



HARROW STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Children's Services Transformation

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Introduction

As part of the LAA reward grant money in 2010, the HSP supported the new operating model project by funding the project lead for one year (June 2010-June 2011).

The new operating model for Children's Services is now proposed to come into effect on 31st October 2011.

Proposals on the detailed model are currently out for consultation with Council staff and unions and we continue to gather feedback from partners on our plans. The Partnership Board's comments would be welcome.

Proposed Action

The new operating model for Children's Services has been designed based on what our users, our staff, and our partners have told us during the Integrated Targeted Service Review, which ran from June 2010 and consulted with over 750 people.

The key components of this new model of assessing and providing support and services for children, young people and their families are:

- A single point of contact with a multi-agency access team
- Integrated Support Teams
- Special Needs Services
- Targeted Services
- A Quality Assurance and Commissioning function
- A new Education Strategy and School Organisation model
- A Business Support model aligned with the Council's corporate model

Our ambition is for practitioners to be co-located in "Teams Around the Family". This would see more staff located together as part of plans to relocate staff to the Civic Centre. The Council's Children's Services therefore need to carry out a reorganisation and relocation of our staff and change some of the ways in which we work with partners to ensure seamless packages of care for our vulnerable young people.

What are you asking the Partnership Board to do

This is an update for the Partnership Board. Comments are invited.

Summary of the Issue

Proposed Children's Services Reorganisation

Background and Context

Comparisons with other London authorities show Harrow's total spend on Children's Services to be low. Education, social care and youth service budgets are well below average.¹ Despite this and thanks to the commitment and hard work of staff, children and young people's outcomes are good, looked after children numbers are low and services are regularly judged as good or better in inspections.

But this is not sustainable. Central Government is altering fundamentally the Local Authority's role and relationship with schools and several of Harrow's high schools are exploring moving to Academy status. Savings targets for 2011-12 have begun to have an impact on all services. We need to redesign our systems and bring our resources together to deal with these changing times and in order to keep children safe and improve outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and families.

Our vision is to build on this foundation of strong Children's Services in Harrow to create a fully integrated Children's Services Directorate that will offer a seamless multi-agency service to vulnerable children, young people and their families. The core principles underpinning this vision are:

- Strong partnerships with police, health and the third sector building on Total Place principles, delivering services together
- A seamless multi-agency service with one point of contact that meets the needs of vulnerable children, young people and their families
- An early intervention approach to ensure that needs are met at the earliest opportunity and avoiding later expense once problems are entrenched
- A Team Around the Family/Child model to meet need in a co-ordinated way
- Reduced bureaucracy and improved integrated systems to maximise time that key professionals are able to work with families and share information effectively
- A new relationship between the Council and schools, acknowledging their increasing autonomy but recognising and building on their understanding of children and family circumstances
- Maximising the efficient use of resources through robust strategic planning, commissioning and procurement of services to meet local need
- Improving outcomes through rigorous quality assurance closely linked to performance management and workforce development

¹ CIPFA Benchmarking local authority report 2010

Benefits of a new approach will include:

Benefits to Children, young people and families	Benefits to Staff	Benefits to the System
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast track most vulnerable for targeted services • Families only having to tell their story only once • Fewer, more appropriate professionals working with family • Access to a rich source of information about services • Clearer system • Speed of access • Improved understanding of need • Greater co-ordination of services and expertise to meet need • Whole family, whole child services • A more personalised approach • Not being repeatedly referred between agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better job satisfaction • Maximising time using professional skills and reducing bureaucratic form-filling • Putting key staff in control of decision-making • Developing a wider range of skills • Clarity about our remit and purpose • Multi-agency context supports staff to build new skills • Close and effective working relationships with partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved information sharing • Swift access to advice and guidance, collation of relevant information from partners and onward referral to the right source of help • Central point with key skills and knowledge • Easier more efficient multi-agency working • Reduce pressure on targeted services over time • Reduce costs and the opportunity to invest savings elsewhere • A single, clear system for referral • Transparency of provision and accountability • Cut out unnecessary processes and time wasted on referral and disjointed information gathering • Reduce duplication of provision and functions

Key Aspects of the New Operating Model

The proposed model groups similar functions together to produce more efficient systems. Services aligned in this way will make the needs of vulnerable children, young people and families the focus of our work, rather than dividing resource up into traditional service silos.

The model introduces a single referral point for all services to reduce bureaucracy and improve efficiency. It also proposes a more effective multi-agency safeguarding information sharing system.

Services focused on intervening early with vulnerable children, young people and families will be brought together into multi-disciplinary teams. The teams will work as part of a Team Around the Family model.

A more effective and robust commissioning, procurement and quality assurance model is proposed. Interventions will have a strong evidence base. We will work more closely with the third sector to deliver services more effectively for families.

We intend to relocate of the majority of Children's Services teams to one site within the Civic Centre with a delivery model focused on communities for example through Children's Centres.