parents, carers and families experience a raised sense of relational and social capital because of increased knowledge and skills base afforded through opportunities the

FSW facilitates during accessible practical support sessions which leads to better engagement with plans and increased chances of achieving positive outcomes as outlined by TFP success criteria

To this end, the present study managed to test and refine the assumed theoretical footings of how the delivery of practical/ hands-on support for ‘troubled families’ may be a promotive context to facilitate effective intensive family support/ intervention. The refined programme theories reflected and emulated upon previous literature that reported the delivery of practical support to ‘troubled families’ to be of paramount importance from both the professional and service-user perspective (Mason, 2012; Boddy et al, 2016).

Programme theory 3: Persistent, assertive and challenging approach

The present study highlighted that both within the literature and the data collected from stakeholders, there is sufficient and sound evidence to suggest that family workers adopting a persistent, assertive and challenging approach to delivering intensive family support within the TFP approach is important in producing positive outcomes related to achieving the success criteria as set out within the TFP framework.

The data gathered from interviews within the present study suggests that the context factor of family support workers (FSWs) adopting a persistent, assertive and challenging approach with families worked with during phase 1 of the TFP appears to facilitate a range of promotive mechanisms, including:

- Service users feel empowered by the FSW’s focus on their strengths to positively negotiate the adversities/ vulnerabilities being experienced
- Service users are ‘challenged’ via a non-confrontational form of encouragement that implies potential for growth and thus supports a sense of personal agency, particularly

in cases where adults within the family have a reduced capacity to facilitate change or where family units appear to have 'given up

- The continuity and high frequency of involvement between FSW and family leads to a more robust understanding of family practices which in turn promotes a mutual understanding of families' needs
- A mutual understanding of needs between the FSW and family creates a sense of openness and respect for FSW which supports engagement with plans and ongoing dialogue
- The persistence and high frequency of involvement between FSW and family leads to timely responses to acute crises or emergent difficulties for family and therefore reduced delay in response and support being implemented

From the context-mechanisms outlined above, some key outcomes related to delivering family support which is persistent, assertive and challenging for families worked with that were highlighted by the family support workers and the parents involved with Phase 1 of the TFP were:

- Family is better able to work towards positive outcomes as referenced within the success criteria for Phase 1 of the TFP as there are fewer opportunities for resistance to intervention due to persistence from FSW
- Family members develop skills following increased sense of personal agency and experiences of gradual change
- FSW better able to apply interventions which are effective and relative to families' needs due to low caseloads with highly intensive involvement and contact

- Reduction in prevalence of longstanding difficulties for the family, thus leading to better outcomes overall.

The present study managed to test and refine the assumed theoretical foundations of how family support workers adopting a persistent, assertive and challenging approach to deliver intensive family support for 'troubled families' may be a promotive context to facilitate effective intensive family support/ intervention.

To this end, the theory of troubled families being worked with in a persistent, assertive and challenging way were well evidenced within the literature. Furthermore, the data collected within the realist interviews was able to reveal how this approach with families could be beneficial for initiating a range of other effective context-mechanisms, such as: building robust family assessments and increasing the opportunities for a strengths-based approach to be applied within family support practices when 'challenge' was presented appropriately (Morris, 2013; Bunting et al, 2015).

Programme theory 4: Family as a whole

The present study highlighted that both within the literature and the data collected from stakeholders, there is sufficient and robust evidence to suggest that the ethos of working with 'troubled families' to understand their holistic needs within the TFP approach is important in producing positive outcomes related to achieving the success criteria as set out within the TFP framework.

The data gathered from interviews within the present study suggests that the context factor of family support workers (FSWs) conducting holistic family needs assessments with families worked with during phase 1 of the TFP appears to facilitate a range of promotive mechanisms, including:

- Families have a single point of access that allows for the iterative assessment, identification and intervention for multiple adversities that are being experienced.
- Integrated family support worker develops a nuanced and empathetic understanding of the 'whole family' that extends beyond standardised assessment procedures.
- Both family support worker and family members are informed of the interrelated nature between individual vulnerabilities and overall family functioning
- Families feel they can access appropriate support services in a destigmatised way

From the context-mechanisms outlined above, some key outcomes related to holistic family needs assessments for families worked with, that were highlighted by the family support workers and the parents involved with Phase 1 of the TFP were:

- Family feels their whole needs are understood and therefore more likely to engage with interventions/ support services available.
- Family support workers understand the holistic needs of the family and are therefore able to work with a continuum of needs.
- Families are likely to experience a reduction in adversities experienced due to each individual's needs being recognised and supported.

To this end, the present study managed to test and refine the assumed theoretical foundations of how conceptualising the needs within 'troubled families' as a whole may be a promotive context to facilitate effective intensive family support/ intervention. Furthermore, the need for professionals to consider the broad range of family practices and units was an important finding in relation to the synthesis and data collected (Morris, 2013).

Programme theory 5: Establishing common purposes and agreed actions

The present study highlighted that both within the literature and the data collected from stakeholders, there is sufficient and robust evidence to suggest that the establishment of common purposes and agreed actions between the family support worker and focus family within the TFP approach, is important in producing positive outcomes related to achieving the success criteria as set out within the TFP framework.

The data gathered from interviews within the present study suggests that the context factor of family support workers and families establishing common purposes and agreed actions during phase 1 of the TFP appears to facilitate a range of promotive mechanisms, including:

- A shared understanding of needs integrated into the plan increases a sense of validation for family and fosters a sense of partnership
- Family experiences achievement via person-centred concrete sub-goals with incentives that increase motivation to sustain positive changes being made
- Family support worker motivated to continue working with family as they respond to intervention plan and achieve positive outcomes
- Experiences of personal successes and overall family progress being made within family intervention creates and develops sense of self-concept and personal agency related to parenthood for parents/ carers
- Parents feel motivated by the need to de-escalate their situation
- Family has a plan of how to achieve better outcomes for their family unit

From the context-mechanisms outlined above, some key outcomes related to establishing common purposes and agreed actions between the focus family and the family support worker, that were highlighted by the family support workers and the parents involved with Phase 1 of the TFP were:

- Family works collaboratively with the family support worker to facilitate positive change through a mutually agreed plan
- Family members feel more competent to negotiate adversities that are being experienced

To this end, the present study managed to test and refine the assumed theoretical foundations of how establishing common purposes of intensive family support involvement and agreeing actions between the family support worker and focus family may be a promotive context to facilitate effective intensive family support/ intervention.

Implications for the Troubled Families Programme work within local context

Firstly, the present study has offered a more nuanced theoretical understanding of how Phase 1 of the TFP may have worked to produce positive changes for families that were supported. To this end, it is envisaged that the findings will have pertinence for key stakeholders involved in the delivery and ultimately success of intensive family support services.

For instance, with a nuanced understanding of potential context and mechanisms that are conducive towards facilitating positive outcomes for families, such as those identified within the present study; approaches to intensive family support may seek to account for these more fully so that there may be the possibility of a greater number of families being ‘turned around’ whilst also developing the fidelity of the programme.

The present study managed to offer both theoretical validation and refinement of the five intervention factors that underpin the TFP, namely; a dedicated family support worker, delivery of practical/ hands-on support, a persistent, assertive and challenging approach with families, assessing holistic family needs, and establishing common purposes and agreed actions.

Furthermore, the research has identified key outcomes that were reported to arise from key stakeholders (family support workers and parents) experiences of being subject to the aforementioned context-mechanism factors.

Whilst the knowledge gained from the present study has implications for how TFP work might be delivered, there should also be some consideration to how it might be transferable to other contexts, such as the development of other family support approaches, interventions or indeed short-term strategies.

However, it ought to be acknowledged that, at the most, the present study is presenting embryonic programme theories to understand the workings of Phase 1 of the TFP. In order to develop the theoretical understanding further, then further research which involves the testing of these embryonic programme theories may be useful.

Implications for Educational Psychology

The present research offers several implications for educational psychology services and associated practitioners to consider when working with families that have been identified as 'Troubled Families'.

Firstly, the role of educational psychologist as a 'scientist-practitioner' has been widely publicised within the literature (Lane and Corrie, 2007). To this end, having implemented the

Realist Evaluation approach as espoused by Pawson and Tilley (1997), it is argued that it offers educational psychologists a method to evaluate social programmes and interventions more generally with due consideration given to the contexts and mechanisms that are conducive towards generating desirable outcomes. For this, it is argued further that educational psychologists have a more than adequate knowledge base with which they can offer useful insight into the generative causation aspect of key stakeholder behaviour.

Secondly, within the local authority that the research was undertaken in, practitioners from the various services under the early intervention/ child and family support services are actively encouraged to work in multi-disciplinary and inter-professional ways. To this end, this presents a significant opportunity for educational psychologists to apply psychological theory and knowledge via several practices, such as reflective practice sessions with other professional groups or direct supervision of family support workers. If colleagues considered undertaking these types of roles then there is a dearth of literature available to reflect upon (Callicott and Leadbetter, 2013; Wedlock, 2016).

Limitations of the research

There are limitations inherent within any piece of research. Within the present study, there were several limitations identified.

Firstly, Realistic Evaluation is a non-prescriptive research methodology which is largely shaped by the guiding principles espoused by Pawson and Tilley (1997). To this end, whilst it offers the researcher a great deal of flexibility, the lack of standardised method examples, particularly within the field of psychological or educational research was a challenge.

Secondly, the identification of participants was largely conducted on an opportunistic basis. Although there were essential criteria for involvement within the study, due to the lack of responses and engagement, those that were available were selected to be interviewed. Regarding the interviews, there was no piloting of them in advance of conducting them with participants. This could be viewed as a weakness in consideration of ensuring reliability and validity of the questions being asked. However, as each interview was conducted within the realist interview style, they were deemed appropriate due to the time that was allocated to the 'teacher-learner' function of the interview.

Another potential limitation of the research could be the stakeholders that were not included within the evaluation, namely children/ young people of 'troubled families' and managers within the focus local authority that had responsibilities for coordinating the programme and managing the family support workers. However, the decision to exclude children and young people from the final study was made on the basis of the difficulties that may have been encountered with their understanding of the TFP and assumed programme theories. Furthermore, the frontline delivery of the TFP was reported to be primarily between family support workers and parents/ carers and therefore they were deemed to be viable interviewees.

Furthermore, it is argued that it is not possible to explore every piece of literature concerned with the TFP. To this end, the process of identifying potential programme theories becomes a narrowed process which ultimately may result in potential CMOCs being missed. However, the scope of potential CMOCs means that it is nigh on impossible to account for all of these within the time and written constraints of the present study. To this end, one may question whether the very nature of realistic evaluation espousing to uncover the contexts and

mechanisms that are involved within change may be somewhat over-ambitious due to the potentially infinite amount of underlying generative mechanisms. Conversely, some critique has been aimed towards the deterministic nature of conceptualising behaviour change within social interventions as a series of non-dynamic CMOC's (Porter, 2015).

The realist interview process has also been criticised for potential risks related to leading the responses of participants via the 'teacher-learner' process, whereby there may be a tendency for responses to present views that are socially desirable or congruent with the espoused programme theories (

Dissemination and further application of findings

The present report will be submitted to the University of Birmingham as per the requirements for volume one of the doctoral thesis towards the applied educational and child psychology doctorate award.

In addition, a brief report will be produced and shared with both the management team within the early help and inclusion support services, as well as the family support workers that currently work across the TFP workforce locally.

I have also received several invitations to present the research findings at service development days/ conferences so that practitioners can begin to understand the factors that promote positive outcomes for troubled families as well as implementing and thus testing the embryonic programme theories for their utility and validity.

Further into the future, there may be opportunities to adapt the present report to the criteria for journal publication, with a view to offering an account of adopting a realistic evaluation

from an educational psychology perspective, as well as adding to the theoretical knowledge base of how and why intensive family support programmes such as the TFP can work to produce favourable outcomes for families.

Conclusion

The aim of the present study was to achieve a refined understanding of if, and how, phase one of the troubled families programme (TFP) worked within a particular local authority to support troubled families to achieve positive outcomes as referenced within the TFP success criteria.

To this end, a Realistic Evaluation approach (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) was adopted in order to ascertain the validity of the programme theories assumed to underpin the TFP (via Realist Synthesis) and then use empirical data (Realist Interviews) derived from TFP stakeholders that could then further identify and refine one's understanding of the middle-range programme theories that underpin effective TFP involvement.

As the Troubled Families initiative has progressed into Phase 2, with this comes a raised expectancy within local authorities for greater numbers of families entering the programme to be 'turned around'. To this end, a robust, evidence-based understanding of how the TFP intervention may work to produce positive outcomes for families is of central importance. Although the present study does not produce or profess generalisable findings, it does report on what worked well, for whom and why within a particular case (local authority). To this end, the programme theories that emerge through the process of realist synthesis and realist interview are testable within different contexts. To this end, the aim of confirming, validating and refining the theoretical understanding of how the TFP worked was upheld within the present study.

Indeed the remit of the present research was restricted in several ways, namely due to time constraints and participant availability. Nonetheless, an understanding, grounded in theory emerged through the realist evaluation process to begin to explicate the contexts and mechanisms that are conducive for producing positive outcomes for families involved.

However, it is recommended that further research might aim to test the refined programme theories that emerged from the evaluation in other contexts (i.e. other local authorities or other parents and family support workers) in order to continue the process of conceptual refinement. In addition, future research may also consider utilising the perspectives of children involved in the TFP as the present study only sought parent and practitioner views. In addition, future research may also consider involving stakeholders from different 'levels' of the TFP (i.e. TFP coordinators, Heads of Services etc.), so that a more holistic and dynamic understanding of the different context, mechanism and outcome configurations can be elicited.

It is hoped that the findings may have implications for how 'troubled families' needs are understood, conceptualised and responded to by intensive family support services. To this end the present research would imply that there are a number of strategies or approaches that family support workers may want to consider when initiating intensive family support work with families that are identified as 'Troubled Families'. The present research's findings would suggest that the assumed programme theories that underpin the TFP are robust family intervention factors to orientate the support work around.

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Appendix 1: Figure of RAMESES publication standards for reporting a Realist Synthesis (Wong et al, 2013)

TITLE		
1		In the title, identify the document as a realist synthesis or review
ABSTRACT		
2		While acknowledging publication requirements and house style, abstracts should ideally contain brief details of: the study's background, review question or objectives; search strategy; methods of selection, appraisal, analysis and synthesis of sources; main results; and implications for practice.
INTRODUCTION		
3	Rationale for review	Explain why the review is needed and what it is likely to contribute to existing understanding of the topic area.
4	Objectives and focus of review	State the objective(s) of the review and/or the review question(s). Define and provide a rationale for the focus of the review.
METHODS		
5	Changes in the review process	Any changes made to the review process that was initially planned should be briefly described and justified.
6	Rationale for using realist synthesis	Explain why realist synthesis was considered the most appropriate method to use.
7	Scoping the literature	Describe and justify the initial process of exploratory scoping of the literature.

TITLE		
8	Searching processes	While considering specific requirements of the journal or other publication outlet, state and provide a rationale for how the iterative searching was done. Provide details on all the sources accessed for information in the review. Where searching in electronic databases has taken place, the details should include, for example, name of database, search terms, dates of coverage and date last searched. If individuals familiar with the relevant literature and/or topic area were contacted, indicate how they were identified and selected.
9	Selection and appraisal of documents	Explain how judgements were made about including and excluding data from documents, and justify these.
10	Data extraction	Describe and explain which data or information were extracted from the included documents and justify this selection.
11	Analysis and synthesis processes	Describe the analysis and synthesis processes in detail. This section should include information on the constructs analysed and describe the analytic process.
RESULTS		
12	Document flow diagram	Provide details on the number of documents assessed for eligibility and included in the review with reasons for exclusion at each stage as well as an indication of their source of origin (for example, from searching databases, reference lists and so on). You may consider using the example templates (which are likely to need modification to suit the data) that are provided.
13	Document characteristics	Provide information on the characteristics of the documents included in the review.
14	Main findings	Present the key findings with a specific focus on theory building and testing.

TITLE		
DISCUSSION		
15	Summary of findings	Summarize the main findings, taking into account the review's objective(s), research question(s), focus and intended audience(s).
16	Strengths, limitations and future research directions	<p>Discuss both the strengths of the review and its limitations. These should include (but need not be restricted to) (a) consideration of all the steps in the review process and (b) comment on the overall strength of evidence supporting the explanatory insights which emerged.</p> <p>The limitations identified may point to areas where further work is needed.</p>
17	Comparison with existing literature	Where applicable, compare and contrast the review's findings with the existing literature (for example, other reviews) on the same topic.
18	Conclusion and recommendations	List the main implications of the findings and place these in the context of other relevant literature. If appropriate, offer recommendations for policy and practice.
19	Funding	Provide details of funding source (if any) for the review, the role played by the funder (if any) and any conflicts of interests of the reviewers.

Appendix 2: Telephone script:

The following script will be used when approaching potential participants identified as having achieved successful outcomes within phase 1 of the Troubled Families programme.

Hello, my name is Yuvender Prashar and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist on placement with the child and family support services at the City of Focus local authority council.

As part of the service's continual evaluation process, I am conducting a research project to explore the views of people who received successful support from the child/ family support services. To the service's knowledge you were highlighted as an individual for whom the support they received between the period 2014-2016 was successful in achieving a positive outcome/ change for your family.

To this end, I would like to learn more about your experiences as a parent involved within the TF programme.

Your participation would involve meeting with me for a short semi-structured interview. I will ask about your experiences of being part of the TF programme and your perceptions about the positive outcomes that you achieved. The interview will take no more than an hour of your time. • Your interview will be in-person at a mutually convenient location, however there will be space made available at your local child and family support team offices if this is convenient. Your interview would be arranged at a time that is convenient for you.

I will take notes during the interview. In order to protect your identity, I will assign you an ID code so your name will not be on my notes. I will not use your name or other personal identifiers in any presentation or research paper. All information related to the research such as your interview transcript, will be securely stored on the University of Birmingham's servers for a period of 10 years as per research guideline. After the research is completed, it will be presented in accordance with the course requirements of the Applied Educational & Child Psychology doctorate programme of the University of Birmingham.

I will provide to with a summary of results following completion of the research.

Would you be interested in participating in this research project? If Yes: • When and where is it convenient for you to meet?

o Date: _____ o Time: _____ o Location: _____

If we have arranged to meet in person:

I will bring a copy of the Consent Form to the interview for us both to sign before the interview begins.

If you think of any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or email (share these)

I look forward to talking to you more about your experiences (at this date and time) _____.

Thank you for agreeing to discuss further/ participating.

If No: Thank you for your time and consideration.

Name: Yuvender Prashar

Date: Oct-Dec 2015

1. Preliminary Working Title of Thesis

Did the Troubled Families Programme intervention contribute to positive change and outcomes within a local authority, if so, how?: A Realistic Evaluation using parent and professional perspectives

2. The Focus of the Research

Phase 1 of the 'Troubled Families' (TF) programme, in Focus local authority, was completed earlier this year (2015). In total, 207 families were supported, of which 89 achieved positive outcomes. This represents a payment-by-results performance of 84%. Payment-by-results is defined as receiving a proportion of further funding from central government, ranging between 20-60% upon positive outcomes being achieved for families worked with. It is suggested that this financial framework will incentivise a focus on achieving outcomes.

A key focus of this research is to explore and illuminate the factors which have contributed to this perceived change, whilst also offering grounds for theoretical appraisal of the assumed programme theories that underpin the TF programme.

3. Justification for the Research

Locally, the data would suggest that there remains a majority (57%) of families within Phase 1 that, for whatever reason, the programme was not influential or conducive to achieving change/ positive outcomes. The national TF programme assumes that positive outcomes for families are defined as:

- 60% reduction in anti-social behaviour incidents and 33% reduction in recorded crime incidents over a 6 month period
- Attendance level of 90% or above maintained for 3 consecutive terms within school
- De-escalation of Child Protection Plan
- Adult(s) within family move off out of work benefit and into continuous employment
- No recorded incidents of domestic violence over 6 month period
- Improvement in health of child, young person and/ or family

However, the concept of positive outcomes would also be explored within the literature review to evaluate the credence of the assumed positive outcomes within the TF programme.

The 84% that did achieve positive outcomes represents a subset within the programme that appeared to be supported well by the TF programme. It is hypothesised that this population may offer interesting insights into why and how the programme may have 'worked' for them. However it is likely that other variables were also influential in facilitating change for the successful families, hence why a qualitative approach will encourage richness in response from participants.

Another desirable outcome of this research is for the findings to have direct implications for practice. It is argued that in developing an understanding of 'what works for whom, why and how' amongst TF practitioners will increase the likelihood of achieving sustained positive outcomes for other families.

4. Key Research Questions and / or Hypotheses

There are a number of hypotheses suggested from the initial data findings of phase 1 of the TF programme. These are:

- o **(H1)** The tracking data for Phase 1 of the TF programme within Focus local authority appears to assist in 'turning round' some families, but not all.
- o **(H2)** There are specific factors, conditions, contexts and mechanisms that are conducive to the TF programme producing these effects.
- o **(H3)** The observed effect is not related to the TF intervention.

Using Realistic Evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) as the research methodology, it is hoped that findings will have direct implications towards how the Troubled Families programme is delivered. However, in any case, the data collected from the research participants will be useful in either confirming the programme theories elicited within the realist synthesis, or refining the programme theories, by highlighting the contexts, mechanisms and outcome configurations (CMOCs) that underpin the positive outcomes and change achieved for some of the families involved in the TF programme.

It is argued that the identification of any of these hypotheses within the data collected would be useful and relevant towards refining the TF programme and how it is delivered locally.

5. What is Already Known About What You Propose to Research?

At present much of the literature concerning the Troubled Families programme has been published by the UK government, namely the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), such as the *2010-2015: Government Policy: Support for families* document. Further analysis of this literature highlights that these publications primarily offer

information related to the progress of the programme within each local authority. In short, it provides an overview of whether and where outcomes are being met, or not. Whilst this offers the reader an 'at a glance' overview of whether the programme is achieving positive outcomes for the families involved, it fails to provide any insight into how these outcomes are being brought about. I.e. the difference that makes the difference.

Subsequently, academics within the field have begun to explore more pertinent issues surrounding the Troubled Families programmes: Morris (2013) conducted a small-scale study to examine the experiences of a sample of families involved within the programme. Key issues highlighted within the study were related to the assumptions that were made about families and their knowledge by practitioners. One of the main conclusions of the study was the need to develop practice (with these families) so that there was a better 'recognition of the processes that support and inhibit professional interventions' (Morris, 2013).

Hayden and Jenkins (2014) critically reviewed the evidence base for the overall approach within the Troubled Families programme and debated whether it is a case of evidence-based policy or policy based evidence. Their conclusions indicate that behavioural change is likely to be achieved for families, namely raising children's school attendance, reducing anti-social behaviour and crime. However, for other issues such as worklessness, this presented a bigger challenge.

Bond-Taylor (2015) explored the dimensions of family empowerment that are presented within the experiences of parents and professionals involved within the Troubled Families programme. Contrasting accounts of empowerment were reported by the parents and keyworkers when compared with the government's discourses which assumed that families would feel empowered through the offer of support alone. It was concluded that this difference in construal of the programme may offer insights into why its success may be hindered.

Bunting et al (2015) utilised a biographical narrative approach to conduct a qualitative study that focussed on parents' experiences of multiple adversities. The parents who participated in the study were also participating within their local Troubled Families programme. The findings of the study reported a need to move away from risk averse child protection practice towards a more relationally based practice which is based upon values of rapport and working within the family system.

The early scoping of the literature indicates that there is a commonality in that they appear to only critique the Troubled Families programme. The conclusions drawn from the papers all point to improvements, considerations or challenges. Whilst these are all useful and helpful towards shaping practice and initiating a discussion around the programme, there is paucity within the Troubled Families literature considering the question of 'when the programme works, why does it work, who does it work for and how?' Furthermore, to date there appears to be no academic paper or research that has applied a realistic evaluation methodology to the Troubled Families programme to uncover its success for some families in terms of context, mechanisms and outcome configurations (CMOC).

6. What Approach and Method Will You Hope to Employ?

	Ontology	Epistemology	Research Methodology	Data Collection Method	Data Analysis Method
	Critical Realism	Interpretivist	Realistic Evaluation	Semi-Structured Interviews	Thematic Analysis
Rationale	Personal belief that a natural world exists, whilst acknowledging the role that cognition, perception and social processes have in shaping our understanding and meaning of it.	The TF programme is a social intervention. Therefore it is important to extend the evaluation of it to include the social processes that influence its utility. An Interpretivist approach allows for complex and contextual data to be collected.	The aim with this approach is to identify the underlying generative mechanisms which explain how outcomes were caused, whilst also acknowledging the role of context in producing this.	Allows for focus on the interaction process, whilst also inviting new ideas, rich detail and idiographic information. Interviews are also consistent with the emancipatory/ participatory nature of research study proposed.	Allows for inductive or deductive analysis of data. Could deductively apply <i>a priori</i> codes generated from realist synthesis (Lit review) to analyse data. Thus allows for theory to be appraised/ refined.

7. In Summary, Indicate Ways in which Your Planned Study will Make an Original Contribution to Knowledge / Theory Development

Generally, both the realist synthesis and evaluation will contribute knowledge that will be useful towards identifying and refining the programme theories that underpin the Troubled Families intervention. It is assumed that with this information, one can better apply the principles of 'what works, for whom and why', also referred to as the context, mechanism and outcome configurations (CMOCs) to other families within the future, with a view that similar results may be attained.

The research will also expand upon the children's services' knowledge of how to apply social interventions successfully with vulnerable families who present with multiple adversities. More specifically, this research and its conclusions will have direct implications towards the professional practices of family support workers, parent support workers and social workers. Increasingly, particularly within Focus local authority Local Authority there has been an emergence in recent times of Educational Psychologists providing supervision to other practitioners, such as those named

above. To this end, it may be of benefit to Educational Psychologists for there to be some research around the psychological mechanisms that promote positive outcomes being achieved for families.

It is also hoped that the study will contribute towards increasing the knowledge of how troubled families can experience change and achieve positive outcomes, thus positioning them as being capable of change, rather than difficult to engage/ hard to reach service users. To this end, it is hoped the research would go some way to initiating an attitudinal shift among professionals working with these families, including EPs whilst also reframing the discourses that exist around these families both within the professional and public domains.

8. What Ethical Challenges Might You Encounter in Your Research? What Can You Do About Them?

The following ethical challenges and ethical requirements have been highlighted, with accompanying suggestions as to how they may be overcome, considered and managed.

Informed consent:

- There will need to be separate consent forms produced for parents and professionals/practitioners respectively, as parents would already be deemed as 'service users' thus it would need to be made explicit that approaches to contact and recruit them are for the purposes of research and improving practice within the local authority in which they reside.

Confidentiality:

- All potential participants within the research will be briefed about confidentiality. Data collected on parents and practitioners will remain confidential, and their identities only known to researchers and the individuals who they would have come into contact with as a result of the TF programme, unless safeguarding issues were to arise.
- To this end information would not remain anonymous as the codes assigned for each parent and professional would be able to be identified, but only to the primary researcher. Furthermore, it would be suggested that the data collected can then be analysed and the findings/ conclusions shared with the key stakeholders within the local authority e.g. Early Help managers, TF programme team, practitioners and parents without any confidentiality being breached.

Withdrawal:

- Participants will be reminded of their right to withdraw at any time within the research process, however once interview data has been collected it will be utilised as per the research brief and confidentiality agreement.

Data ownership:

- As the research is contingent upon primary data, research sample and practitioners being supplied from the local authority then ownership of the research remains with the local authority.

Thesis accessibility:

- It is likely that once completed and examined the thesis would become public knowledge which can be accessed freely.

9. What Time-table do you Hope to Work Toward?

The table below outlines an approximate schedule for the research process. It is likely that key points within the process, such as the application for ethical review and recruitment of participants could potentially cause some delays.

However, at the time of writing, provisional discussions regarding ethical issues and recruitment of participants have suggested that these are likely to be manageable.

Time	Action
Jan 2016	Research proposal form to be submitted. w/ Ethical review form.
Feb 2016	Present research proposal to panel at University.
April 2016	Submit literature review/ realist synthesis. Ethical approval to be secured.
May/June 2016	Data collection to be undertaken
Oct/Nov 2016	Data to be analysed
Dec 2016- Feb 2017	Writing up of first draft of Vol 1
Mar/ Apr 2017	Editing of Vol 1 following initial feedback
May 2017	Finalising of Vol 1
June 2017	Submission of Thesis (Vol 1 & 2)
July 2017	Viva Voce examination

10. To Whom and How Will You Report Your Findings?

The findings of the proposed study will be shared with the parents and professionals who participated within the research via individual debrief sessions. All participants will also be provided with access to the completed research upon its examination via the University and external examiners.

Appendix 4- RESEARCH PROJECT – Informed consent form

Information sheet

My name is Yuvender Prashar and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist based within Focus local authority Educational Psychology service and a research student at the University of Birmingham, who is interested in finding out how families can be best supported through challenging times.

I hope to complete a research project which will highlight what works best to produce positive change for families, whilst also celebrating your successes.

The research will help me, you, other families and the local children and families services to understand the best ways of supporting families through to positive outcomes, such as gaining employment and improving the wellbeing of children and young people.

Following completion of the research, the results of the study will be used towards producing my Doctoral Thesis and may in the future be published within reports for the Local Authority and Academic Journals.

Your role as a participant

I would like to complete an audio recorded face-to-face interview with you, which should last no longer than 1 hour of your time.

In this interview you will be asked some questions about the support that you received from your support worker(s) as part of the Troubled Families programme. However you can also provide any other thoughts or opinions if you wish. You can choose which questions you wish to respond to.

The interviews would take place at a Local Authority office located within the Inclusion Support service.

Your responses will remain confidential and not be shared with any other participants. Only I will have access to your information as the researcher and my university supervisor Dr. Huw Williams. As part of the University's code of practice for research data is preserved and made accessible for a period of 10 years.

Once I have collected the interview responses you will have a period of 1 week to withdraw from the study. If you were to tell me something within the interview which I thought put yourself or others at risk then I would have to pass on this information in line with the safeguarding protocol of the Local Authority.

Please complete the attached consent form.

Research contact details

For any questions and queries you can contact me on: Email: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Telephone: [REDACTED] I also have a research supervisor, Dr Huw Williams, who can be contacted on:

Email: [REDACTED]

THANK YOU

CONSENT FORM

(to be completed by participants)

My name is: -----

Please circle your response to each statement as appropriate:

I would like to be in the research project	YES	NO
I understand I can say that I do not want to be part of the research at any time (other than 1 week after interviews)	YES	NO
I am happy to complete an interview with the researcher	YES	NO
I consent to the interview being audio-recorded	YES	NO
I understand that my interview information will stay confidential	YES	NO
I understand that my interview information will be used in a report, but identity will remain anonymous	YES	NO
If I have a question/ query, I know who to ask	YES	NO
I understand that if I say something that could mean harm to self or others then it will be reported by the researcher	YES	NO
I understand how my data will be used and who will have access to it and how long and where it is to be stored.	YES	NO

Signed

Date:

Please ensure that your form is returned to the researcher, Mr Yuvender Prashar

THANK YOU

Appendix 5 -Interview Schedule

Introduction:

Thank you for being willing to take part in an interview. Can I first of all assure you that your responses will remain completely anonymous? I will not record, store or use your name in any report that is produced, however I will assign an ID code instead.

Throughout the interview, I will be making notes. I would also like to record the interview so that I do not miss anything that is said. Once the interview notes have been typed up a copy of the transcript will be kept on a secure server at the University of Birmingham for 10 years as per data protection guidelines.

Your views in combination with others' will help me to gain a better understanding on how the support you received was helpful. There are no right or wrong answers. This information will also be used for my thesis as part of my university work. In this work, I may choose to use quotes from interviews, however this will only be the case if it is deemed that they do not contain any identifiable features.

Final checks:

- Are you happy for me to record this interview?
- Do you have any questions?
- Are you happy to continue?

Warm up questions:

1. Can I first ask you if you are either currently or have previously received any support from your local authorities' child and family support service?

(This should be yes, as the sample has been selected on this basis)

If yes, take note of:

- a- Type of support received
 - b- Frequency of support
 - c- What did the support look like?
 - d- How the person construes the effectiveness of the support
 - e- Why was *this* support successful, - and perhaps previous attempts (if applicable) not?
2. If person has experienced difficulty with question 1, use following prompts to assist.
 - a- Have you received support for:
 - b- *Quote criteria of TF program – DV, ASB, PSNA, Youth crime, unemployment*

Introduction:

I am doing some research to try and find out how the TF program supports families to achieve positive and sustained outcomes. This would include anything that was provided by the local authority, any actions that were initiated or support from professional agencies.

I am going to share with you some ideas about how the TF program may work to support families towards positive outcomes and change.

I would like you to help me understand what the TF program/ local authority did to support you, your family or your child and whether you experienced the following and if so, how.

Sharing/ exploring the theories to be tested:

CMOC 1: The role of the dedicated family worker

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
The need for TF's to be supported due to a variety of societal issues.	LA feels that TF's need a dedicated worker to assist in negating issues impacting on family and promote engagement and motivation to change.	LA seen as responding to societal issues and intervening early to prevent escalation of issues for family.

In your experience, what do you think the role of your dedicated family support worker was?

What do you think encouraged the LA to assign you a dedicated family support worker?

How important do you think your dedicated family support worker was in supporting you towards the changes/ outcomes that were achieved?

CMOC 2: The delivery of practical/ 'hands on' support

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
The need to locate resources and work in those areas that the service user experiences as a priority	Person-centred orientation for working towards tangible and achievable goals fosters a sense of progress within TF service user	Engagement between LA and TF is consolidated. Service user supported and educated towards change

In your experience, did you receive practical/ hands on support?

If so, how did this support you and your family towards achieving positive outcomes/ change?

How important do you think it is that families receive hands-on support?

How important do you think it is that LA's and families who receive support, are engaged in a close working relationship?

What do you think kept you involved with the LA?

CMOC 3: A persistent, assertive and challenging approach

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
The LA's role and responsibility in providing a 'good enough' standard of care to children and families experiencing <i>trouble</i>	LA demonstrates a commitment to supporting the betterment of families. Persistent support for families instils a sense of being cared for, promotes resilience and determination and commitment to change process.	Needs of families are catered for in an approach based within principles of care not coercion.

In your experience, did you feel supported by the LA with the issues your family were facing previously?

Did you feel that you or your family benefitted from the support that was received through the TFP? If so, how?

What were your experiences of the approach to the support you received? (E.g. was it supportive, enabling, nurturing etc.)

CMOC 4: Considering the family as a whole

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
Families can be experiencing a multiplicity of issues at any one time.	LA has a holistic understanding of the needs of families.	The LA providing a service to the family which capture the interrelated nature of experiences.
At any one time there can be a multiples agencies working with families.	Family feels understood by the LA support services and professionals	Assessments and plans are produced aligned to the unique 'rhythms' of families.

In your experience, did you feel that your family as a whole was understood? (Why? How?)

What factors helped practitioners in their understanding of you as a person/ family?

What do you think could have helped practitioners to better understand your family?

CMOC 5: Common purpose and agreed action

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
Family is referred/ self-refers for support from LA.	Both family and LA have a mutual understanding of the purposes of involvement. Targets and agreed actions.	A contract outlining goals, is agreed between LA and family under the auspices of the TF coordinator.
	LA/ TF wishes to avoid aversive actions.	Progress of families is reviewed regularly

What is your understanding behind why the LA offered you/ your family support?

How would you have defined the issues for which you were referred for/ referred to the local child and family support team?

In your experience, how clearly were the purposes of the LA involvement with your family explained? (Why? How?)

In your experience, how were actions agreed?

What factors contributed to you maintaining to agreed goals?

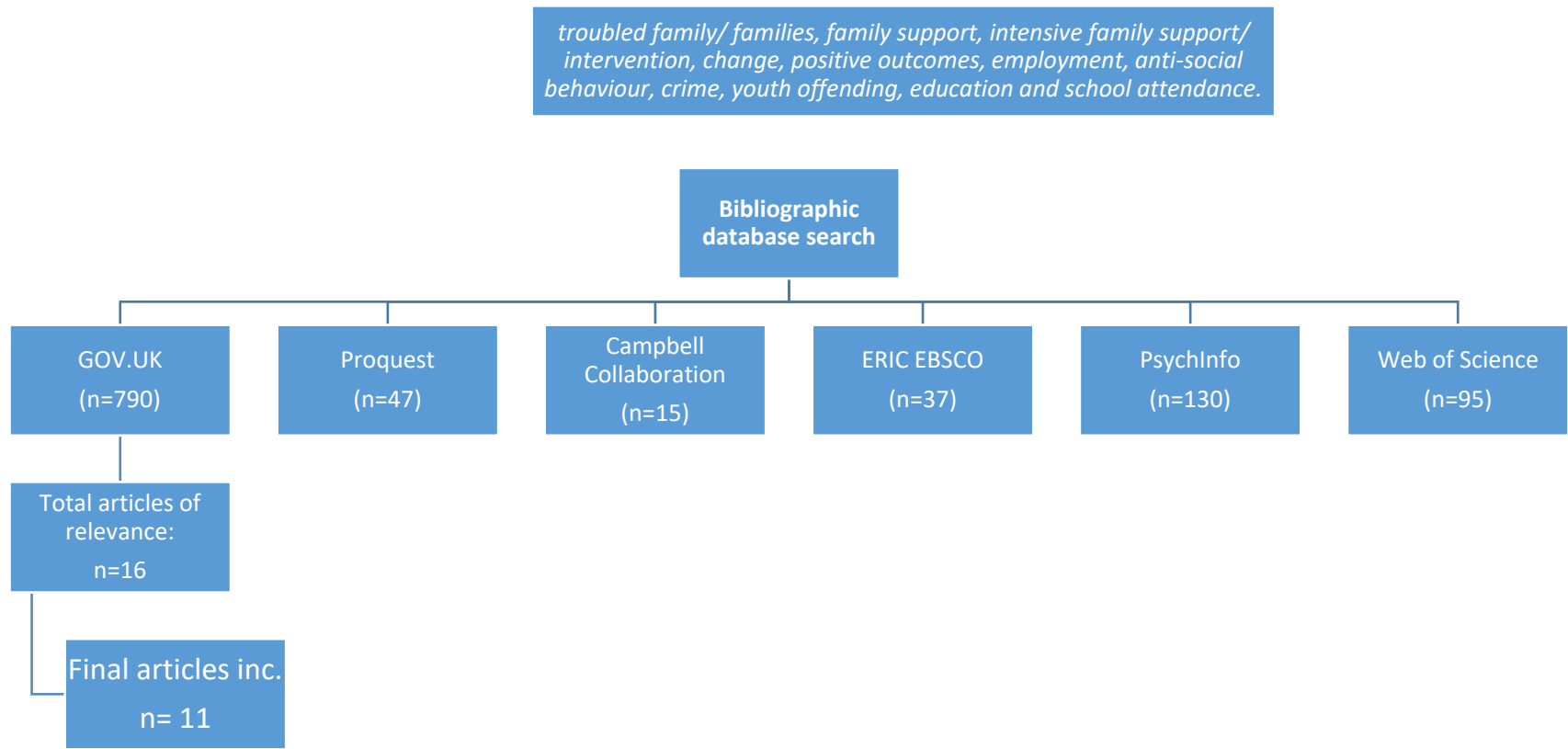
Other theories:

Are there other ways you think the TF program supported your family towards positive outcomes/ change?

Are there other ways you think the LA/ TF program could support families to be supported towards positive outcomes/ change?

Are there any other factors, that perhaps we have not spoken about which supported your family towards positive change/ outcomes?

Appendix 6 – SEARCH STRATEGY FOR REALIST SYNTHESIS



Did the Troubled Families Programme (TFP) intervention contribute to positive change and outcomes being achieved for families worked with within a local authority, if so, how?



A Realistic Evaluation using parent and professional perspectives.

Volume 1: Yuvender Prashar
EP SERVICE DEVELOPMENT DAY – 12.07.17

What is the TFP (Phase 1)?

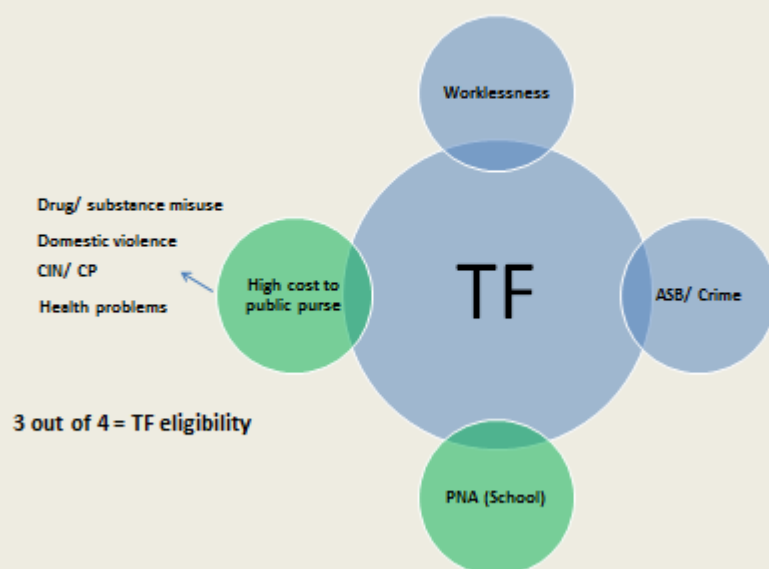
Troubled Families Programme is a targeted intervention approach for families with multiple problems, including crime, anti-social behaviour, school truancy, unemployment, mental health problems and domestic abuse.

FAMILY INTERVENTION FACTORS:

1. A dedicated worker, dedicated to a family
2. Practical 'hands-on' support
3. A persistent, assertive and challenging approach
4. Considering the family as a whole – gathering the intelligence
5. Common purpose and agreed action.

DCLG, (2012) *Working with Troubled Families: a guide to the evidence and good practice*

What are 'Troubled Families'?



TFP Phase 1: success criteria

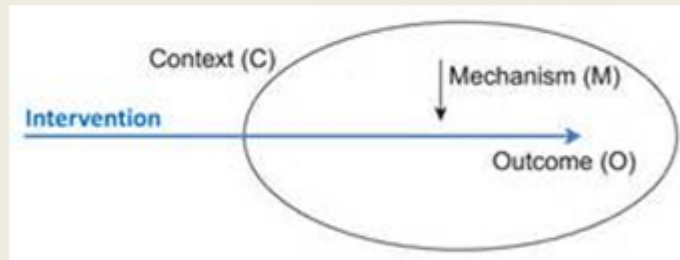
Troubled family criteria (Phase 1)	Outcomes (Payment-by-results)
Involved in crime and anti-social behaviour	At least a 50% reduction in anti-social behaviour across the household in the last 6 months. OR Overall level of offending across all under 18-year-olds in the household has reduced their level of proven offending by at least 33% in the last 6 months, in comparison to their average level of proven offending in the previous 6 months.
Have children not in school	All children in the household who are in school, a Pupil Referral Unit or Alternative Provision have had fewer than three fixed term exclusions and less than 15% unauthorised absences in the last 3 consecutive terms; and All children in the household who are not on the school roll have moved into a school, Pupil Referral Unit or alternative provision, have had fewer than three fixed term exclusions and less than 15% unauthorised absences in the last 3 consecutive terms.
Have an adult on out of work benefits	An adult in the household has volunteered for the Work Programme or has been attached to the European Social Fund Provision in the last 6 months. An adult in the household to move off out of work benefits and into continuous employment.
Cause high costs to the public purse	These were not directly included in the payment-by-results scheme as they were recognised to be factors that assist in the identification of troubled families and are thus likely to improve if education, employment and crime factors are addressed.

Emergent hypotheses

- o **(H1)** The tracking data for Phase 1 of the TF programme within [REDACTED] appears to assist in 'turning round' some families, but not all.
- o **(H2)** There are specific factors, conditions, contexts and mechanisms that are conducive to the TF programme producing the effect.
- o **(H3)** The observed effect is not related to the TF intervention

Research methodology

- REALISTIC EVALUATION (Pawson and Tilley, 1997)



"What works, for whom, and in what circumstances?"

Research aims

- How well supported are the TFP assumed programme theories in the literature? (Realist Synthesis)
- Was the TFP intervention responsible for positive outcomes in families that achieved?
- What contexts and mechanisms are conducive for producing positive outcomes (as recognised by the TFP)?

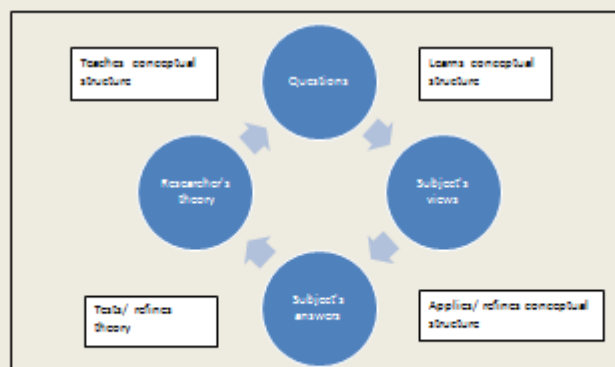
“Programme theories”

Programmes are theories enacted

- TFP authors have made assumed programme theories explicit:
 - Dedicated FSW as an enabler for change
 - Offering practical, hands on support locates work to those areas that the service user experiences as priority
 - Families need to be worked with in a persistent, assertive and challenging approach
 - To enable positive and sustained change, the needs of the family need to be considered as a ‘whole’
 - To enable positive and sustained change, common purposes and agreed actions must be established between family and their support worker

Data collection

- 4 Realist interviews were conducted
 - 2 x parents
 - 2 x practitioners (Family Support Workers)



Data analysis

- Hybrid thematic analysis
 - Template analysis approach to deductive analysis
 - Inductive analysis of subject's responses to elicit alternative programme theories

Findings

- The aim of Realistic Evaluation is to:
 - Appraise, validate, falsify or refine theory
 - Typically presented in a series of CMOCs that derive from Realist Synthesis and Data Collection
 - CMOC – Context, Mechanism and Outcome Configurations

Findings PT 1: Dedicated FSW

Embryonic programme theory (elicited from realist synthesis)	Refined Programme Theory (elicited through realist interview)
<p>OUTCOME: Increased positive familial engagement with family support service.</p> <p>Increased likelihood of disclosures from family during assessment process leads to more robust assessment of need and therefore better tailored interventions and outcomes</p> <p>CONTEXT: Troubled Families Programme provides family experiencing multiple adversities with a dedicated family support worker to intensively engage, assess and promote positive change for the focus family</p> <p>MECHANISM: Parents / families feel supported with negotiating the multiple 'fields of forces' that impact on them.</p> <p>Family support worker has time and reflexivity to allow parent/ families to rethink their adversities and 'open up' to relevant support options</p>	<p>OUTCOME: Increased positive familial engagement with family support service and the development of a trusting relationship with a neutral support agent.</p> <p>Increased likelihood of disclosures from family during assessment process leads to more robust assessment of need and therefore better tailored interventions and outcomes</p> <p>CONTEXT: Troubled Families Programme provides family experiencing multiple adversities with a dedicated family support worker to intensively engage, assess, promote and maintain current positive changes for the focus family in a designated way.</p> <p>MECHANISM: Parents / families feel supported with negotiating the multiple 'fields of forces' that impact on them via an incremental package of support.</p> <p>Family support worker has time and reflexivity to allow parent/ families to rethink their adversities and 'open up' to relevant support options by assuming several roles including: 'problemholder', 'prompter' and 'gatekeeper'</p>

Findings PT 2: PHAS

Embryonic programme theory (elicited from realist synthesis)	Refined Programme Theory (elicited through realist interview)
<p>OUTCOME: Parents, carers and families experience a raised sense of relational and social capital because of increased knowledge and skills base afforded through opportunities the PSW facilitates during practical support sessions which leads to better engagement with plans and increased chances of achieving positive outcomes as outlined by TFP success criteria</p> <p>CONTEXT: Troubled Families Programme provides family experiencing multiple adversities with a dedicated family support worker who facilitates practical/ hands-on support</p> <p>MECHANISM: Family experience reduced sense of burden within the household (anxieties are somewhat alleviated) as PSW has modelled/ scaffolded how to address common household tasks</p> <p>Family builds relationships with key worker, other family members and other professionals supporting the delivery of practical support</p> <p>Parents develop skills and knowledge to manage household demands with a child-focus permeating throughout</p>	<p>OUTCOME: Parents, carers and families experience a raised sense of relational and social capital because of increased knowledge and skills base afforded through opportunities the PSW facilitates during accessible practical support sessions which leads to better engagement with plans and increased chances of achieving positive outcomes as outlined by TFP success criteria</p> <p>CONTEXT: Troubled Families Programme provides family experiencing multiple adversities with a dedicated family support worker who facilitates practical/ hands-on support to divert from malevolent generational bonds</p> <p>MECHANISM: Family experience reduced sense of burden within the household (anxieties are somewhat alleviated) as PSW has modelled/ scaffolded how to address common household tasks</p> <p>Family builds relationships with key worker, other family members and other professionals supporting the delivery of practical support through experiencing achievement and raised self-concept</p> <p>Parents develop skills and knowledge to manage household demands with a sense of pride and a child-focus permeating throughout</p>

Findings PT 3: PAC approach

Embryonic programme theory (elicited from realist synthesis)	Refined Programme Theory (elicited through realist interview)
<p>OUTCOME: Family is better able to work towards positive outcomes as referenced within the success criteria for Phase 1 of the TM.</p> <p>Family members develop skills following increased sense of personal agency.</p> <p>RW better able to apply interventions which are effective and relative to families' needs.</p> <p>Reduction in prevalence of long-standing difficulties for the family thus leading to better outcomes overall.</p> <p>CONTEXT: Phase 1 of the Troubled Families programme works with families identified in a persistent, assertive and challenging way.</p> <p>MECHANISM: Service users feel empowered by the RW's focus on their strengths to positively negotiate the adversities/ vulnerabilities being experienced.</p> <p>Service users are 'challenged' via an intervention/ational form of encouragement that implies potential for growth and thus supports exercise of personal agency.</p> <p>The continuity and high frequency of involvement between RW and family leads to a more robust understanding of family practices which in turn promotes mutual understanding of families' needs.</p> <p>A mutual understanding of needs between the RW and family creates a sense of openness which supports engagement with plans and ongoing dialogue.</p> <p>The persistence and high frequency of involvement between RW and family leads to timely responses to acute crises or emergent difficulties for family.</p>	<p>OUTCOME: Family is better able to work towards positive outcomes as referenced within the success criteria for Phase 1 of the TM as there are fewer opportunities for resistance to intervention due to persistence from RW.</p> <p>Family members develop skills following increased sense of personal agency and experience of gradual change.</p> <p>RW better able to apply interventions which are effective and relative to families' needs due to better working with high intensity involvement and contact.</p> <p>Reduction in prevalence of long-standing difficulties for the family thus leading to better outcomes overall.</p> <p>CONTEXT: Phase 1 of the Troubled Families programme works with families identified in a persistent, assertive and challenging way.</p> <p>MECHANISM: Service users feel empowered by the RW's focus on their strengths to positively negotiate the adversities/ vulnerabilities being experienced.</p> <p>Service users are 'challenged' via an intervention/ational form of encouragement that implies potential for growth and thus supports exercise of personal agency, particularly in cases where adults within the family have a reduced capacity to facilitate change or where family units appear to have 'gone away'.</p> <p>The continuity and high frequency of involvement between RW and family leads to a more robust understanding of family practices which in turn promotes a mutual understanding of families' needs.</p> <p>A mutual understanding of needs between RW and family creates a sense of openness and rapport for RW which supports engagement with plans and ongoing dialogue.</p> <p>The persistence and high frequency of involvement between RW and family leads to timely responses to acute crises or emergent difficulties for family and therefore reduced delays in response and support being implemented.</p>

Findings PT 4: FAAW

Embryonic programme theory (elicited from realist synthesis)	Refined Programme Theory (elicited through realist interview)
<p>OUTCOME: Family feels their whole needs are understood and therefore more likely to engage with interventions/ support services available.</p> <p>Families are likely to experience a reduction in adversities experienced.</p> <p>Family support workers understand the holistic needs of the family and are therefore able to work with a continuum of needs.</p> <p>CONTEXT: Phase 1 of the Troubled Families Programme delivers intensive family support that is underpinned by a robust/ holistic understanding of the focus family.</p> <p>MECHANISM: Families have a single point of access that allows for the assessment, identification and intervention for multiple adversities that are being experienced.</p> <p>Integrated family support worker develops a nuanced understanding of the 'whole family' that extends beyond standardised assessment procedures.</p> <p>Both family support worker and family members are informed of the interrelated nature between individual vulnerabilities and overall family functioning.</p> <p>Families feel they can access appropriate support services in a designated way.</p>	<p>OUTCOME: <u>Family feels their whole needs are understood and therefore more likely to engage with interventions/ support services available.</u></p> <p>Families are likely to experience a reduction in adversities experienced due to each individual's needs being recognised and supported.</p> <p><u>Family support workers understand the holistic needs of the family and are therefore able to work with a continuum of needs.</u></p> <p>CONTEXT: Phase 1 of the Troubled Families Programme delivers intensive family support that is underpinned by a robust/ holistic understanding of the focus family.</p> <p>MECHANISM: Families have a single point of access that allows for the holistic assessment, identification and intervention for multiple adversities that are being experienced.</p> <p>Integrated family support worker develops a nuanced and empathetic understanding of the 'whole family' that extends beyond standardised assessment procedures.</p> <p>Both family support worker and family members are informed of the interrelated nature between individual vulnerabilities and overall family functioning.</p> <p>Families feel they can access appropriate support services in a designated way.</p>

Findings PT 5: CP + AA

Embryonic programme theory (elicited from realist synthesis)	Refined Programme Theory (elicited through realist interview)
<p>OUTCOME: Family works collaboratively with the family support worker to facilitate positive change</p> <p>Family members feel more competent to negotiate adversities that are being experienced</p> <p>CONTEXT: The Troubled Families programme is underpinned by a consistent approach to assessing, monitoring and reviewing the needs of families worked with through mutually agreed intervention plans</p> <p>MECHANISM: A shared understanding of needs integrated into the plan increases a sense of validation for family</p> <p>Family experiences achievement via concrete sub-goals that increase motivation to sustain positive changes being made</p> <p>Family support worker motivated to continue working with family as they respond to intervention plan and achieve positive outcomes</p> <p>Progress being made within family intervention creates and develops a sense of self-concept and personal agency related to parenthood for parents/ carers</p>	<p>OUTCOME: Family works collaboratively with the family support worker to facilitate positive change through a mutually agreed plan</p> <p>Family members feel more competent to negotiate adversities that are being experienced</p> <p>CONTEXT: The Troubled Families programme is underpinned by a consistent approach to assessing, monitoring and reviewing the needs of families worked with through mutually agreed intervention plans</p> <p>MECHANISM: A shared understanding of needs integrated into the plan increases a sense of validation for family and fosters a sense of partnership</p> <p>Family experiences achievement via person-centred concrete sub-goals with incentives that increase motivation to sustain positive changes being made</p> <p>Family support worker motivated to continue working with family as they respond to intervention plan and achieve positive outcomes</p> <p>Experiences of personal successes and overall family progress being made within family intervention creates and develops a sense of self-concept and personal agency related to parenthood for parents/ carers</p> <p>Parents feel motivated by the need to de-escalate their situation</p> <p>Family has a plan of how to achieve better outcomes for the family unit</p>

Alternative factors identified

- Family support worker receiving frequent professional supervision
- Family support worker reported incidental support whilst they were located within a multi-disciplinary team to be conducive to furthering their understanding of needs within the family and therefore how to collaborate and intervene more effectively.
- Some instances, family support worker views 'troubles' within families which may be biased towards their own value judgements and expectations rather than the criterion-set within the programme
- Where families already have existing and supportive networks around their family (i.e. school and work) then this was reported to be supportive in enhancing overall support package for the family unit
- A family support worker reported how the payment-by-results framework facilitated a competitive climate among colleagues and different areas within the city, to this end, it was reported that this motivated family support workers to strive to achieve positive outcomes for the family which were driven by personal targets.
- The willingness of the family appeared to be an important context for family support workers who reported that they were far more inclined to persist and support families where families were demonstrating steps to progress and act upon professional advice given.

Broad conclusions

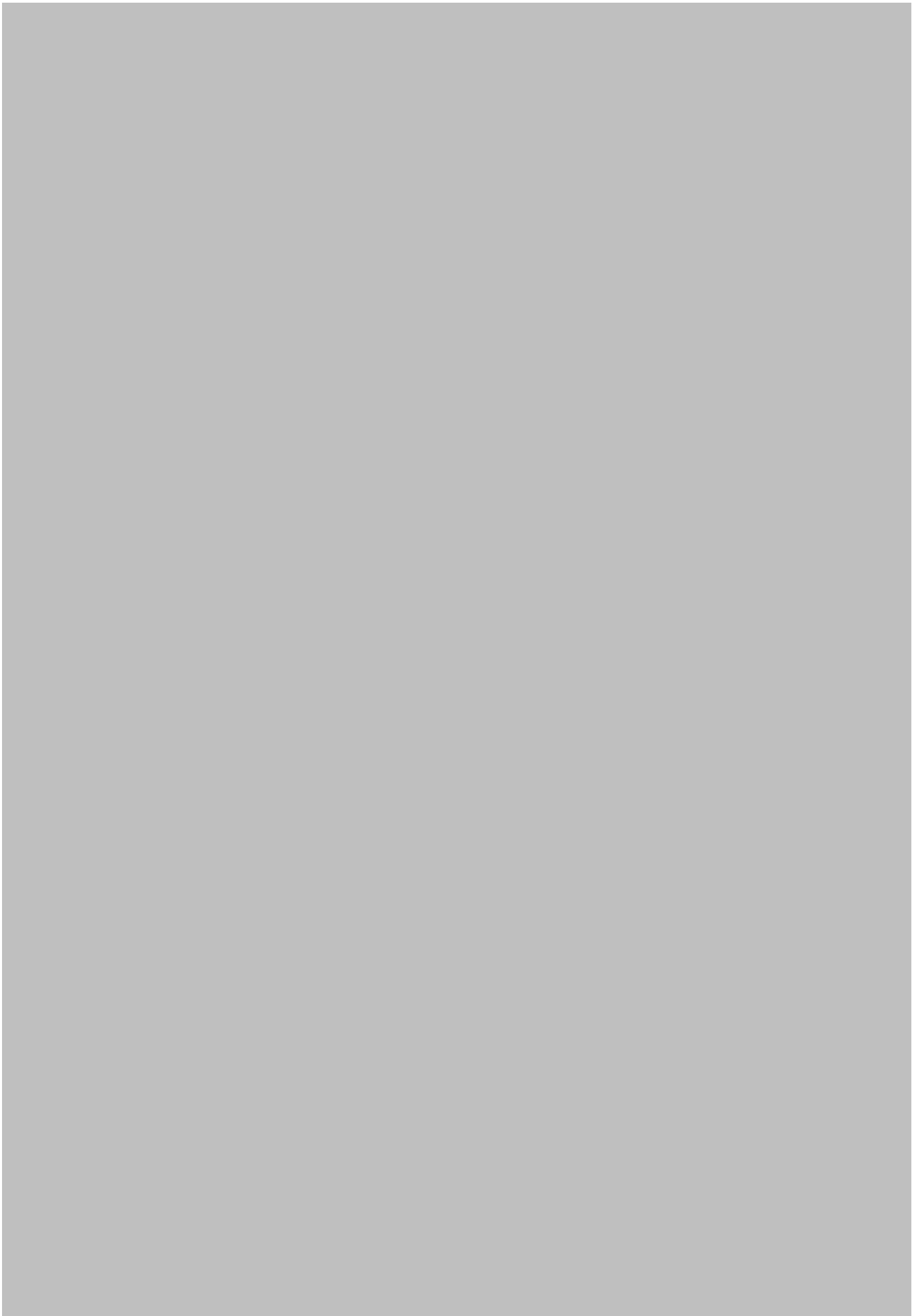
- PTs that are assumed to underpin Phase 1 of TFP have a strong theoretical evidence base within the literature (Theory validation)
- Data collected from subjects either validated or refined theoretical understanding of what worked, who for, and how during Phase 1 of TFP in [REDACTED]

Implications

- Understanding of generative mechanisms that facilitate positive and sustained change for families
- FSW training / reflective practice sessions?
- Supervision of FSW by EP service
- What is the TFP then?

Limitations

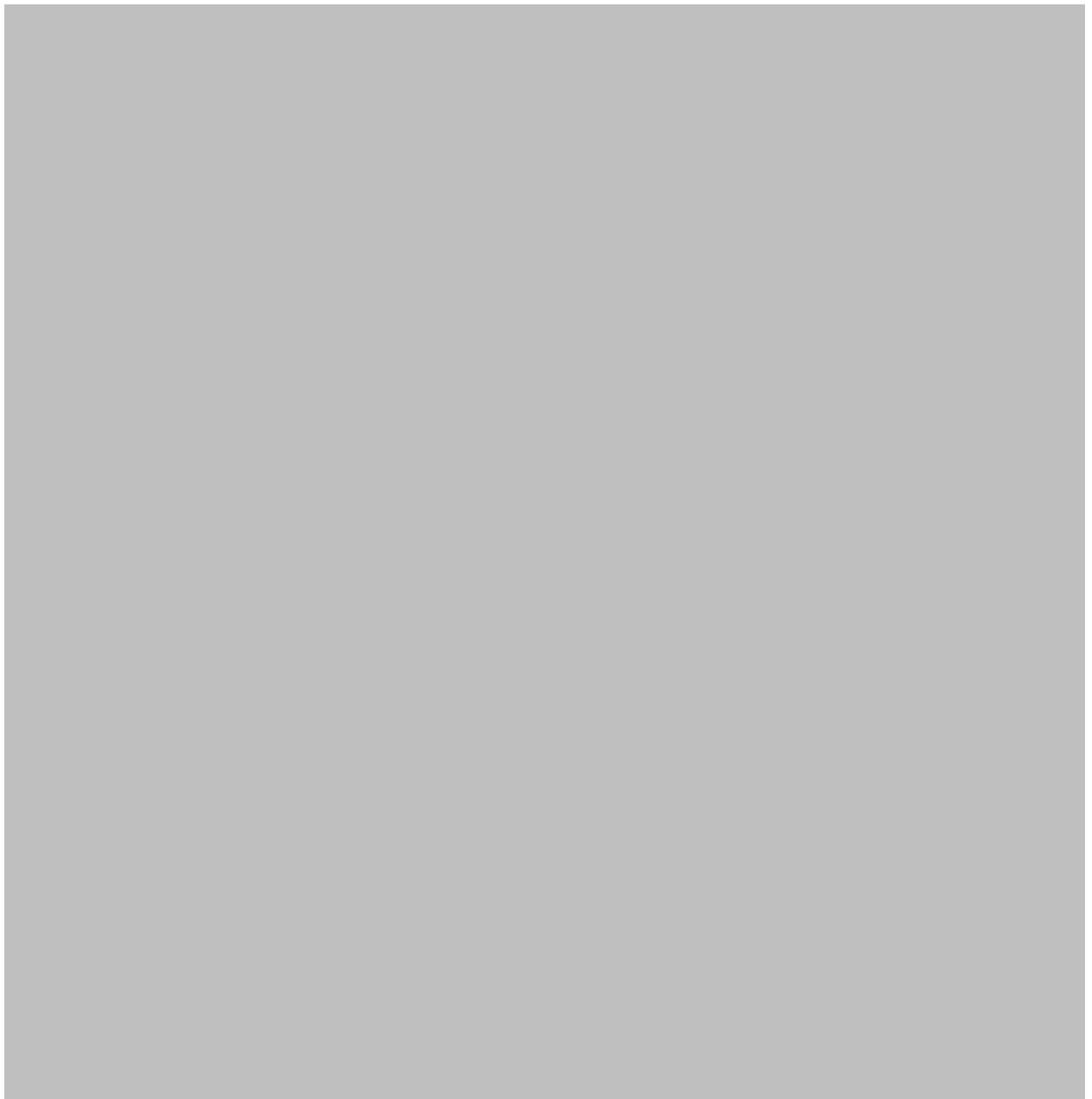
- Competing literature standpoints around TFP
- No standardised way of 'doing' RE
- 'Troubled families' are hard to reach (all p were female)
- No CYP views included in data collection
- No alternative stakeholder views included in data collection
- Paucity of comparable realist syntheses
- The potential for a vast amount of CMOCs missed



Appendix 9: Overview of articles included within Realist Synthesis (RS)

Author(s)	Synopsis	Method	Contribution to RS
Bunting et al (2015)	An exploration of parent's experiences of multiple adversities and their differing conceptualisations	Qualitative study Biographical / narrative approach	Identification and development of embryonic programme theories to present to stakeholders within realist interview
Forrester et al (2008)	Evaluation of an intensive family preservation service.	Mixed-methods (Quasi experimental design with some qualitative interviews)	Relevance of 'crisis intervention theory', motivational interviewing and solution-focused approaches to supporting families experiencing multiple adversities. Identification of embryonic CMOCs to be tested with TFP stakeholders.
Parr (2015)	An exploration of how the relationship between family support worker and service-user (parents) is established and maintained	Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from an Intensive Intervention Project, a longitudinal qualitative case study project and a review of the National Evaluation of Intensive Family Support Projects (2004-2008 by the DCLG).	Identification of embryonic CMOCs pertinent to the assumed theory regarding the role of the dedicated family support worker in relation to achieving positive outcomes for families worked with.
Polkki et al (2016)	An exploration of the critical factors within intensive family support work that are associated with positive outcomes	Critical realist approach to analysing case outcomes for troubled parents and their children referred to intensive family support services.	Identification and development of embryonic programme theories of what, how, why and whom for intensive family work works for, to present to stakeholders within realist interview

Morris (2013)	Examining the experiences and shared narratives of families using multiples services for a range of adversities	Series of in-depth qualitative family interviews Grounded theory approach with Content Analysis	Identification of embryonic CMOCs pertinent to the assumed theory regarding the role of the dedicated family support worker and the importance of practical support in relation to achieving positive outcomes for families worked with.
Boddy et al (2016)	Considering family experiences of 'trouble' and how they are recognised within policy and practice of intensive family support	In-depth interviews with a range of stakeholders	Identification of embryonic CMOCs relevant to how the TFP is delivered to be tested with TFP stakeholders.
Mason (2012)	Parent's experiences of using an intensive family support service	Exploratory qualitative case study to provide insights into service characteristics that were important for service users	Identification of potential context-mechanism that were relevant in promoting positive change for families.
Hardy and Darlington (2008)	Exploring what parents valued from their experiences of successful intensive family support work	In-depth interviews utilising a critical ecological perspective	Identification of contexts and mechanisms that parents reported be conducive towards working positively with their respective intensive family support services.
Batty and Flint (2012)	Conceptualising the CMOCs of intensive family support projects	Realistic evaluation approach focused on review of previous experiences across multiple intensive family support programs.	Explicit identification of context, mechanisms and outcomes associated with successful intensive family support interventions
Suarez (1996)	Articles excluded from final RS due to irrelevant content and/ or full text being unavailable		
Piquero (2008)			
Thornberry (2008)			



Appendix 11: Template Analysis a priori themes (theories) elicited from the Realist Synthesis

Programme theory 1 – The dedicated family support worker as an enabler for change

Increased positive familial engagement with family support service (OUTCOME)

Increased likelihood of disclosures from family during assessment process leads to more robust assessment of need and therefore better tailored interventions and outcomes (OUTCOME)

- Troubled Families Programme provides family experiencing multiple adversities with a dedicated family support worker to engage, assess and promote positive change for the focus family (CONTEXT)
 - o Parents / families feel supported with negotiating the multiple 'fields of forces' that impact on them. (MECHANISM)
 - o Family support worker has time and reflexivity to allow parent/ families to rethink their adversities and 'open up' to relevant support options (MECHANISM)

Programme theory 2– Offering practical / hands-on support

Parents, carers and families experience a raised sense of relational and social capital because of increased knowledge and skills base afforded through opportunities the FSW facilitates during practical support sessions which leads to better engagement with plans and increased chances of achieving positive outcomes as outlined by TFP success criteria (OUTCOME)

- Troubled Families Programme provides family experiencing multiple adversities with a dedicated family support worker who facilitates practical/ hands-on support (CONTEXT)
 - o Family experience reduced sense of burden within the household (anxieties are somewhat alleviated) as FSW has modelled/ scaffolded how to address common household tasks (MECHANISM)
 - o Family builds relationships with key worker, other family members and other professionals supporting the delivery of practical support (MECHANISM)
 - o Parents develop skills and knowledge to manage household demands with a child-focus permeating throughout (MECHANISM)

Programme theory 3– Adopting a persistent, assertive and challenging approach

Family is more able to work towards positive outcomes as referenced within the success criteria for Phase 1 of the TFP. (OUTCOME)

Family members develop skills following increased sense of personal agency (OUTCOME)

FSW better able to apply interventions that are effective and relative to families' needs. (OUTCOME)

Reduction in prevalence of longstanding difficulties for the family, thus leading to better outcomes overall. (OUTCOME)

- Phase 1 of the Troubled Families programme works with families identified in a persistent, assertive and challenging way (CONTEXT)
 - Service users feel empowered by the FSW's focus on their strengths to positively negotiate the adversities/ vulnerabilities being experienced
 - Service users are 'challenged' via a non-confrontational form of encouragement that implies potential for growth and thus supports a sense of personal agency
 - The continuity and high frequency of involvement between FSW and family leads to a more robust understanding of family practices which in turn promotes a mutual understanding of families' needs
 - A mutual understanding of needs between the FSW and family creates a sense of openness which supports engagement with plans and ongoing dialogue
 - The persistence and high frequency of involvement between FSW and family leads to timely responses to acute crises or emergent difficulties for family (MECHANISMS)

Programme theory 4- Understanding the family as a 'whole'

Family feels their whole needs are understood and therefore more likely to engage with interventions/ support services available. (OUTCOME)

Families are likely to experience a reduction in adversities experienced (OUTCOME)

Family support workers understand the holistic needs of the family and are therefore able to work with a continuum of needs. (OUTCOME)

- Phase 1 of the Troubled Families Programme delivers intensive family support that is underpinned by a robust / holistic understanding of the focus family. (CONTEXT)
 - Families have a single point of access that allows for the assessment, identification and intervention for multiple adversities that are being experienced.
 - Integrated family support worker develops a nuanced understanding of the 'whole family' that extends beyond standardised assessment procedures.

- Both family support worker and family members are informed of the interrelated nature between individual vulnerabilities and overall family functioning
- Families feel they can access appropriate support services in a destigmatised way (MECHANISMS)

Programme theory 5- Establishing common purposes and agreed actions

Family works collaboratively with the family support worker to facilitate positive change (OUTCOME)

Family members feel more competent to negotiate adversities that are being experienced (OUTCOME)

- The Troubled Families programme is underpinned by a consistent approach to assessing, monitoring and reviewing the needs of families worked with through mutually agreed intervention plans (CONTEXT)
- A shared understanding of needs integrated into the plan increases a sense of validation for family
- Family experiences achievement via concrete sub-goals that increase motivation to sustain positive changes being made
- Family support worker motivated to continue working with family as they respond to intervention plan and achieve positive outcomes
- Progress being made within family intervention creates and develops sense of self-concept and personal agency related to parenthood for parents/ carers (MECHANISMS)