

## **COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP TASK GROUP**

**30 SEPTEMBER 2013**

Present: Councillor A Khan (Chair)  
Councillor  
Councillors R Martins, J Aron, A Joynes, A Lovejoy, K McLeod  
and M Meerabux

Also present: Councillor Mark Watkin and Councillor Tim Williams  
Gareth Morgan, Thriving Families Programme Manager  
Karen Dorney, Watford and Three Rivers Team Manager

Officers: Community Safety Manager  
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (JK)

### **9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **10 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### **11 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2013 were submitted and signed.

### **12 THRIVING FAMILIES**

The Chair welcomed Gareth Morgan, Thriving Families Programme Manager, and Karen Dorney, Watford and Three Rivers Team Manager, to the meeting.

Mr Morgan introduced the presentation and gave an overview of the Thriving Families programme. He explained that the approach in Hertfordshire was about early intervention and the project incorporated the government's Troubled Families initiative. He explained that the government's approach, by necessity, was quite prescriptive and that there were clear criteria about which families could be involved. The aim was that following intervention and support, the families involved would become self-sustaining and less dependent on public services. This would be achieved for example, through reducing antisocial behaviour, improving parenting, reducing vulnerabilities including mental health and substance misuse and improving safeguarding and health and well-being. In the future, it was hoped that the programme would have an even greater focus on communities. He reminded the group that this was a financially linked programme, which aimed to reduce the costs incurred by the public purse.

He explained where these families fell on the scale of intervention and how they had been identified. The last sample group analysed showed that 56% of families in the programme suffered from worklessness and 40% had a history of antisocial behaviour. He drew the Task Group's attention to the number of families identified in the initial data process as being eligible for support in Watford, which was about average compared to other Hertfordshire districts. He defined the model of family intervention used by the programme which provided for a dedicated worker, who developed a sound relationship and knowledge of the family who was assertive where required and gave practical support. He outlined the different partners and specialists involved in the work.

Karen Dorney, the Watford and Three Rivers Team Manager, outlined the structure of the team. She noted that there would be an additional Family Intervention Worker joining the team with a special focus on housing. The majority of the families that they worked with were tenants of Watford Community Housing Trust. She outlined a case study which showed how the project worked in practice.

Following a question from Councillor Martins, Ms Dorney clarified that the family in question had not yet engaged with her team when they received the eviction notice. She explained how they could work with partner organisations to address the different needs of the families involved.

Ms Dorney addressed a question from Councillor Meerabux about school attendance of older teenagers, she noted that there was a legal duty to educate. She argued that other options for education could be explored if continuing at school was not the most appropriate route for the young person. Councillor Joynes added that in her experience schools were prepared to be flexible for the best outcomes for their students.

Councillor McLeod asked about the contacts that the Thriving Families team had with local headteachers and how schools were made aware the programme. Ms Dorney outlined the ways that they engaged with headteachers, who were a key partner, and how they raised awareness more widely. Mr Morgan underlined the importance of engaging with primary schools in particular as early intervention work developed.

In response to a question from Councillor Joynes about families which did not meet the criteria, Ms Dorney clarified that the government criteria were quite strict; however they would prefer to examine available evidence to try and include families who were eligible for the programme, rather than exclude them.

Councillor Aron asked whether the Thriving Families team could refer families to other agencies that they felt were appropriate. Ms Dorney said that a monthly meeting with all the agencies who could be involved with families was held, and all the new referrals were considered.

Councillor Aron asked whether families were followed up over a longer period of time. Ms Dorney noted that the government programme was on a payment-by-

results basis. She added that there was a three month period where professionals could monitor the progress of the family and refer them back if necessary. Family Intervention Workers also could contact the family monthly to review their situation. Involvement in multi-agency meetings such as the Antisocial Behaviour Action Group meant that the Thriving Families team was made aware of problems quickly.

Mr Morgan added that the average length of intervention for a family was 9 to 10 months. Improvement had to be demonstrated over a 6 to 12 month period for the outcome payments to be received.

Following a question from Councillor Watkin about how success was measured, Mr Morgan explained how the funding was split between identification of families and sustained improvement in their situation. He outlined that the improvements that were required were:

- School attendance of 85% or more sustained over three terms
- Paid work for six months or the completion of the Work Programme
- A reduction in antisocial behaviour in the household by 60% over six months
- A reduction in youth crime of 33% sustained over six months

These were applied to the eligibility criteria that the families demonstrated at the start of the programme.

Councillor Watkin asked about the performance of Hertfordshire County Council nationally and asked for comments. Mr Morgan responded that the reason that Hertfordshire scored lower on the outcomes metric was that a policy decision had been taken to submit a small number of 'test' claims to ensure that the process was working correctly and met internal audit requirements. The next claim period was October and he was confident that Hertfordshire would meet the 10% of Hertfordshire's total potential claims, (over the three year Troubled Families phase 1) as expected by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The Chair referred to the 95 families in Watford who had been identified, he asked whether they could be broken down by ward or division. Mr Morgan replied that each authority had a lead officer who held the data for each area from the original identified cohort.

The Chair asked what the motivation was for families to be part of the programme. Mr Morgan confirmed that there was no financial incentive; the officers involved wanted to work with families who were willing to work with them. There would always be families who were reluctant to change or felt damaged by previous contact with services. The motivation was about understanding the improvements in their lives that were possible with support. For example, they worked closely with schools to help families understand the value of education. An important motivation for families was often being able to secure their home after being at risk of eviction. Ms Dorney confirmed that many parents were keen to engage and improve the lives of their children.

In response to a question from Councillor Martins, Mr Morgan noted that early intervention for these families was an effective way to invest-to-save. The work

was being done because it was the right thing to do to improve families, to improve children's lives and to improve communities. He added that the intention was that as families became more successful, more capacity in the teams would be created, to enable families on the margins of the eligibility criteria to be increasingly able to access these services. Ms Dorney highlighted that they worked with the whole family which often equated to early intervention.

Councillor Williams referred to the 'hotspots' where a number of families lived in close proximity; he asked how these areas could be helped. Mr Morgan confirmed this was an area of work being developed with the idea of working with stakeholders and organisations to improve local communities and their environments. By supporting the local communities in these areas, the Thriving Families eligible families resident there would also be supported. There had not yet been the capacity to start this work. It was felt, however, that, once established, it was something that could be replicated in different areas. Ms Dorney added that small-scale projects were already underway and she gave an example of how they had worked with the Police to provide activities to help reduce antisocial behaviour.

Councillor Lovejoy asked what would happen if family moved away from the area. Mr Morgan responded that there would be no outcome funding entitlement for Hertfordshire, however the work could continue in the new area and case notes provided to the new area to enable Thriving families support to be maintained in the new area as appropriate.

Following a question from Councillor Meerabux about transition between primary and secondary school, Ms Dorney emphasised that this process was now well-developed and primary and secondary schools worked well together. There had not yet been any government guidance on the raising of the school leaving age to 17 and the effect this would have on the Troubled Families project.

The Chair asked about the relationships with further education colleges, Ms Dorney confirmed that this was an area where there was room for improvement. Mr Morgan added that the eligibility criteria for the programme was rigid and many college students were older than 16. But it was potentially a very useful relationship. Following a further question from the Chair about school admission policies, Mr Morgan responded that they had no remit over schools' admissions policies.

The Task Group thanked Mr Morgan and Ms Dorney for their presentation.

**ACTION** - The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer to circulate the PowerPoint presentation.

**RESOLVED** – that the presentation be noted.

## **COMMUNITY SAFETY ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRES RESULTS**

The Task Group received an update from the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer about the engagement questionnaires that the Task Group had commissioned.

She reported that there had been 15 responses to the councillors' survey, 26 responses to the community survey and 19 responses to the Police survey. She highlighted some key findings for the Task Group:

- Over 40% of the groups who answered the community survey did not know the local contacts with whom they could raise concerns about community safety. Every respondent to answer this question asked to have details of local contacts.
- When asked how communication between residents and authorities could be improved, some community groups responded that they would like more community involvement by PCSOs.
- Councillors from nine wards in Watford completed the survey.
- Approximately two thirds of councillors who answered the survey felt that casework was most effective means of engaging with their community. Residents Association meetings and other community group meetings also scored highly.
- For the Police survey, 95% of respondents felt that community events were either very or fairly effective in engaging residents.

She reported that the service had been analysed with assistance from officers from Partnerships and Performance. A final report would be prepared for the next meeting of the Task Group.

RESOLVED –

That the update report be noted

## **WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATE ON ACTIONS**

The Task Group reviewed the work programme for the remainder of the municipal year.

The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer reported that the Probation Service had been invited to the next meeting to discuss the areas outlined in the original scrutiny suggestion. It was suggested that an invitation should be sent to Councillor Lynch as she had contributed to the original suggestion and that all members should be invited as well.

**ACTION-Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer**

The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer noted that the Task Group had discussed meeting to consider the learning points from the member briefing on

drug and alcohol treatment. She suggested that this be added to the agenda for December.

ACTION-Committee on Scrutiny Support Officer

The Task Group considered the action list that was attached to the agenda and agreed that several of the actions could be signed off.

RESOLVED –

That the updates to the work programme and action list be noted.

Chair

The Meeting started at 6.30 pm  
and finished at 8.05 pm