



Core Group 30 September 2009

Item 6
Investment of countywide Performance Reward Grant
'Think Family'

Background

On the 13th July Hertfordshire County Council Cabinet agreed to support the Herts Forward proposal for a 'Think Family' project funded with the LAA performance reward grant. This paper provides more detail on the project.

Introduction

Small numbers of children and their extended families call disproportionately on the resources of public sector service providers. Frequently the same children will need to access a wide range of services from level two through to level four. Their multiple needs stretch partner organisations. From time to time, through a lack of data sharing and joint working, they fall through the cracks. All too often the findings of Serious Case Reviews, conducted when a child has died or come to serious harm, reveal the lack of a joined up approach to tackling complex problems. This lack of joint working at the serious and complicated end of service provision (levels three and four) can be mirrored in the provision of level two services to those children exhibiting signs of need. At this level there is probably even less coordinated working together.

What we are seeking to Achieve through Think Family

- Identify marginalised families through the needs of children and young people.

- Break the cycle of dependency and disadvantage.

- Improve the outcomes for children, families and communities by dealing with the issues in a cross agency problem solving manner.

- Enhance interagency cooperation. Create a new operating culture and developing better ways of working together.

- Develop and evaluate a template for better service delivery which can endure and be transferable to the whole County.

- Drive down inefficiencies in current cross agency working and reinvest the savings in better front end service.

Think Family

'Think Family' is a government supported programme that encourages the join up of service delivery through a combination of good leadership, pooled budgets and co-located staff. The Springboard project in Blackpool is one of the most advanced Think Family projects in the country and the University of Salford's published research into Springboard states the many benefits that the 'Think Family' approach can bring across a wide range of performance indicators from smoking cessation through to the reduction in repeat incidents of domestic violence (see appendix A). Senior practitioners from Hertfordshire have visited the Springboard Project and their findings have assisted with the proposals outlined here.

The Proposal

Operating from four strategically chosen bases The Hertfordshire 'Think Family' project will bring together into multi agency teams a number of key organisations who, operating as problem solvers together, will improve the life chances of vulnerable and at risk children. The project will deliver improvements against those indicators from the national set that correlate with child well being. They will do this by delivering or commissioning tailored services either to the children themselves or (just as likely) to their families and those other adults that impact their lives.

Each team will comprise approximately eight professionals from a number of key agencies and will be supported by professional assistance from other agencies and the third sector. Each of the teams will contain, as core representatives, staff from Police, Children Schools and Families (CSF), Adult Care Services (ACS) and Health. Other agencies such as Probation and the Learning and Skills Council whose contribution to the success of this project is likely to be significant will contribute in accord with assessed demand.

These core staff will be drawn from pre existing resources and dedicated to this project. Each of these four locality teams will be led by a different agency so as to ensure that there is full partnership buy in.

The locality team leaders will report to an operations manager.

Aims and objectives

The teams will use a twin track approach. This will include help for families to address those factors that place children at risk, accompanied with supervision and, if necessary, enforcement. This approach will provide them with incentives to change. Each family will be allocated a lead professional whose responsibility it is to coordinate the multi agency response to the family, to ensure the delivery of a sustainable joined up response.

The Hertfordshire 'Think Family' programme will support in particular Priorities 11 and 12 of the Children and Young People's Plan: 'Children and

Young People thrive in spite of family poverty’, and ‘Children and Young People Keep on the Right Track. There are also strong links into other programmes, such as ‘Safer and Stronger Communities. The programme will in particular have a positive impact on the following performance targets:

NI	Target
116	Proportion of Children in Poverty (LAA2)
118	Take up of formal childcare by low income working families
153	Working age people on out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods
111	First time entrants to the youth justice system aged 10-17
45	Proportion of young offenders in education, training and employment (LAA2)
115	Substance misuse by young people
32	Repeat incidents of domestic violence (LAA2)
40	Drug users in effective treatment (LAA2)
112	Under 18 conception rates
123	16+ smoking prevalence

The Operational Bases

The four locality teams will operate in areas that are identified, using the published Indicators of Multiple Deprivation (2007) the Index of Child Well Being (2009) and county held Mldas and crime data, as presenting the greatest challenge to local service providers (see appendix B).

The four locations; a combination of wards and super output areas with populations of 5000- 8000 are:

- South Oxhey (Three Rivers)
- Bedwell (Stevenage)
- Cowley Hill (Hertsmere)
- Holbrook (Broxbourne)

Not only do these four locations, on any statistical indicator, present the greatest challenge to local services they already have some partner infrastructure in place that will facilitate the co-location of multi agency teams.

Each of the four locations will have approximately £130,000 a year available to commission specialist services. Some of these services will be bespoke and tailored to meet a child's particular needs. Others may be developed on a countywide basis and will be accessible for each of the four pilot areas e.g. domestic violence perpetrator programmes. The programme will be funded for three years .Sustainability will be delivered by redirecting resources currently lost or dissipated through silo working. Further, given that this programme is preventative in aim, its success will in due course free up resources at levels three and four.

Identification of the Children

Children in need are likely to come and go from the scope of this project. New families will present themselves and other families through the work of Think Family will become less resource hungry. Referrals into the teams will be possible in a wide variety of ways. Statutory agencies, housing associations, voluntary sector organisations and even families themselves will be able to refer to the project. However from a standing start it could take some time to identify an appropriate cohort of children and families for each team to work with if it was allowed to grow organically. Therefore to begin the project a data sharing exercise between agencies will identify about 100 families assessed against a scoring matrix containing the most at risk children living within the four operational areas. These children and families will then be allocated to the four teams. Their progress will be charted against a baseline document. PWC have recently developed risk family identification tool. This is another means of ensuring that Think Family's efforts are properly directed. On appointment the Operations Manager will explore appropriate means of identifying vulnerable children and coordinate this identification exercise.

As the project develops referrals of children and their families will take place on a day to day basis using the same scoring matrix to assess their suitability for adoption and their progress charted against the same baseline document.

Governance

A cross partnership group will operate under the umbrella of the regular meeting programme of the HCTP. Representatives from contributing Think Family partner agencies who do not currently sit at HCTP, such as ACS and Probation, will be invited to attend for a quarterly 'Think Family' agenda item. Health Providers and Police (already members of the HCTP) will act as the links to the other Herts Forward Partnership Groups. This Extended HCTP group would act as the Project Board and be accountable to Herts Forward for the success of the project.

An Operational Group will be established to manage the implementation of the programme, oversee performance and delegate to individual officers and organisations specific aspects of the project. This group will be accountable to and be appointed by the Extended HCTP.

The Operational Group will appoint an operations manager to handle day to day activities to establish the project and be accountable to the group for performance. This will be a three year appointment and will be the only post funded by the PRG. It has been recently evaluated and advertised among partner agencies. The post holder will be identified by November 2009.

The Operations manager will oversee the four centres and provide leadership guidance and direction to the four team leaders.

Accountability for the funding provided by the PRG will be held by CSF on behalf of the Extended HCTP and a range of cost centres will be established for this purpose. Where funding is provided to other agencies funding agreements will be entered into to ensure the funding is used for the purpose provided.

Funding

Herts Forward have agreed to allocate £3.6m to this project to be spent in equal proportions on capital and revenue. Given that this project is meant to deliver new and sustainable ways of working it is proposed that the revenue is used over three years rather than two. Apart from funding one post the revenue will be used exclusively to commission services for vulnerable children and their families.

The capital element will be used in making the available locations fit for multi agency use. It is possible that the available capital will exceed requirements for this programme but may be “swapped” with excess revenue in the Recession to Recovery programme. Alternatively it could be reserved for subsequent accommodation requirements of further roll out of Think Family across the County following assessment of the success of this programme.

Role of the Third Sector

Raising the life chances of a child caught up in disadvantage will require case specific interventions that are as likely to involve parents and carers as much as the child themselves. Mentoring and diversion from crime of those adults who have an influence of a disadvantaged child are may well be complementary approaches to the provision of tier two and tier three services to the child themselves. In developing a tailored approach to each child the multiagency team will commission services from third sector providers as well as making use of services provided by the statutory bodies.

Conclusion

The performance reward grant represents a once in a lifetime opportunity to make a significant difference to the way we provide services in Hertfordshire. For too long service providers have been constrained by procedural thinking and a narrow set of organisational objectives. The reward grant has offered service providers an opportunity to rethink the way they do business and success will be achieved if the life outcomes of disadvantaged children are improved and service providers find a more coherent way of providing services.