

**TO: EXECUTIVE
19 JULY 2016**

**FAMILIES IN A STRONG COMMUNITY PROJECT
Director of Children, Young People & Learning**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Executive of the conclusion and outcomes from the successful grant application in 2015 for Delivering Differently in Neighbourhoods funding for Families in a Stronger Community Project.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the Executive NOTES the success of this pilot project and the outcomes achieved.**
- 2.2 **That the possibility of extending this work through a joint bid with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is ENDORSED and led through the Health and Wellbeing Board.**

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure that the work of the Families in a Stronger Community Project continues to focus on improving the outcomes for vulnerable families within Bracknell Forest.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 None

6 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 6.1 The project runs from July 2015 to September 2016. Context findings and successes are included in Appendix 1 which is a case study evaluation, Families in a Strong Community Project, submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in April 2016.
- 6.2 Bracknell Forest Council piloted a plan to redesign services to some of the most vulnerable members of the community through establishing a programme of neighbourhood based very early support and intervention. Bracknell Forest received a grant of £87,500 through the DCLG 'Delivering Differently through Neighbourhoods' programme. This was used to develop a Bracknell Forest volunteering training scheme to support vulnerable families from within the community. Using these groups of skilled volunteers based in their local communities we were able to set up and run friendship and support groups for vulnerable residents. The groups were based in Children's Centres and schools. In addition, volunteers were placed in a range of positions including directly with schools and community support groups.
- 6.3 Whereas many families receive support from friends and relations when things start to go wrong, others do not. It is these vulnerable families that we wanted to identify for support. Providing this support is implemented at an early stage there is the

Unrestricted

potential for cost savings due to a decrease in demand for high cost services. Community based peer support can be effective where early help is needed and provides opportunities for strong and sustained relationships to be formed. It also builds capacity within the local community.

- 6.4 All support offered was in collaboration with the families themselves, the aim of which is that they are supported in behaviour change over a period of time and in the process building community resilience. The model has proved beneficial for both vulnerable families and the volunteers, with a proportion having now been able to access employment opportunities through upskilling and increased mental health and wellbeing. Evaluations after volunteers training show an increased self confidence for volunteers and an increased awareness of their own health and mental being. Benefits for those targeted families being supported have been evaluated and details are shown in the case study attached. Families supported have increased self reliance and show better mental health outcomes. This should lead to increased community resilience and less need for statutory services at a later date within those more deprived communities.
- 6.5 The pilot was focussed on three Bracknell Town neighbourhoods: Harmans Water, Wildridings and Great Hollands as areas of deprivation, although support has also been offered outside of these areas by volunteers supporting other Bracknell Forest community groups.
- 6.6 The project used a mix of case studies and cost benefit analysis to assess the impact of this model. A report was produced in April 2016 which was submitted to the DCLG to share learning with other LAs nationally. The Project Manager has presented on this model to South East Strategic Leaders, ADCS and other LAs within Delivering Differently in Neighbourhoods network as well as cross council.
- 6.7 Due to the project completion in September 2016 and the successes and learning from the project, Involve will now deliver the volunteering course twice within the next 12 months. Involve will then ensure that volunteers are placed in a wide range of volunteering opportunities within Bracknell Forest Council services and to other voluntary and community groups.
- 6.8 Volunteers should be signposted by Involve to offer a range of additional courses to attend around parenting and support for families in order to increase self confidence and upskill for potential employment in the future. Existing courses are offered currently at no additional cost for Bracknell Forest Council, including those offered by Involve, FIT team, Community Learning and external partners
- 6.9 It is anticipated that volunteer training can be rolled out across Bracknell Forest and be adapted to need. Involve should then ensure that this model for volunteering is embedded within its Bracknell Forest offer.
- 6.10 Families in a Strong Community have been piloting a friendship and support group model for vulnerable parents in Children's centres and schools and it is our understanding that this model will be developed in line with transformational work being done by Early Intervention Project.
- 6.11 **Extending the project for a further year.** This project has been very successful in both establishing a training programme for volunteers and in developing the local community. The project could be extended for another year at an estimated cost of £40,000. It was recommended by the Project Board, Chaired by the Chief Executive, that a joint bid is made with the CCG, with the potential for the Council contribution to

be financed from the transformational programme fund, for funding to extend the project to other targeted neighbourhoods. The project could be overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board. This proposal forms one of the recommendations.

7 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 7.1 The relevant legal issues are addressed within the report

Borough Treasurer

- 7.2 Whilst the cost benefit analysis identifies a potential 32% return on the grant investment, actual cash benefits to the Council will take time to emerge and when certain, will be reported through the normal budget monitoring process.
- 7.3 Before a proposal can be taken to the Executive to extend the project for a second year, a funding source for the £40,000 council contribution needs to be identified.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 – DCLG Delivering Differently in Neighbourhoods Case Study

Contact for further information

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