



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

DATE	TITLE	Wards
7 December 2011	Community Budget: Prison Link Exemplar Project	All

SYNOPSIS

H&F is part of a four borough Community Budget pathfinder that has recently been awarded £300,000 from DfE to deliver a 'Prison Link' project, with the aim of reducing re-offending rates.

CONTRIBUTORS

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To review and comment on the proposals for the Prison Link Project.
2. To consider how H&F and its partner boroughs might expand their Community Budget.

CONTACT

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NEXT STEPS

Progress will be reported to Cabinet and to DfE.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In the Summer of 2010, the new Coalition Government announced its plans to take forward the previous Government's 'Total Place' pilot programme with the introduction of 'Community Budgets' in selected areas. H&F, along with K&C, Westminster and Wandsworth, bid to be one of the chosen areas and, in October 2010, the four boroughs were named as one of 10 areas that would develop Community Budgets to deliver better outcomes for 'families with complex needs'.
- 1.2 The concept behind Community Budgets is that, by integrating public spending in an area, we avoid duplication and improve the co-ordination of services to deliver improved outcomes at lower cost. In the spirit of localism, the offer from Government was that Whitehall should devolve budgets to the local level, which should then be pooled and aligned as Community Budgets.
- 1.3 The Coalition's legislative programme will deliver devolved budgets, in the area of policing and health, with the introduction of Police Commissioners and GP commissioning bodies. In the area of employment support, DWP has devolved its work programme funding to a number of prime contractors on a payment by results model. Local authorities, however, have not been the recipients of any major devolvement of Whitehall budgets, which has frustrated many of the Community Budget areas, where it was expected that local authorities, or public service boards, might hold the purse strings of a 'single bank account'.
- 1.4 It is the Government's view that local authorities should be negotiating with other public sector partners to pool or align spending to deliver improved outcomes for troubled families at lesser cost to the public purse in the long term. H&F is having discussions with the work programme prime contractors (now selected) and with local GPs (prior to commissioning powers being devolved) and has a long standing joint commissioning arrangement with H&F Police to deliver 24/7 beat policing in the town centres.

2. PRISON LINK PROJECT

- 2.1 The one Department that has provided direct funding to Community Budget areas is DfE, in recognition of the fact that it is the lead department in addressing the problems of 'families with complex needs' in its funding of the Family Intervention Programme. Earlier in the year, the DfE invited the ten Community Budget areas to submit proposals for 'exemplar' projects that would seek to demonstrate improved outcomes for families with complex needs from better integrated interventions. The four boroughs were successful in bidding for a project focussed on Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs prisons

that would seek to maintain and promote family ties between offenders and those on the outside.

- 2.2 The project proposal takes learning from Scandinavia, which has one of the lowest reoffending rates in the world, and works on the basis that strong family ties help to reduce reoffending. Family support can not only help an offender to turn away from crime, but it can also stop young children or siblings turning to crime. By working with non statutory offenders and young adult offenders it is hoped that the damage to family relationships can be limited at an earlier stage and any further complex family needs also picked up and referred on at this point.
- 2.3 The overall aim of the project is to reduce re-offending rates of persistent, non-statutory offenders resident in Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Wandsworth and Westminster. The key objectives are:
 - To liaise between offenders in custody and their families to facilitate, maintain and develop close family ties during their period of imprisonment;
 - To develop an evidence base as to types of interventions which best enable prisoners to maintain positive contact with their families;
 - To provide early interventions for young family members to avoid inter-generational criminality;
 - To improve life chances for offenders.
- 2.4 The project will run for 2 years and focus on two overlapping cohorts:
 - Offenders who are parents and have children living in the four boroughs;
 - Young adult offenders who have family members living in the four boroughs.
- 2.5 Key partners will include the Family Recovery/Family Support Programme teams from across the four boroughs, the Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT), the Prison Service, the Metropolitan Police and the Probation Service. Links will also be made with Integrated Offender Management Boards, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPAs) and the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).
- 2.6 The project will consist of three or four full time qualified social workers, who will forge links with and liaise between prisoners and close family members. Following initial contact with prisoners, a baseline level of information will be provided to every offender and every family that will help to raise awareness as to how to maintain good links and family relationships. The second stage of contact will be to visit the families of those offenders who are in custody to offer them the opportunity of support on any issue that is impacted by that family member being in prison.

- 2.7 This support will vary from family to family but might include:
- Support and possible joint visits for vulnerable members of the family into the prison environment (children and older people for example);
 - Referral to support agencies who can actively assist with housing and financial advice on benefits;
 - Advice on helping children to deal with an absent parent;
 - Preparation for the return of the absent family member to the household;
 - To link other preventative services into the family to channel young people away from potential offending behaviour;
 - Access to universal and targeted children’s services – from which offenders and their families tend to self exclude through fear of the consequences of identification by “the authorities”.
- 2.8 The evaluation of the project will involve the tracking of offenders in contact with the Family Link Workers and analysis of the following indicators:
- Re-offending rates of the cohort over a specified period of time (possibly six months following release), compared with historical re-offending rates of those particular offenders and/or average re-offending rates of offenders more generally;
 - The numbers of offenders maintaining family relationships for a specified period of time (e.g. 6 months) after leaving custody;
 - The number of offenders in employment, education or training after 6 months from release;
 - Other indicators relating to specific problems of individual offenders, e.g. tackling substance misuse issues.
- 2.9 The DfE has committed £300,000 to the project, over the two year period, and a further £40,000 is being sought from an evaluation fund.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To review and comment on the proposals for the Prison Link Project.
2. To consider how H&F and its partner boroughs might expand their Community Budget.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

No.	Description of Background Papers	Name/Ext of holder of file/copy	Department/ Location
1.	Prison Link project plan	Peter Smith	CPD/FCS Room 39, HTH