



# Information sheet

## Improving outcomes for vulnerable families

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[www.aft.org.uk](http://www.aft.org.uk)

### Summary

Services for UK families [1] are at a crossroads. Next steps in policy, workforce training, service design and practice development will determine whether policy aspirations are translated into action and families' needs are met.

The UK boasts some family-focused, family-sensitive services, teams and staff trainings of international renown – but provision is piecemeal and too often woefully inadequate. Recent surveys by AFT and others confirm an acute shortage of specialists able to deliver and support therapeutic work with families experiencing complex and serious difficulties. Too many regions and service areas offer inadequate workforce trainings, training pathways and service frameworks to support staff at all levels in safe and effective working with vulnerable children and adults and their families. Too many families do not have access to supports that would help them move forward in their lives.

Developing systemic family-focused services and practitioner skills transforms lives, is a priceless social task AND makes sound economic sense [2].

Research shows it

- **enables** people in close relationship to help each other
- **builds** family understandings and strengths
- **promotes** mental health, well being and recovery
- **develops** individual and family resilience
- **resists** pathologising human distress
- **improves** risk assessment and intervention
- **prevents** family difficulties escalating into crises
- **responds** to crises if they do occur in ways that fit each family's strengths and needs
- **involves** families and carers in care and service planning
- **supports** social inclusion through sensitive engagement with those currently underrepresented in mainstream services
- **encourages** constructive collaboration between professionals
- **delivers** long-term reductions in health and social care costs

[1] AFT recognises that different cultures and groups have different ideas of what 'family' means. AFT takes 'family' to describe any group of people who care about each other and define themselves as such. As well as parents and children of all ages, they may work with grandparents, siblings, uncles and aunts, cousins, friends, carers, other professionals – whoever people identify as important to their lives.

[2] For details see AFT Information Sheet: Research. Also visit [www.aft.org.uk](http://www.aft.org.uk)