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Intensive Family Intervention and the Problem Figuration of 'Troubled Families'

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Abstract

This article examines how intensive family interventions in England since 1997, including the Coalition Government's Troubled Families Programme, are situated in a contemporary problem figuration of 'anti-social' or 'troubled' families that frames and justifies the utilisation of different models of intensive family intervention. The article explores how techniques of classification and estimation, combined with the controversial use of 'research' evidence in policy making are situated within a 'rational fiction' that constructs 'anti-social' families in particular ways. The article illustrates how this problem figuration has evolved during the New Labour and Coalition administrations in England, identifying their similarities and differences. It then presents findings from a study of intensive family intervention strategies and mechanisms in a large English city to illustrate how this national level discourse and policy framework relates to developing localised practice and the tensions and ambiguities that arise.

Key words: Anti-social Behaviour, Intensive Family Intervention, Local Practice, Problem Figuration, Troubled Families

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Introduction

In Western European nations including the UK, France and the Netherlands, long histories of evolving discourses on problematic households and appropriate forms of intervention and supervision continue to be manifested in contemporary policy rationales frameworks. In England this includes the current Troubled Families programme, while France has implemented new targeted family service interventions and the city of Amsterdam has experimented with the physical segregation and intensive surveillance of 'problem families'.

Tackling social exclusion and addressing anti-social behaviour (ASB) were priorities for the UK New Labour administrations between 1997 and 2010 (Flint, 2006; Millie, 2009a and 2009b; Squires, 2008). New legislative sanctioning mechanisms such as Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), Parenting Orders, injunctions and Dispersal Orders and the 'Respect' agenda culminated in the Respect Action Plan (Respect Task Force, 2006) which confirmed New Labour's prioritisation of anti-social behaviour within its social policy programmes. However, in the latter years of New Labour, emphasis shifted towards intensive family intervention projects as a flagship mechanism for tackling the problematic conduct of the most vulnerable families.

Intensive family intervention projects were premised on a 'triple-track' approach of early intervention, 'non-negotiable' support and enforcement action if support was refused or progress not made (Respect Task Force, 2006). The projects ranged in the sites and intensity of interventions, from 24-hour support in a bespoke residential unit to weekly visits to families in their own homes, and are delivered by local authorities, registered social landlords

and charities. They were based on a 'key worker' building relationships with family members, diagnosing the causes of anti-social behaviour and vulnerability, working with families and co-ordinating multi-agency packages of interventions (see Batty and Flint, 2012; Flint, 2012 for an overview of models and a summary of evaluation evidence). Over 250 of these projects were established in England through the Respect Action Plan and Youth Task Force Action Plan and other programmes, while similar projects were established in the 'Breaking the Cycle' programme of the Scottish Government and the early intervention projects introduced by the Welsh Assembly Government. Other forms of intensive family support, which included key worker and domestic visit elements, were promoted between 1997 and 2010; for example, Family Nurse Partnerships. But our focus in this article is on intensive family interventions that are inherently linked to anti-social behaviour: as the rationale and trigger of referral to the projects; as a mechanism for enacting conditionality and engagement (for example risk of eviction, ASBOs or Parenting Orders); and as a key focus of the project interventions.

The UK Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government, elected in 2010, argued that more effective responses to ASB were required and critiqued New Labour's mechanisms (particularly ASBOs) for failing to address underlying causes (Home Office, 2011; 2012). Initially, the Coalition's policies were premised on a 'rehabilitation revolution' focused on prevention and 'a second chance society' (Ministry of Justice, 2010; HM Government, 2012) although these actually retained an emphasis on early intervention, whole family approaches based on a key worker model and 'non-negotiable' support, enacted through family intervention projects. The Coalition has not specified a specific model to be used, although guidance advocates 'evidenced based programmes' such as Family Functional Therapy or Family Intervention Projects. The Government also aimed to increase support beyond the welfare system and to reduce top down state intervention (Ministry of Justice, 2010; HM

Government, 2012): enacted through localism, an enhanced interventionist role for community, voluntary and private sectors, a more explicit economic paradigm (based on payment by results), and a radical reform of the welfare state. The Coalition Government's Troubled Families Programme, which epitomises these approaches, aims to 'turn around' the lives of 120,000 'troubled families' by April 2015, with all local areas in England required to identify their most 'troubled' families and to appoint a coordinator to lead the redesign of service provision.

This article begins by applying Van Wel's (1992) concept of 'problem figuration' to the construction of anti-social behaviour and the controversies over the use of 'scientific' research in this field and argues that these debates should be situated within a conceptual understanding of the figuration of the problem of anti-social or troubled families and the fictional bias inherent to this project of government, evident in the figurations of New Labour and the Coalition's Troubled Families programme. The article then examines the realities and challenges of localised practice situated within this national figuration, based on empirical research in a Northern English city. It concludes that controversies over specific research outputs or governmental claims and the inability to acknowledge continuing gaps in understanding are part of a longer historical failure to effectively use acquired research knowledge which is inherent to the politics of 'troubled families' (Bond-Taylor, 2014) and the power of fictions and bias within dominant policy narratives.

Problem Figurations of 'Troubled Families' and Interventions

Van Wel's (1992) studies of the history of intensive intervention with families in the Netherlands develops the concept of *problem figuration* to show the socially constructed nature of policy rhetoric and proposed interventions in defining problems, their causes and

the mechanisms to be deployed. Van Wel identifies successive waves of problem figurations, with each figuration based on a critique of the failings of its immediate predecessor (as evidenced in the Coalition's framing of New Labour policies). This process has been explicitly recognised by Hayden and Jenkins (2014) in their depiction of 'troubled families' as a 'wicked problem' that is continually reconceptualised and 're-solved' depending on changes in government. Van Wel also states the essentially ahistorical nature of any contemporary problem figuration, which, for example, fails to acknowledge the long genealogy of state intervention with vulnerable families, such as the Family Service Units that developed during the 20th Century (see Welshman, 2012). Van Wel (1992) argues that the frameworks of intervention (for example, Family Intervention Projects or the Troubled Families Programme) may be coherent and rational as an aligned governmental response to the narrative political construction of ASB and families (supported by the claimed scientific and empirical basis of government's use of research evidence

However, this rationality is also underpinned by assumptions and prioritisations that represent fictional, historically embedded images and representations of the nature of the problem and the targeted subjects of intervention (i.e. 'troubled' families) that reflect the 'structure of bias' in a given period and the wider mechanisms stigmatising troubled families in contemporary discourse (see Bond-Taylor, 2014; Lister, 2014). Van Wel (1992) and Welshman (2012) argue that governmental responses to ASB and family vulnerability are not based on cumulative insight or the rational utilization of increased knowledge. Indeed, evaluation research, despite its controversies and the government's claim to scientific authority, has yet to robustly establish the precise effectiveness or mechanisms of various forms of intervention (Van Wel, 1992).

The problematic nature of the policy knowledge base related to ASB and the efficacy of interventions to address it have long been recognised. Prior (2009) highlights how the

relationship between power and knowledge in this field is manifested through an official governmental empirical 'reality' that denies the ambiguities and gaps in knowledge and fails to account for the disjuncture between policy rhetoric and even officially constructed evidence. Family Intervention Projects have been a site of particular contestation between government and researchers, and indeed, between researchers themselves, with critics such as Garrett (2007) and Gregg (2010) critiquing the methods used to undertake evaluations and the analysis and presentation of findings that exaggerate positive and progressive outcomes for households (see Batty and Flint, 2012). Similarly, Hayden and Jenkins (2014) have critiqued the use of 'policy-based' evidence in governmental justifications for the Troubled Families programme.

The Government continues to imbue its rationales for intensive interventions through a claimed empirical science of quantitative estimation. The rhetorical claim by Iain Duncan Smith (HM Government, 2012) that there were 'hundreds of thousands of individuals and families living profoundly troubled lives marked by multiple disadvantages', was operationalised in the identification of 120,000 troubled families underpinning the Troubled Families programme (Communities and Local Government, 2012), with local authorities provided with indicative numbers of troubled families in their own localities. Lister (2014) challenges the construction and methodology of this estimate and it is not clear how it relates to other estimates, for example the 500,000 'forgotten families' identified by the Riots, Communities and Victims Panel (2012) . The Government also constructs the definition of families to be targeted through its specific eligibility criteria of families with no adults in paid employment, a member in or at risk of offending or a child with poor school attendance (HM Government, 2012). This constructs the private troubles of families that are to be the public troubles of governmental intervention, emphasising reduced problematic personal conduct, improved education and pathways to employment that both New Labour and the Coalition

framed personal responsibility within. These also constitute the priorities for intervention and the indicators that will be deployed to measure 'success.'

The Government articulates definitive costs associated with these families of £9 billion (or £75,000 per family), within a context of a reported 3.2m incidents of ASB in 2010-2011 (Home Office, 2012) and claims to know that this figure 'is likely still to be the tip of the iceberg' (Home Office, 2012: 8). The Government stated that its analysis showed that the Troubled Families Programme should successfully 'turn around' 20,000 families by March 2015 (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012: 10). Governmental updates state the success of the programme, with 62,000 families worked with and 22, 000 families turned around' (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2013a, 2013b). Lister (2014) identifies the power of the initial estimates of troubled families to frame the policy and intervention context, revealing how no local authority identified more troubled families that the central government estimate and how almost a quarter of local authorities identified the exact number of families estimated by central government. As Lister argues, these estimates appear to define the contextual 'reality' of the number of families needing support, driven by the financial imperatives built in to the payment by results mechanism within the Troubled Families programme.

The Government has claimed an authority to define the scale and nature of troubled families in England through the science of these statistics and through the establishment of the Early Intervention Foundation and publication of good practice guidance (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012) which purport to collate and disseminate the empirical evidence base and accumulated knowledge of effective practice. But there has been a striking reluctance to open up this 'scientific' analysis and interpretation to transparency and scrutiny. Freedom of Information requests to establish how the £9 billion/ £75,000 per family figures were calculated failed to establish the methodology (Lister, 2014).

These grey areas between research, and its social scientific basis, and the governmental problem figuration of troubled families are epitomised in the report produced by Louise Casey, the Head of the Troubled Families Unit (Casey, 2012) which was classified by the Government as 'dipstick/informal information gathering' rather than 'formal research' (Bailey, 2012; Ramesh, 2012). Bailey critiqued a shift from 'evidence-based policy' to 'policy by dipstick' (Bailey, 2012; Ramesh, 2012), echoing a similar claim by Gregg (2010) that evidence-based policy had been replaced by 'policy-based evidence'. Casey's report presents an explicitly articulated ambiguity about its social-scientific status. It states that her interviews with 16 case study families 'do not pretend to be an exact science' and that 'this is not formal research and these interviews and the information they gave us is not representative' (Casey, 2012: 5). However, it also directly contradicts these caveats, stating 'it was thought important to listen directly to troubled families in order to *get a true and recent understanding* of the problems they faced, their histories and what the real challenge of 'turning around' *thousands of such families nationwide would entail* (Casey, 2012: 4, emphasis added). The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles, validated the report, claiming that it provided 'real insights into these families' lives' and offered 'a true understanding of the challenges local authorities face' (Ramesh, 2012). Casey claimed that she 'wanted to get to know these families', 'when probed [answers] were clear', that she 'spent a long time listening to [the families] and that she had attempted 'to [get] underneath the skin of these families' (Casey, 2012: 1-3). Leaving aside the volume of empirical and detailed research already undertaken with families (rather than one-off short interviews in an inappropriate and pressurised setting), Casey's report is significant for the narratives, prioritises and assumptions it articulates about troubled families. While Casey claims that 'no judgements are made on these families' this is precisely what her work serves to do.

Casey (2012: 1) identifies the centrality of 'family' as the causal site of problems and explicitly downplays wider structural factors:

> Several families talked of needing a bigger house from the council as a cause of problems for them, or of not getting enough free childcare, or they blamed teachers and schools for failing their children- *when it was clear that their troubles were arising from their home life'* (Casey, 2012: 51, emphasis added).

Structural factors are definitively dismissed (see Williams, 2012 for a critique), despite the body of empirical work on intensive interventions identifying their prominence. Similarly, the complexity of interactions and vulnerability are summarised as 'many of the people we interviewed were just not very good at relationships' (Casey, 2012: 48). The report highlights sexual and physical abuse; arson; a 'majority' of domestic abuse; incest and large numbers of children. It contrasts these families inability to 'recover from and cope with' episodes such as bereavement (Casey, 2012: 3), failing to cite evidence showing that 'other families' are 'not completely derailed' by bereavement'; and directly juxtaposes the case study families with 'normal' individuals (Casey, 2012: 50). Casey's diagnosis confirms Bond-Taylor's (2014, 153) identification of the politics of the Troubled Families Programme as manifested through a discourse of families as dysfunctional, inadequate, irresponsible and anti-social rather than disadvantaged, excluded and vulnerable. But, while Bond-Taylor (2014) also argues that the Troubled Families Programme demonstrates more continuity than divergence with New Labour the rhetorical construction of troubled families actually needs to be placed within the longer historical pervasiveness of these representations.

The report's argument that 'intergenerational transmission of problems…was rife' (Casey, 2012: 46) locates this work in the long and still influential transmitted deprivation theory (Welshman, 2012) and tropes of deviant sexuality and domesticity consistently present since

Victorian times (Wise, 2009; Welshman, 2012). A focus on malingering, household squalor, inadequate parenting and financial management and failure to engage 'appropriately' with welfare services significantly influenced medical, social work professions and voluntary organisations' engagement with families from 1940 onwards (Welshman, 2012).

Casey's report may be located within the broader problem figuration that spans both New Labour and the Coalition, in which the family is identified as a site where 'personhood' is created and the complex inter-related patterns of vulnerability and poverty are acknowledged (Parr, 2011; Millie, 2009a; Gillies, 2014) while, simultaneously a focus on lifestyles, family dynamics and parenting are disassociated from structural determinants and lived realities (Morris and Featherstone, 2010). Although Van Wel argues that problem figurations are often internally logical and rational, it is interesting to note that the gendered figuration of much anti-social behaviour discourse, focusing on the lack of maternal instinct or lone female parents, was not accompanied by gendered forms of supportive intervention that addressed the challenges of mothers or realigned the roles and responsibilities of fathers (Evans, 2012; Holt, 2009; Churchill, 2007).

From National Problem Figuration to the Dilemmas of Localised Practice

The article now examines the importance of local policy interpretations in constructing meaningful practice within national problem figurations and policy frameworks (Bond-Taylor, 2014: 142; Hayden and Jenkins, 2014). The findings in this section are drawn from an ESRC- funded study exploring the delivery of 'Whole Household Interventions' in a large northern English city. The research, conducted in 2012-2013, comprised interviews with over 50 individuals involved in the delivery of the model being used in the city; including Multi Agency Support Teams (MASTs) managers and leaders, intervention workers from a range

of agencies and organisations and seven families subject to whole household interventions. The city has been instrumental in pioneering family intervention initiatives and approaches since the early 2000's, including Family Intervention Projects, resulting in a legacy of projects with different genealogies being delivered. This patchwork of projects is now framed within the architecture of the Troubled Families programme but with a specific emphasis localised emphasis on a key worker- whole household approach as the main mechanism for delivering services to the most vulnerable families in the city, scaled up and mainstreamed through the work of MASTs.

In contrast to historic approaches, which typically involved multiple agencies working with families without sufficient coordination, shared knowledge of underlying issues or the resources needed to make a real difference, the whole household approach is delivered through three MASTs based across the city. These teams work with the whole family and are built on the principle of one key worker for each family. MASTs work with children, young people, and their families to provide a range of services that aim to improve wellbeing, school attendance, learning, behaviour and health care. Their additional remit is to signpost families to other services and support and assist their engagement with these services.

The model adopted in the city appeared, therefore, to draw upon key learning from national research evidence about the importance of a key worker model, pooled resources, agency co-ordination and holistic whole family interventions that were closely aligned with the rationality of the national problem figuration advocating key elements of family intervention models. Specific cumulative learning, such as the need to enable and resource workers to spend increased amounts of time with families, getting to know them and building trust and rapport delivered positive outcomes through facilitating an understanding of the complexity of family situations and a holistic assessment of their needs in order to identify causal factors and underlying issues which had often been hidden from other services. This 'getting to know'

period proved central to enabling intervention workers to develop a support and action plan meeting the needs of the family:

> I think we're really good at making those relationships with families and the trust that you build with them to effect change and I really do think we effect change and make a difference, whether it's a small difference or a big difference, I think we make a lot of change in families and that relationship with them is really good. But again that takes time to do (Intervention Worker)

Similarly, the centrality of addressing families' immediate issues was also prioritised by intervention workers. Providing direct support to families mainly through emotional, practical and financial assistance was valued highly by families:

> She's all right, I'm comfy saying anything to her…she [intervention worker] doesn't come and just say what she wants, she'll listen to you, she has got time to sit and listen, not like some people…she'll talk you through it, she'll not say 'you've got to do it' cos if someone tells me I've got to do it, I won't do it. If I know someone's here to help and if I know someone's here wanting to help then I'll work both ways" (Family Member)

However, the case study also revealed the ambiguities, complexity and limitations of localised practice which are negated in national level problem figurations and policy guidance. Firstly, a genealogy of learning based on cumulative practice in the city was often in tension with the particular genealogy of different agencies and organisational practices with their own histories, challenging the extent to which a new localised regime of practice could be implemented. Although at a strategic level, there were agreed principles and a clear delivery model, 'buy in' at an operational level, embracing new ways of working, was slow to filter down and dislodging traditional working practices and challenging silo approaches were

difficult to overcome, limiting the extent to which families may be 'gripped' and bound within the seamless and coordinated mechanisms of intervention as conceptualised in national policy rationales.

Existing services still tended to take an isolationist approach when addressing individual family members' issues. It was not common for services to identify interdependencies and interlinked problems between family members by working with all the family and inter-agency working between individuals in both MASTs and existing service providers was patchy. In cases where inter-agency working was stronger, this was often based upon positive relationships between key actors that had developed over a long period of time:

> Try and work in partnership and that's where I feel that real partnership working and building trust and rapport with your colleagues is so important, cos what I do then is even if we may not like each other we've got to have that professional relationship and I think that's really important to build that so I pick up the phone and say 'you've sent this in, there's still all these concerns, come on' and we try to work as effectively as we can' (MAST Team Leader)

Furthermore, there was no shared, city-wide understanding of key working. Numerous agencies reported adopting a key worker approach but these descriptions were rarely consistent. Roles presumed (by some services) to encapsulate key working did not fulfil all aspects of the approach and, despite the growing attempts by national and local policy and practice guidance to define and describe key worker roles, there remained a need to articulate what the whole household approach across the city would look like. The lack of knowledge

and understanding about MAST and the key worker role and remit varied within and between services and limited the engagement of some services. For example, some social workers worked closely with MAST workers and valued their contribution to a family case, whilst other services were unclear about the role of MAST and the whole household approach taken by its workers. Knowledge and awareness of education welfare and parenting classes were widespread, but knowledge of the early intervention and prevention work of MAST was often more limited. This limited awareness, and a lack of understanding of the benefits flowing from preventative work, meant that officers in some services were unclear about when or why they would refer a client to MAST.

Assessing the issues faced by the whole family is time consuming, requires a cross cutting multiple domain skill-set and involves an understanding of adult and child focused issues. Levering in appropriate services to deal with the more varied presenting issues for multiple family members requires close linkages with a wider range of services, and a broad commitment to greater multi-agency working. While services, such as MAST, are establishing closer working relations and referral protocols with a host of child focused services, it was clear that there remained work to be done across the city to better join-up adult and children's services.

Beyond the need for enhanced shared learning and definitions and improved coordination there were very significant limitations imposed by limited resources and expertise, which are seldom acknowledged in national policy discourses. One of the functions of key workers in often to identify the range of vulnerabilities impacting upon families which are often excavated as relationships develop:

The reality is reviews often fetch you more problems cos by then you've had more time to start befriending your family more, more issues come out (Intervention Worker)

But this mapping of the range of problems does not necessarily translate into the necessary scale and diversity of interventions in response. It was often the case that support enabled families to function on a daily basis but, in line with the problem figuration of policy identified above negating structural explanations, did not address the underlying causes of the families' problems. Signposting and referral are one of the key components of key working. However, Intervention workers reported a number of difficulties escalating cases to specialist services: "We'll have it escalated to social care when it escalates to social care, social care bat it back down and send it to intervention work and it feeds back to us." Whatever the reasons for the problems in referral, the intervention workers had to 'fill the gap'. Intervention workers reported they very often did not have the specialist expertise relevant to the case but felt they needed to continue to offer support and assistance wherever possible:

Just from experience a few weeks ago I did ask for some support from one of our senior specialists regarding doing a swap in education and 10 days later got nowhere so I ended up doing it myself and did a good job so it makes you think try and do it yourself, I went into the inclusion centre and spoke to somebody high up there and she put me on right road. So it's not always their fault cos they've got that much work on. (Intervention Worker)

This inevitably placed stress on intervention workers and in some cases added to their already full workload. Additionally, the role and status of intervention workers was a source of tension. Often intervention workers were in a position to identify causal factors and action some form of preventative measures, often necessitating the involvement of other specialist

services. However, their knowledge of the families' issues was often overlooked by specialist services who themselves were governed by access thresholds. There was a reported unwillingness of some officers in some services to cede responsibilities to intervention workers. In some cases this could be linked to professional status and grade. This reflects the misunderstanding of the key worker role and the differentiation between the role of key worker and a specialist agency, but this form of tension is likely to become increasingly prevalent as the Troubled Families Programme and wider welfare reform seek to enhance the role of private, voluntary and community organisations in the delivery of interventions.

Rolling out a Whole Household Approach in the city raised a number of challenges and revealed a number of disjunctions with the proposed or presumed links within national policy frameworks between mechanisms and outcomes. The localised differentiation of a Troubled Families programme model and how this is interpreted and delivered is evident (not least in the case study city not articulating the terminology of 'troubled families'). It is also clear that practice knowledge is unevenly shared across organisations (and cumulative knowledge is further threatened by cutbacks in specialist services and the precarity of many experienced practitioners and organisations' funding status). The case study illustrates how key pillars of the Troubled Families programme: short time scales and explicit linear exit routes; clear cut identification of eligible/ appropriate targeted families; measurable quantitative outcome indicators; the financial incentive apparatus (in the context of substantial reductions in budgets); and the perceived positive influences of multi-sectoral delivery; are all challenged by the complex reality of localised dilemmas and experiences of practice. This confirms previous findings (Hayden and Jenkins, 2014; Van Wel, 1992; Welshman 2012) that good practice and cumulative learning within problem figurations and governmental mechanisms are always selective: highlighting the efficacy of particular elements (such as key workers and multi-agency partnerships) while simultaneously denying the primacy of other elements

(such as time, political power and status, resources and the complicated definitions of positive outcomes).

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Conclusions

This article has illustrated how debates about the research and evaluation of intensive family interventions in England since 1997, and more specifically the Coalition Government's recent claims for scientific authority and the particular controversies over Louise Casey's report, need to be located in an understanding that policy is formulated within a particular problem figuration of, 'anti-social' or 'troubled families' (Bond-Taylor, 2014; Hayden and Jenkins, 2014; Van Wel, 1992). Debates between academics and government require a broader understanding that the figuration of ASB in policy and practice is formulated through an inherent relationship between empirical, rational and fictional elements. The continuities and disjunctions (Prior, 2009) in policy narratives and mechanisms between political administrations and between national rhetoric and programme formation and localised practice have also been identified. Many evaluations of intensive interventions have been positive (Batty and Flint, 2012; Hodgkinson and Jones, 2013) and the identification in government guidance (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012) about key factors linked to success: a dedicated worker, practical hands on support, a persistent

approach, the whole-family scope of interventions and common purpose between agencies, is aligned with evaluation evidence.

However, the case study presented in this article identifies a series of unresolved issues about responsibilities, resources, measuring (and valuing) incremental as well as transformative outcomes and how the increasingly complex landscape of public, private and voluntary/community provision and interactions may be negotiated by families and practitioners (Morris, 2013). The effects of localism and payment by results that are central to the Troubled Families Programme are yet to be determined, as are the impacts of the new Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. The claims and counter-claims about the efficacy of the Troubled Families Programme and intensive family intervention models are the latest instalment in the historic failure to adequately utilise acquired learning. This is often masked by selective claims to the authority of evidence-based policy-making (Hayden and Jenkins, 2014; Van Wel, 1992; Welshman, 2012) within a politics of ASB that invokes fictional bias as a mechanism of power which has an inherent, but very problematic, relationship to knowledge and the claims of scientific evidence-based policy making.

Acquired and cumulative learning will inevitably always be subject to contestation given that discourses of societal problems, including 'troubled families' are inherently political in their construction. However, there are a number of mechanisms through which acquired learning from the genealogies of practice may be protected. Firstly there needs to be recognition that substantial local accumulated experience and expertise risks being ruptured or lost through the discontinuation of funding for projects and initiatives. Secondly, there is a need for stronger and longer governmental 'memories' and application of research evidence: Louise Casey's (2012) report is a classic example of failing to utilise a substantial body of knowledge (albeit a body of knowledge that had, quite appropriately, been subject to critique). Finally problem figurations derive much of their authority from their rational internal

consistency. Thereby, the logical conclusion of the governmental promotion of the key worker model within the Troubled Families programme is that excavating the full range of vulnerabilities, and their causes, experienced by families requires an ambition to meaningfully address the range of structural factors revealed as underpinning their 'troubles.'

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