**HEALTH AND ADULT SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE**

**01 OCTOBER 2013**

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<th>Title:</th>
<th>Update Report - Scrutiny Review on the Impact of the Recession and Welfare Reforms on Mental Health</th>
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<tr>
<td>Report of the Corporate Director of Adult &amp; Community Services</td>
<td>Open</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wards Affected: None</td>
<td>Key Decision: No</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Lisa Hodges, Business Support Officer</td>
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**Accountable Divisional Director:**
Glynis Rogers, Community Safety and Public Protection

**Accountable Director:**
Anne Bristow, Adult and Community Services

**Summary:**
The Health and Adult Services Select Committee (HASSC) is now half-way through its scrutiny review on the impact of the current recession and the welfare reforms on the mental health and wellbeing of residents in Barking and Dagenham. As part of its investigation, the Committee has now undertaken two sessions and one site visit with representatives from various statutory Council services, voluntary organisations and the North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT) Service User Reference Group.

This report gives an update on the progress of the Scrutiny Review since the last HASSC meeting on 29 July 2013, as well as an outline of the session with primary care and mental health services and commissioners on 1 October 2013. It also provides a summary of the plans for World Mental Health Day and the final stage of the review, before the first draft of the report and recommendations are presented in November.

**Recommendation(s)**

1. Members are asked to note the session overview for 29 July 2013 and the outline of the session for 1 October 2013.
2. Members are also asked to note the plans for World Mental Health Day and the final steps in the scrutiny review process.
1. **Introduction**

1.1 The Health and Adult Services Select Committee (HASSC) have chosen to conduct a scrutiny on the impact of the current recession, and the subsequent welfare reforms, on the mental health and wellbeing of residents in Barking and Dagenham as their scrutiny review for 2013/14.

1.2 Members have attended a number of site visits and sessions to inform the findings of the scrutiny review. An overview of the previous session with statutory services and the voluntary sector is outlined below, as well as a brief summary of the site visit which Members attended with the NELFT Service User Reference Group. Finally, this report gives an overview of the plans for the third session of the scrutiny with primary care and NELFT, as well as plans for World Mental Health Day on 10 October 2013.

2. **Overview of the ‘Local Impact of Austerity and recession’ session (29 July 2013)**

2.1 The second session of the scrutiny review, entitled ‘The local impact of austerity and recession’ took place before the last Select Committee meeting on 29 July 2013. The session was split into two parts, both aiming to explore the impact that the recession and the welfare reforms had had on local people through the eyes of statutory Council services and voluntary organisations. Members first explored the perspectives of a set of core statutory services dealing with housing, employment and benefits. This was followed by the opportunity to discuss the perspectives of a group of voluntary sector agencies, covering welfare advice and mental health support. An overview of the session is detailed below.

2.2 The two parts to the session were run as informal ‘question and answer’ focus groups and allowed Members to question key service providers on their experiences of providing support to people affected by the recession and welfare reforms.

2.3 Questions focused on the numbers of people accessing the services, the levels of need, the areas of concern that residents had, and the interventions that services were putting in place. Questions were also asked regarding the challenges that were facing services and whether services were robust enough to cope with the expected increase in demand.

2.4 The key points from the discussions are detailed below and the information collated from the session will be fed into the report of the scrutiny review and will inform the recommendations that are put together by HASSC.
Representatives from Revenue & Benefits, Housing and Employment & Skills attended the first part of the session and the following key points were raised:

**Housing**
- Housing stated that there are high numbers of people on Council housing waiting lists and that demand for housing is currently outstripping the supply.
- Officers are reporting that they are seeing increased levels of anxiety in residents, particularly residents reporting that they are concerned that they will lose their job due to the recession. It was stated that a number of residents are seeking advice from Housing Advice and Homelessness and Officers are reporting increased incidences of poor mental health in the residents that they are talking to, due to concerns relating to austerity measures and the welfare reforms.
- The Borough has the largest private rented sector in London and that on average, private landlords get 4-5 enquiries per property. It was felt that private landlords are more likely to rent their property to people not on benefits than those that are.

**Revenues & Benefits**
- Council Tax recovery activity has increased due to people falling behind with payments. Revenues and Benefits stated that in June 2013, three times as many residents received a summons for Council Tax than in June 2012.
- There is also an increase in rent arrears as people are hit by size criteria as a result of the ‘Bedroom Tax’.
- It is estimated that 900 residents are likely to be affected by the Benefits Cap which came into effect in August and it is anticipated that there will be an increase in people migrating into the borough as Barking and Dagenham remains slightly below the cap.
- The Revenues & Benefits service are working with families who are affected by the welfare reforms and are providing assistance with financial management.

**Employment & Skills**
- There are approximately 8,760 people claiming incapacity benefit, with around 3,500 claiming for mental health problems or behavioural related disorders.
- It is thought that many of these claimants will be transferred to the government’s Work Programme. However, in the first 18 months of the Programme (June 2011 to March 2013), only approximately 10 out of 620 residents obtained employment.
- Employment & Skills are working with employers such as Asda and Sainsbury’s to try to ring-fence jobs for the long-term unemployed.
2.6 Voluntary Sector Services

Representatives from Richmond Fellowship (an organisation who provide support to people with mental health problems), the Citizen’s Advice Bureau (CAB) and the Samaritans attended the second part of the session. Members were able to discuss with representatives how they interact with residents and service users and understand some of the concerns affecting voluntary services. The key points are detailed below:

Richmond Fellowship
- Richmond Fellowship stated that they are finding that service users are increasingly requiring more support around austerity-related issues, especially as other services close.
- Representatives from Richmond Fellowship felt that there is a lack of services providing emotional and wellbeing support in the borough and service users can be reluctant to move on in recovery due to a lack of confidence that the right support will be available to help them going forward.
- The service typically operates between a quarter and a third above commissioned capacity.

CAB
- CAB reported that people presenting to the drop-in service often demonstrate levels of depression and anxiety and that the data indicates that demand for people presenting with benefit and debt issues has increased by 25% against last year.
- CAB has prepared for the Welfare Reforms and has trained their staff to recognise people presenting with lower level distress and anxiety related to the impact of the recession and the reforms.
- The service relies on a small group of paid staff but generally relies heavily on volunteers. However, CAB are finding it difficult to retain volunteers as many get up-skilled and move on to paid work.

Samaritans
- The Samaritans are receiving more calls as a result of the Welfare Reforms, especially people worried about completing forms. It was noted that it is difficult for the Samaritans to identify those who are presenting with mental health issues in the borough as address information is not collected and the local branch covers Barking & Dagenham and Havering.
- The service is staffed entirely by volunteers. As for the CAB above, there is a constant turnover of volunteers and training and recruitment is ongoing.
3. **Update on site visits**

3.1 As well as the session on 29 July 2013 with statutory services and voluntary organisations, Members have also attended a site visit with the North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT) Service User Reference Group to inform the findings of the review.

3.2 A number of key issues came out of the site visit which will not only be discussed in the final report, but will also be explored in the session of the scrutiny review with representatives from NELFT and primary care. These included:

- The importance of accessing the right support at the point of crisis to aid recovery from mental health problems.
- The importance of volunteering opportunities in helping people to keep and maintain good mental health.
- The importance of seamless referral pathways and GP training. It was felt that GPs are not always trained or experienced in dealing with mental health unless the GP has a special interest in mental health.
- The importance of good information and advice for residents about mental health problems and where they can get support and advice. It was felt that this information should be readily available in all primary and secondary care premises and that more information should be available in pharmacies and GP surgeries.

4. **Outline of ‘The Impact on Mental Health Services and Primary Care’ session (1 October 2013)**

4.1 The session on 1 October is an opportunity for Members to participate in their penultimate session as part of the scrutiny review. This session is to allow Members to meet with representatives from Barking & Dagenham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT) to discuss the impacts of austerity and welfare reforms on mental health through the perspective of mental health services and primary care providers. The session is also to enable Members to question the CCG about current commissioning of mental health services and long term commissioning plans.

4.2 The following people have been invited to attend the session from the organisations:

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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Raj Kumar</td>
<td>Local CCG lead for Mental Health and Vice Chair of Barking &amp; Dagenham CCG</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharon Morrow</td>
<td>Chief Operating Officer, Barking &amp; Dagenham CCG</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Horne</td>
<td>Director of Operations NELFT</td>
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4.3 As in other scrutiny sessions, representatives will take part in a 45 minute formal question and answer session with Members of the Committee.

5. Plans for World Mental Health Day (10 October 2013)

5.1 World Mental Health Day is on 10 October 2013 and as part of the day, the Chair of the Health and Adult Services Select Committee is inviting residents and local organisations to the Broadway Theatre to take part in a focus group to find out their views on how the current recession is affecting their mental health and wellbeing.

5.2 This will be the final session in which Members will be able to explore issues with residents and inform the final report and recommendations and Members are asked to promote the event to their constituents.

5.3 The session will take place on Thursday 10 October 2013 at the Broadway Theatre, Barking between 4pm - 5pm with live entertainment and refreshments scheduled afterwards at the Broadway for participants to enjoy. Painting and artwork from mental health service users will also be on display.

5.4 Members should also be aware that NELFT are leading on an information event for World Mental Health Day at Dagenham Library on 10 October. Information stalls will be available and a number of organisations have indicated interest including Starlight, the Shaw Trust and DABD. Members are invited to attend the event which will take place from 11am until 4pm and more information on the event can be obtained from Carmel Michaels, Occupational Therapy & Social Inclusion Lead at NELFT on 0300 555 1129.

6. Next Steps

6.1 The first draft of the scrutiny review report will be available at the next meeting of the Health and Adult Services Select Committee on 12 November 2013.

6.2 Councillor Maureen Worby, Cabinet Member for Health, has been invited to this meeting and this will be an opportunity for Members of HASSC to discuss the initial findings and recommendations with the Cabinet Member before the final report is presented to HASSC at its meeting on 14 January 2014.