

HARROW STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Report of activity at Harrow Chief Executives

6th December 2012

Introduction
This paper summarises the activity involving the Harrow Chief Executives' meetings since the last Board.
Proposed Action
That the activity of Harrow Chief Executives is noted.
What are you asking the Partnership Board to do
The Board should note the activity of Harrow Chief Executives

Background

At the time of writing, Harrow Chief Executives (HCE) have met twice since the Board's last meeting but there is another meeting scheduled for 3rd December and details of activity arising from that meeting will be reported verbally.

September meeting

Children's and Families Improvement plan

The HCE meeting in September concentrated on the Improvement Plan prepared to respond to the outcomes of the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission inspections relating to Safeguarding and Looked After Children. The Improvement Plan had been had been developed by joint teams from the Council and NHS Harrow and the response to the common aspects of both inspection reports was the same.

The meeting heard that the framework for inspections had changed and that the benchmarks for the different standards had become more exacting. Overall, the service was rated as adequate but included some strong areas but also some that were not performing well and had outdated approaches and thinking. Some recent initiatives around commissioning with the Police and the NHS and

establishing the MASH had been recognised. Building on this, a new relationship with local NHS organisations was developing with a more stable staffing and realism in expectations and performance.

The main thrusts of the overall Improvement Plan were Quality; Outcomes; Quality Assurance and Challenge.

The immediate task was to improve the standard to which existing actions were performed and to think about what other actions could improve the offer to children. The next stage would be to begin to explore what else could be incorporated into services. It would be important to do this as early as possible because attention to improving standards would cement thinking that the current actions constituted the whole of what is possible.

In relation to Looked After Children, analyses and evaluations were not shared well between agencies and plans, once formulated, were not always adhered to or monitored. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board could provide more oversight and advice to help get this right.

Harrow Chief Executives agreed that the Improvement Plan represented a good start and that it was particularly significant that it was the product of a multi-agency process. Developing a vision for the next phase of improvement was important and HCE could help with that as well as monitoring implementation of the Improvement Plan and might be particularly helpful in looking at alignment issues. HCE also agreed to receive progress reports at every other meeting.

Families First

HCE received a progress report on the implementation of the Families First project which was the local name for Government's Troubled Families programme.

Work had begun with the first cohort of families using a Team Around the Family (TAF) approach. Staff from the Children's Service Early intervention Service were acting as key workers for the identified families and managing their interaction with other professionals. There also had a small personalised budget to buy goods or services that would directly support the achievement of the Government's targets around school attendance, crime reduction and/or moving towards employment.

Key workers were supported by a number of BME Police Officers who had offered to provide support to the programme. Key workers were also ensuring that families had registered with health services.

October meeting

The meeting concentrated on Welfare Reform. The meeting received an analysis of the impact that changes to Housing and Council Tax Benefit had already and were expected to have on residents. This ranged from impacts of less than £50 a week to a few families that were expected to lose more than £500 a week. The greatest impact in Harrow would be on families receiving Income Support rather than Job Seekers Allowance as locally, unemployment is comparatively low. Universal credit will not have a significant impact in that entitlements are not being significantly altered although the administration of benefits will change. The roll out will take several years and the biggest impact is to reduce that rate at which benefit is lost as earned income increases making work a more financially attractive option.

JobCentre Plus had and would continue to raise awareness of the forthcoming changes. They have contacted everyone in receipt of Income Support – people that were not ordinarily seen by the Job Centre very often – to warn them of the likely impact but many if not most did not appear to be making contingency plans. Council and health sector staff and voluntary sector organisations will be asked to reinforce this message.

Some people are, however, taking advantage of the support into employment available via JCP which can fund things like language support. Employment is the answer to the difficulties posed by welfare reforms as any individual working for 16 hours a week or more or any couple who between them are working for 24 hours a week or more will not be affected.

JCP could provide which included 4 weeks intensive work-based training and 6 months of support when someone does get work. This is particularly important for people who may have been out of the workforce for some time and have lost the habit of regular and timely attendance. There is also scope for flexible support and specific training to meet individual needs.

The impact of housing benefit changes on tenants of social landlords might be able to be mitigated by other support from those landlords and meetings exploring this were underway. As well as families moving out of Harrow due to the impact of welfare changes, there were likely to be a number of families moving in which would have an impact on demand for services.

Work to emphasise to the 9,000 Small and Medium Enterprises in Harrow the potential that apprenticeships could bring to their businesses would be worthwhile.

There was also a discussion about the value added of the various back to work programmes available.