



25th April 2016

Michael Lockwood,
Chief Executive,
Harrow Council.

Dear Michael,

LOCAL ASSURANCE TEST – PROGRESS REVIEW

1. On behalf of the Local Government Association (LGA) we are writing with the findings from the recent Local Assurance Test (LAT) Progress Review, following the establishment of the People Directorate in October 2015. The review programme was very well organised. We received a positive welcome and excellent engagement and support throughout the process. We were impressed by people's transparency and commitment to improving the quality of life and life chances of residents in Harrow.

Background

2. In May 2015 the LGA Children's Improvement Adviser carried out an independent 'local test of assurance' in respect of the council's proposals to establish a People Directorate as part of a restructuring of the senior management of the council. The report concluded that the council's proposals, as set out in the Harrow Council Senior Management Restructure Consultation Pack, met the requirements of the 'local test of assurance'. The report noted that it would be important to keep consideration of the 'test of local assurance' under review as the council took forward implementation, particularly having regard to the key risks and their mitigation.
3. The report made five key recommendations:
 - i. Establish and appoint the role of Corporate Director – People as soon as possible, ensuring that the person appointed has recent, relevant and successful experience in leading Children's Services.
 - ii. Ensure that there is a clear implementation plan for the establishment of the People Directorate. The plan needs to give detailed consideration to the identification and mitigation of key risks. The plan needs to incorporate immediate actions and phased development of the long-term opportunities arising from integration. The plan must ensure a close match between priorities and resources linked to the three-year medium financial strategy.

- iii. Ensure that there is dedicated change management capacity to support the development of the new directorate, working as part of an overall corporate change management process.
 - iv. Ensure that the relevant Safeguarding Boards and Scrutiny provide timely and effective scrutiny of the progress and impact of the People Directorate, drawing on the views of the workforce and service users to inform their understanding.
 - v. Maintain the 'test of local assurance' as a 'live' process and commission a formal review after twelve months of the operation of the Directorate.
4. In accordance with the final recommendation, the council commissioned the respective LGA Improvement Advisers for Children's and Adult Services to undertake an 'early' review of progress over the past nine months

Progress Review Process

5. The process has included consideration of key background documents and performance information, along with interviews on site. The review also draws on the findings and recommendations from the recently completed 'Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care' review that was undertaken from 15th-17th March 2017.
6. For the purposes of the progress review it was agreed that we would report on:
 - i. progress in response to the five recommendations in the 2015 LAT Review;
 - ii. current performance in Children's and Adults Services identifying, any key performance risks
 - iii. progress with other areas for development identified in the 2015 report, including:
 - the establishment and working of an integrated senior leadership team in the People Directorate and its approach to leadership of change;
 - evidence of service improvement through a move to an integrated directorate (for example an all-through service for disabled children and adults);
 - development of the directorate's commissioning functions and the council's wider commissioning network;
 - the Directorate's financial strategy;
 - workforce development;
 - impact on partner agencies and multi-agency partnerships
 - the role and work of Scrutiny in the development and evaluation of the new Directorate's work.

Key Findings

Progress against the 2015 Recommendations

(A more detailed review of the response to the key recommendations is provided at [Appendix 1.](#))

7. The council ensured that a timely appointment was made to the role of Corporate Director – People. Having taken up the role in October 2015, the Corporate Director has rightly focused on building effective relationships, securing ‘buy in’ for the vision, promoting staff engagement (notably with middle leaders), and securing incremental changes in line with the ‘direction of travel’. The Corporate Director is establishing an integrated senior leadership team with an increasing sense of shared direction and distributed leadership. That commitment is reflected in a number of joint projects that have either been completed or are underway. A digest of that activity, drawn from the council’s own progress report against the 2015 recommendations, is provided at [Appendix 2.](#) The council’s review of progress highlights a number of areas of improved partnership working across the Directorate. Quarterly performance reports show a continuing focus on identifying and responding to key areas of performance risk. Progress has been more limited in relation to two of the recommendations from the 2015 report, the most important of which is the lack of a formal implementation plan for the new Directorate.

Performance, Areas for Development and Risks

Children’s Services

8. Children’s Services continues to have a good understanding of its strengths, areas for development and key risks. There is a comprehensive, evidence-based, self-assessment (SEF) that is used as a working document to support service improvement. Evidence from the SEF and from the most recent Performance Board report suggest that there are a number of key vulnerabilities in respect of Children’s Services. These are:
 - operational weaknesses in the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH), with the risk that there is an ineffective response to changing risk and need with vulnerable children and families;
 - pressures arising from an increase in referrals, combined with recruitment difficulties in the First Response team, with the result that there is a reduction in both timeliness and quality of assessment and planning;
 - proposals to develop and implement a new Early Intervention Service (EIS) model from September 2016, with a full-year effect saving of £682k.
9. The review team has seen detailed and appropriate action plans to respond to these risks and key developments, with appropriate management oversight by the Corporate Director, Divisional Director and Lead Member. It will be important to ensure that there is appropriate challenge about the progress of these plans through the council’s Performance Board and the Harrow Safeguarding Children Board.

Adult Services

10. Performance continues to be secure with risks appropriately identified and mitigated. The recent self-assessment using the Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care (TEASC) risk awareness tool, undertaken in March 2016, identified areas of strength, such as safeguarding, and areas of performance requiring further consideration. The TEASC review covered areas of: leadership and governance; performance and outcomes; commissioning and quality; national priorities and partnerships; resource and workforce management; culture and change. The review made a series of recommendations for further exploration, which this review endorses as these support the continuing improvement and development journey for the Peoples Directorate.
11. We support the recommendation that 'the focus on adult social care should remain high in the new Directorate in order that progress continues on wellbeing and prevention agendas and whole system working across health and social care' (see below) should continue to be a priority. This would support the delivery of the Peoples Directorate aspirations.

Other Areas for Development

Evidence of Service Improvement through the new Directorate

12. There is a shared view regarding the opportunities for transformational service improvement arising from the establishment of the Peoples' Directorate which could improve the experiences of vulnerable children and adults. Progress has been made in establishing an All Age Disabilities Service, with significant buy in from staff, who will be involved in a forthcoming Away Day to influence the development of new systems and policies. The desired outcomes for the service are ambitious and would benefit from being articulated in a delivery plan with SMART targets so that Members, staff, managers and service users can be clear when and how these outcomes are being achieved. This includes improving choice and control for service users and their families alongside delivering savings and efficiencies.
13. Other opportunities for transferring learning between Adults to Children's services were mentioned but it is too soon to see tangible and measurable benefits or impact e.g. adoption of personal budgets for children and young people; consistent application of Continuing Care criteria; improved transition service planning and delivery.

Commissioning

14. Commissioning continues to be a key enabler of change and service improvement and there are plans for updating the Market Position Statement in September 2016, following the development of lifelong commissioning strategies for Carers, Supported Housing and People with Learning Disabilities and Autism. It is essential that this work is done to support the realisation of the Peoples' Directorate vision of a having a range of options available for service users to purchase from, especially given current risks in the local market.

15. The delivery plans for the Peoples Directorate strategies should consider how to translate forecasted needs and aspirations into procurement specifications e.g. specific number and size of lifetime homes for supported housing for vulnerable adults or families as part of the Harrow regeneration programme.

Directorate Financial Strategy

16. The council's overall approach to the implementation of its budget strategy has moved away from a conventional directorate targets approach, with a more thematic approach in line with the priorities set out in the *Harrow Ambition Plan 2020*. This is reflected in the directorate's financial strategy through cross-cutting developments such as the Early Intervention Service Transformation and the development of lifelong commissioning strategies for vulnerable people. There remain some concerns about overall sustainability of the budget if these developments are unable to achieve the intended mix of quality improvement and saving, particularly the continuing short-term pressures in relation to recruitment of children's social workers, high placement costs, and impending changes to the schools budget.

Workforce Development

17. The Corporate Director has rightly focused on building effective relationships, securing 'buy in' for the vision, and promoting staff engagement (notably with middle leaders). The front line staff directly affected by the changes (e.g. All Age Disability Services) were most articulate about the positive impact and more work may need to be done to ensure that all staff can see the benefits and the improved opportunities of the new organisational structure, to get their 'buy in' to support further transformational change.
18. There have been significant successes in increasing the stability of the workforce through permanent recruitment to posts. The staffing re-organisations have been completed and the new structures are in place. This provides a solid basis for undertaking further changes in practice to meet the objectives of the Peoples' Directorate.
19. Opportunities for bringing staff together across the Directorate, such as the social work conference in September are welcomed by front line staff and managers as evidence of the new collaborative culture. Anecdotally there is more networking across the Peoples Department and less of a silo culture: senior management is seen to model and support positive behaviour change.

Impact on partner agencies

20. Relationships with health partners have improved, as evidenced by the 2016/17 Better Care Fund proposals. These provide a starting point for the local discussion about health and social care integration, which is a national imperative. Taking forward the TEASC recommendations regarding 'a greater focus on integration and the development of specific joint transformation plans... to address budget deficits in both health and social care as well as improving outcomes for people' is a critical next step to support the sustainability of the Peoples' Services Directorate.

Conclusion

21. This review has considered evidence of progress only nine months after completion of the review of the Local Test of Assurance in June 2015, and only six months after the substantive appointment of the Corporate Director. In that short period it is important to acknowledge the extensive work to maintain and improve the performance of the key constituent services alongside the drive to promote a sense of shared direction and constructive partnership working across the directorate. There is significant evidence of that shared direction amongst senior and middle leaders, but less so amongst frontline practitioners. There is evidence of a lot of activity to promote joint development across the directorate but it lacks an overall strategic framework, operational plan, and outcome measures. As a result, Members and Senior Officers cannot be certain about the match of resources to priorities and have only a limited basis for evaluating the impact of changes arising from the establishment of the new Directorate.

In terms of meeting the Local Test of Assurance requirements, there continues to be major strength arising from the council's overall strategy (the *Harrow Ambition Plan 2020*) and its performance management arrangements. There continues to be good challenge and support from the Harrow Safeguarding Children and Safeguarding Adults Boards. The senior management arrangements in the People Directorate continue to ensure that there is a clear focus on improving performance and the management of risk in Children's and Adults Services.

Key Recommendations

1. Develop an integrated Directorate delivery plan (with a high level 'Plan on a Page' format) setting out clear priorities, programmes of work, measurable qualitative and financial impacts that demonstrate how and when outcomes will be achieved – whether from integration of adults and childrens' services; from delivering all age commissioning strategies; or from service transformation.
2. Ensure that there is effective oversight of the management of key performance risks in Children's Services.
3. Volunteer for a London ADASS peer review in 2016/17 on the new integrated approach to commissioning, focussing on forecasting local needs and shaping the market to provide services for vulnerable children and adults to provide greater choice and reduce costs. (Building on the TEASC recommendation to self-assess using the Commissioning for Better Outcomes tool)
4. Develop joint plans with health partners, building on the Better Care Fund work, to meet health and social care integration ambitions that transform services, improve user experience and deliver savings across the system.

Yours sincerely,

John Harris (Children's Improvement Adviser, LGA)

Dr Adi Cooper OBE (Care and Health Improvement Adviser, LGA)



LB. HARROW – LOCAL TEST OF ASSURANCE – PROGRESS REVIEW
PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM 2015 REPORT

	Recommendation	Progress
1	Establish and appoint the role of Corporate Director – People as soon as possible, ensuring that the person appointed has recent, relevant and successful experience in leading Children’s Services.	<u>Met</u>

Comments:
 The Corporate Director (‘the Director’), People was appointed with effect from 1st October 2015. The Director has worked hard to promote a shared vision for the new Directorate and to model positive joint working. He has taken time to engage with staff in service areas outside his previous expertise and experience, to seek their views and to understand key service challenges. He has also taken the opportunity to fashion constructive working relationships with leaders from partner organisations, particularly in the NHS.

2	Ensure that there is a clear implementation plan for the establishment of the People Directorate. The plan needs to give detailed consideration to the identification and mitigation of key risks. The plan needs to incorporate immediate actions and phased development of the long-term opportunities arising from integration. The plan must ensure a close match between priorities and resources linked to the three-year medium financial strategy.	<u>Part Met - Limited</u>
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Comments:
 The council’s progress report records action in response to this recommendation as ‘partly met – on track’. The evaluation cannot fully support this view. It is clear that the People Services Senior Management Team have undertaken a great deal of activity to establish the new Directorate and can document actions that can be matched retrospectively to this recommendation in terms of initiatives to promote joint working or to manage risk. (See ‘*People Services Directorate – Progress Report for Local Assurance Test 9 Month Review – March 2016*’) There is not, however, an overall implementation plan and associated risk plan that is supporting the overall development of the Directorate, linked to the medium-term financial strategy. The lack of such a plan means

that it is more difficult to match priorities to resources, to ensure that complex changes are coordinated and programmed, that capacity is used to optimum effect, and that impact can be evaluated.		
3	Ensure that there is dedicated change management capacity to support the development of the new directorate, working as part of an overall corporate change management process.	Met – On Track
Comments: Specific project management capacity has been put in place to take forward key changes in the Directorate in its first months of operation. The particular areas of focus have been: management of the change process to establish the All-Age Disability Service, and corporate support for the Transformation of Early Help project. It will be important to identify further capacity for more substantial changes ahead – for example, the lifelong commissioning strategies for Carers, Supported Housing, and People with Learning Disabilities and Autism.		
4	Ensure that the relevant Safeguarding Boards and Scrutiny provide timely and effective scrutiny of the progress and impact of the People Directorate, drawing on the views of the workforce and service users to inform their understanding.	Limited to date – some plans in place
Comments: The council’s progress report records the response to this recommendation as ‘on track’. There have been reports to the respective Children’s and Adults Safeguarding Boards but there has been no reporting to or involvement of Overview and Scrutiny to date. There are outline proposals to seek views from the workforce through the Annual Council Staff Survey 2016 and Social Work Health Check Surveys. A report to Overview and Scrutiny is planned for the next appropriate meeting in ‘late Sept/Oct 2016’.		
5	Maintain the ‘test of local assurance’ as a ‘live’ process and commission a formal review after twelve months of the operation of the Directorate.	Met
Comments: The council has been proactive in seeking an early review of progress, enabling any emerging areas of risk or drift to be addressed quickly. It is a mark of the council’s positive approach to learning, improvement and external challenge.		



Appendix 2

DIGEST OF COUNCIL'S REPORTED DEVELOPMENTS TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF PEOPLE DIRECTORATE

Children's permanent staffing secured by 01.01.16:

- 1x Ch&YP Divisional Director, 6x Heads of Service [Troubled Families & Early Intervention most recently completed]
- Restructure of Education services on track. X2 Heads of Service leading on operational services and strategic planning will be in place from 1.4.16. (PN)
- x1 Head of Service for school improvement remains under review with schools until August 2016 (PN)
- Transformation of Early Help project: implementation planned Autumn 2016
- 14.10.15 Health & Wellbeing Board signed up to Disabled Children's Charter: progress report due Oct 2016
- HSCB is chaired by the Independent Chair and reports to Chief Executive, and to the Corporate Director of People Services (CR suggestion)
- Quarterly briefings on Safeguarding children to the Chief Executive, Leader and the portfolio holder (CR suggestion)
- From Dec 2015, the Harrow Couple Domestic Violence Programme, delivered in conjunction with the Tavistock Couples Centre for Relationships [TCCR].

Harrow Ambitions 2020 (published Feb 2016):

Working Together to make a difference for Harrow – 3 priorities build a better Harrow;

be more business-like and business friendly; protect the most vulnerable and support families;

aligned Workforce & leadership values:

be courageous; do it together; make it happen

Realignment to secure synergies – ongoing

- Oct 2015 Harrow Council signed up to the British Sign Language Charter
- Single Integrated Adults & Children's Commissioning Team from 01.10.15 under Adults Social Care

Operational SNT transferred out to Community Directorate (Commissioning) from 01.10.15: strategic responsibility retained for eligibility etc.

- Family Information Service and Early Years operationally managed by Harrow School Improvement Partnership. EY restructure completed by Dec 2015.
- Development of All Age Disability pathway in good progress
 - Children with Disability Team management responsibility transferred to the Assistant Director of Adults Social Care on the 23.02.2016 to merge with the Adults Transition team to set up a 0 to 25 years of disability services for children and young people. (VS)
 - Managing change process is in place. Management staff consultation completed and structure agreed. Frontline staff are being consulted on an operational model and an Awayday has been arranged to ensure staff and service needs are identified. (VS)
 - Firs (residential respite facility) transfer planned to All Life Disability Service under Adults Social Care (date tbc)
- People Services Senior Management Team meeting regularly
- Single Quarterly Improvement Board being established: Qtr 3 Boards for Children's, Adults and Public Health held on the same day. Planned move to single People Services Board from Quarter 1 2016/17 tbc
- Single People Services moderation of ASYE completions by newly qualified social workers; planned Principal Social Workers joint work to ensure completion of SW statutory HCPC re-registrations due Autumn 2016, and associated cpd evidencing (NH)
- People Services Framework management authorisations and cover arrangements reviewed and updated. MOSAIC planned rollout from Autumn 2016 includes family records which will further embed THINK Family synergies (MS)
- Troubled Families transformation on track: Outcomes Plan close to signoff will further highlight and embed synergies
- Children's single inspection ongoing preparation includes Jan 2016 updated summary of services commissioned for 'toxic trio', including contributions from PH, Adults & other partners.
- Transition planning extended including focus on high cost YP residential placement challenge, to facilitate smooth transition, as well as earlier notification on possible vulnerable adults, from current Children's social care cases. (CK e.g. High cost Ch's Panel held 26.02.16)
- Ongoing work with WLA: CAREPLACE West London database for adult residential placements planned April 2016 expansion to include Children's database. (CK)
- Shared Lives discussion re possible extension to children's (CK)
Project Infinity including Digital First re-commissioned as part of planned expansion of MyCommunity ePurse (Ref: Ambitions document – achievements)
- CSE: closer partnership working between key leads re: CSE & Vulnerable Adults; Integration of information (adults & services) (TM/CR – if you wish to include)

Retained separate operating high performing HSCB & LSAB protecting effective capacity and focus, recognising existing operational connectivity achieved.

Adults' permanent senior management staffing secured

Towards Excellence in Adults Social Care (TEASC) is being completed and ready for the LAT review to incorporate. The TEASC is report is being prepared by an independent consultant and working with the CHIA of the LGA. (VS)

- Ongoing active engagement with MASH
- LSAB is chaired by the DASS and reports to the Corporate Director of People Services. (VS)
- Quarterly briefings on Safeguarding adults to the Chief Executive, Leader and the portfolio holder. (VS)
- Assistant Director of Adults social care is a permanent member of the LSCB. (VS)
- Summer 2015 Adults Services' workers received training in identifying families who may benefit from a referral to children and families services. System changes reflected and enabled improved ways of recording and sharing these recommendations. A reciprocal arrangement has been enabled for children's social workers considering referring adults for support services.
- Safeguarding Adults multi-agency training programme was recently evaluated and updated. From April 2016 will include sessions specifically on the "toxic trio" ie children and families living in homes where there is a parent/carer known to be receiving treatment for drug or alcohol misuse, known to be suffering from mental ill health and/or experiencing domestic abuse.
- Ongoing Think Family regular audits – feedback and learning points being taken to HSCB Quality Assurance Sub Committee 05.04.16
- The Risk Enablement Panel meets monthly to discuss cases and has a co- opted member from Children's Services (Service Manager MASH) in recognition that cases often cross over between adults, including mental health; DV and children.
- Feb/March 2016 undertaking Towards Excellence in Adult Social Care [TEASC] activity.
NEW Annual Adults SW Conference 29.09.16 with crossover content for other qualified SWs in CNWL & Children's including Think Family, @ Civic site.
ChiefSW speaking.

Public Health permanent staff secured

- New improved School Nurse Service
- October 2015 took on responsibility for the Health Visiting service and secured an increase in funding from £113 to £160 per child.
- Re-procuring sexual health services, pan London, aiming for more robust pathways re safeguarding
- CDOP