

Schools Forum 11 December 2007

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Progress on the Implementation of the Common Assessment Framework and Lead Professional

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Schools Forum of progress made regarding the Common Assessment Framework and the role of the Lead Professional, with reference to Section 10 (Children Act 2004) pooled budget arrangement.

Background

2. Schools Forum received a report in February 2007, which highlighted partners' responsibilities under Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 to work together to develop Children's Trust arrangements to meet the requirements of that Act and the Every Child Matters agenda. The Education and Inspection Act 2006 places a duty on Schools to cooperate to ensure engagement with the Every Child Matters agenda to achieve the five outcomes of - Be Healthy; Stay Safe; Enjoy and Achieve; Make a Positive Contribution and Economic Wellbeing.
3. The Common Assessment Framework, Lead Professional, information sharing, service directory and ContactPoint (Formally the Child Index), will assist in the delivery of integrated frontline services to children and young people. The appointment of five Integrated Service Managers (ISMs), one for each township of the Borough, would be appointed to:
 - Champion the change process to achieve an integrated service locally, for children young people and their families/carers.
 - Lead and coordinate the development of locally based practitioners to work as multi-agency teams.
 - In consultation with all those involved, develop an action plan, which reflects priorities within the Children and Young People's plan and other local priorities with a view to informing the Commissioning Strategy at a Borough level.
 - Work closely with managers/partners, including schools, to develop appropriate pathways to support plans around children and young people to ensure a coherent whole systems approach.
 - Track outcomes for children and young people against the five priority outcomes within the Children Act 2004.
 - Ensure that information is shared across all agencies to support planning and service delivery locally.
 - To arrange and deliver training for those who need it within a given geographic location in relation to raising awareness and delivery of the integrated process.

It was agreed that a pooled budget between the Local Authority (£50K), schools (£236K), further education colleges (£15K), Health (£30K), Police (£20K) and Connexions (£30K) would be established to resource this activity.

Progress to date

4. Progress is reported against the following: Swift and Easy Access training, recruitment, other significant developments and the pooled budget

4.1 Swift and Easy Access (S and EA)

The development of integrated working processes will provide the framework for schools to fulfil the Swift and Easy Access (S and EA) aspect of the core offer for extended services. The TDA have rated our progress in Dudley as green (on a red/amber/green assessment scale) for implementing this area of activity. However, it is noted by TDA that there is a current gap in staff resources, which needs to be addressed so that the agenda can be moved forward. A draft strategy for extended services is now out for consultation, with a closing date of 18th January 2008. The TDA have produced a framework and toolkit to assist schools and their partners on the delivery of S and EA, which will form the basis of the future delivery structure for Dudley. The ISMs will play a significant role in ensuring that arrangements set out in that plan are delivered.

4.2 Training

The Integrated Working (IW) training programme commenced in May of this year. Nearly 800 practitioners have attended the awareness-raising sessions. Over 200 practitioners have undertaken the core practitioner training, with another 150 booked onto future sessions. Almost 100 managers have attended the management briefing sessions. The initial programme was scheduled until December of this year on the basis that Integrated Service Managers would be appointed by that time and that they would then take the training programme forward on a locality basis. Further dates have been identified for Jan, Feb and March of 2008. It was acknowledged early in the delivery of the training that schools would find it difficult to engage, one of the barriers being the cost of supply cover to release staff. It is now the case that as a result of not appointing to the ISM posts there is an opportunity to offer some additional support to schools.

Recruitment

4.3

The five ISM posts were advertised in July with an exceptionally long closing date in September, to ensure a good circulation. Twenty applications were received, eight people short-listed, five interviewed and only one person appointed. This was clearly disappointing as the roll out of this activity was predicated on these crucial appointments. Agreement has been reached at the Children's Trust Executive Board that partner agencies will now each identify two suitable practitioners to create a pool from which to select. As timescales are tight it is expected that suitable practitioners will be identified by early December, with a view to them being in post by January 2008. The one person who has been appointed is due to commence in the new year and following her induction a decision will be made about the locality to which she will be deployed. As a consequence of the non- appointment to these posts, there has been no further

activity to roll this programme out across the Borough. Nine CAFs have been completed as part of the local piloting arrangements, which took place in one of the Borough's primary schools. In these cases either the Deputy Head Teacher or the Family Support Worker took on the role of the Lead Professional, one was an Educational Lead Professional. Feedback from these will be organised for January 2008.

Other Significant Developments

5. The Government, in its spending review, indicated their commitment to the procurement of a national e CAF solution, which would require partners to complete and store their CAFs electronically. The system is expected to be available in 2009.

Dudley has appointed a ContactPoint manager. ContactPoint will be enabled locally from October 2008 and will go live in 2009. Training will be delivered regarding access to ContactPoint in parallel to its implementation. An Integrated Working website for Dudley is in development which will give access for the Partnership to, amongst other things a newly developed set of working guidelines and procedures for this new way of working.

The Children's Trust has received a draft strategy paper outlining the principles for future frontline service delivery through integrated teams. These principles will have mutually supporting functions with those processes outlined above, including Swift and Easy Access. Discussions continue at Executive Board level on the best way to move this area of work forward.

The Pooled budget

6. The development of a Section 10 agreement to oversee the pooled budget arrangement is in its final draft and will be ready to be signed off by partners by December. All partners, with the exception of the Police and the Dudley Group of Hospitals have agreed their contributions. Discussions will continue with these two partners with a view to resolving these issues. The potential shortfall in this year's budget will be addressed through a contribution from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF). As indicated above, four of the five ISM posts have not been appointed, creating resource capability from within the pooled budget. Discussions have taken place with representatives from the Schools ISA Forum to agree a way forward for the re-distribution of some of this resource. It was agreed that in order to facilitate schools participation in the IW training, a contribution be made to schools on a formula basis to cover supply staff costs up until the end of this financial year. Where appropriate schools that have already attended could claim retrospectively if they could evidence supply costs. Further analysis of the budget would then need to take place in March taking account of appointment to the ISM posts and take up of training.

7. **Finance**

Arrangements for a Section 10 pooled budgets are nearing completion. Further work will be undertaken with both the Police and DGH to secure their contribution. Resource capacity resulting out of the non-appointment of the ISMs will be re-distributed to schools to assist in engagement with the training programme. Expectation that ISM posts will be filled in the new year so salary and start up

costs will need to be retained for such an eventuality. Appendix A gives a budget breakdown of expenditure to date and forecast of potential spend should the ISMs be appointed. Any underspend at the end of the year will be returned to partners if required on a pro-rata basis. This means that schools forum would be offered 60% of any underspends.

8. **Law**

The Children Act 2004 and the Education and Inspection Act 2006 places a duty on relevant partners to work together to deliver integrated front line services to achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes

9. **Equality Impact**

The implementation of the Common Assessment Processes and Lead Professional role will ensure that equality and diversity issues are addressed by focusing on individual children and their families needs regardless of background and would seek to narrow the gap between those who access services and those who find it more difficult to do so.

10. **Recommendations**

It is recommended that:

- a. Schools Forum agree to the proposal that the current underspend of £154,000 in the pooled budget be used to support schools to engage in the IW training programme by covering the cost of supply cover.
- b. Schools Forum agree to the possible return of any underspends identified at year end, on a pro-rata basis entitling DSG to be offered 60% of such funds as appropriate.
- c. Schools Forum agrees to continue to fund this development in line with current contributions for the financial year 2008/09.
- d. Schools Forum receives a further report on the budget position at the meeting on 6th February 2008.



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