

Non-statutory agencies

Non Statutory Agencies, such as Children's Centres, Law Centre, Citizens Advice, Food Banks, Drop Zone, etc, have a diverse number of different reasons for involvement with Focus Family and it follows that what they see as relevant outcomes will also vary. However, the aim of Focus Family work is to reform service provision through offering more holistic and co-ordinated support to families.

Children's Centres provide a core part of the Focus Family offer and this includes:

- A contract to deliver services agreed in the tendering process
- Funding to provide agreed services
- Provide Family Intervention Services
- Co-ordinate a whole family approach
- Develop services according to local need
- Challenge a family's behaviours
- Be persistent, honest and consistent with families
- Liaise with other agencies
- Offer parenting programmes with a record of high uptake
- Many staff are Domestic Violence Champions and can offer support as appropriate and necessary
- Regularly run DV Toolkit programmes
- Encourage partner organisations to be part of the Team around the Family
- Offer an outcome focussed assessment
- Links with Adult Education programmes

The nature of non-statutory agencies means that they are often better placed to provide:

- A clearer, overall picture of the family's needs and circumstances
- Engagement with families who have often proven challenging to engage with
- Work well together with other agencies due to existing partnership work
- Have many services already available that families can be signposted to/ referred to and supported in accessing
- Good knowledge of benefits and systems

- Can negotiate and advocate for families
- Promote the benefits of a Focus Family way of working
- Work to address the cause and effects of poverty

Through long term co-ordinated support that acts on both the symptoms and causes of challenges in a family's life non-statutory agencies would reduce the time spent on the "revolving door" that many families find themselves stuck in.

CAB, for example, spend a lot of time advising customers on Benefit Sanctions. The Law centre is working on a pilot in the Carlisle and Eden area working specifically to address the needs of Focus Family clients and has shown success in addressing financial hardships. If early help is in place through the Focus Family approach, then issues which lead to Benefit Sanctions, such as chaotic lifestyle, will be addressed and modified to (hopefully) a more manageable level.

Focus Family asks partners from the non-statutory sector to:

- Develop an awareness of the Focus Family work and its benefits for clients
- Consider the needs of the whole family and not just the person presenting with a problem
- Contact the Focus Family team for further support
- Share information as appropriate
- Attend Team around the Family meetings as necessary
- Work with Focus Family to prioritise service provision for families most in need of support