### Summary:

The Health and Adult Services Select Committee (HASSC) undertook a scrutiny review on the Potential Impact of the Recession and Welfare Reforms on Mental Health in 2013/14 which resulted in seven recommendations being actioned.

The summarised recommendations are:

- Better information and advice is needed for residents, practitioners and those already known to mental health services on issues of welfare reform, advocacy, and support for coping with stress/depression/anxiety
- Recovery and resilience can be supported/built up through training and volunteering opportunities
- Peer support opportunities must be developed to prevent isolation, provide emotional support, and share knowledge
- The primary care depression pathway should be reviewed to ensure it is holistic and not overly reliant on the prescription of anti-depressants
- The effects of the austerity and welfare reforms should be measured so that the Council and its partners understand the impacts on residents and levels of need
- Demand on local services (advocacy, local emergency support, credit unions, welfare rights) should be closely monitored
- The Mental Health First Aid training programme should be delivered to professionals across the partnership and other local employers. Additional mental health awareness training should be provided where appropriate.

The scrutiny review recommendations were first presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB) at its meeting on 25 March 2014 and the Mental Health Sub Group was tasked with overseeing the development of the Action Plan to implement the recommendations.
A progress report against the Action Plan was presented to the HASSC in September 2014 where positive outcomes following the review were noted. A request was made that a further and final progress update should be presented back to the HASSC in March 2015.

This report will provide HASSC members with the further progress that has been achieved since September 2014.

The report will also inform members that the Scrutiny Review recommendations have now been synthesised into a single, overarching, thematic action plan that incorporates recommendations from the Barking and Dagenham Mental Health Needs Assessment, Closing the Gap, and the Mental Health Crisis Concordat.

**Recommendations**

The Health and Adult Services Select Committee is recommended to:

i. Note and discuss the action progress made to date to implement the seven recommendations

ii. To note that the scrutiny review recommendations have been ‘synthesised’ into an overarching thematic action plan that incorporates recommendations from the Mental Health Needs Assessment, and the national policy documents ‘Closing The Gap’ and Mental Health Crisis Concordat.

**Reasons**

It is best scrutiny practice for the select committees to monitor the progress of recommendations made as a result of investigations carried out previously to evaluate the impact of scrutiny reviews.

1. **Introduction and Background**

1.1 The Health and Adult Services Select Committee (HASSC) chose to conduct a scrutiny review on the impact of the recession and welfare reforms on mental health and wellbeing as their scrutiny topic for 2013/14. The review began in June 2013 and the final information gathering session was held in November 2013.

1.2 The review sought to answer three key questions:

- How are economic austerity and the Welfare Reforms impacting on our citizens?
- Will the austerity measures, reduction in income levels and increases in poverty lead to more mental ill health?
- What can we do, or what are we currently doing, to mitigate the likely impact?

1.3. Following the evidence gathering, HASSC arrived at four broad conclusions:

- Welfare reforms are a source of anxiety (especially to those with pre-existing mental health issues).
- Financial hardship is putting strain on residents and is the cause of emotional distress.
• There is increased demand for voluntary sector services.
• There is increased demand for health service interventions.

1.4. In response to the evidence and findings the HASSC made 7 recommendations which are summarised as follows:

• Better information and advice is needed for residents, practitioners and those already known to mental health services on issues of welfare reform, advocacy, and support for coping with stress/depression/anxiety.

• Recovery and resilience can be supported/built up through training and volunteering opportunities.

• Peer support opportunities must be developed to prevent isolation, provide emotional support, and share knowledge.

• The primary care depression pathway should be reviewed to ensure it is holistic and not overly reliant on the prescription of anti-depressants.

• The effects of the austerity and welfare reforms should be measured so that the Council and its partners understand the impacts on residents and levels of need.

• Demand on local services (advocacy, local emergency support, credit unions, welfare rights) should be closely monitored.

• The Mental Health First Aid training programme should be delivered to professionals across the partnership and other local employers. Additional mental health awareness training should be provided where appropriate.

1.5 The findings of the of the scrutiny review were first presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB) at its meeting in March 2014, which resulted in a request that the mental health sub-group develop an implementation action plan to take forward the reports 7 recommendations and that this to be presented to the HWBB July 2014 meeting.

1.6 An update on progress was provided to the HASSC at its September 2014 meeting, where positive outcomes following the review were noted, and a request made that a further and a final progress update should be presented back to the HASSC in March 2015.

2. Implementation Progress

2.1 The implementation of actions to progress achievement of the recommendations has been overseen by the Mental Health Sub Group. Details given below summarise the progress that has been achieved since September 2014 for each of the seven recommendations.
2.1.1 Better information and advice is needed for residents, practitioners and those already known to mental health services on issues of welfare reform, advocacy, and support for coping with stress/depression/anxiety.

A Mental Health Needs Analysis (MHNA) has been completed and the report and findings will be presented to a future Health and Wellbeing Board.

As part of the Mental Health Needs Assessment information gathering process, a mapping exercise was conducted to identify gaps in current information and advice provision within Barking and Dagenham. Two public and service user engagement events were undertaken in September and November 2014 at which service user and carer feedback was gathered regarding what improved access and quality of information and advice about services offering benefits advice and advocacy would look like.

Work is being undertaken within the Mental Health sub group membership to ensure that all web-based and printed information regarding mental health services for adults and children/young people is consistent and up to date. The Time to Change website and free resources will be promoted throughout the health and social care system, including on websites.

2.1.2 Recovery and resilience can be supported/built up through training and volunteering opportunities.

There is evidence that Mental Health Sub Group member organisations have promoted volunteering opportunities over the last six months.

- Jobcentre Plus have been working with local employers and organisations to create work experience and volunteering opportunities available to various categories of benefit recipients. Specialist Disability Employment Advisers, and Employment and Support Allowance Advisers, have work experience or volunteering opportunities created for clients experiencing Mental Health problems.
- The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham volunteering team continues to promote volunteering through a regular newsletter and a new volunteering website. The council commissions the Richmond Fellowship, a specialist vocational support service, to promote volunteering opportunities and support people with mental health problems into volunteering, training and employment. Since the beginning of October 2014 they have supported 8 mental health service users to gain volunteering placements. They also support people to attend volunteer facilitated support groups and 37 service users were supported to do this since the beginning of October 2014. A forum of all Mental Health Providers is taking place in February 2015 and the Richmond Fellowship will be presenting their service to all Providers at the Forum.
- NELFT voluntary services are developing a volunteer training programme and liaising with neighbouring Trusts in order to share best practice prior to fully launching the redesigned training programme.
2.1.3 **Peer support opportunities must be developed to prevent isolation, provide emotional support, and share knowledge.**

A finding of the Mental Health Needs Assessment was that people with mental illness in Barking and Dagenham would greatly benefit from greater holistic support for their recovery.

NELFT provides a Recovery College which attracts Barking & Dagenham students. The college uses an educational approach to promote individual learning and development of expertise and recovery for people using mental health services and their carers. Peer trainers contribute to the co-production and delivery of the course curriculum. However, the Recovery College is not a commissioned service. Currently it is funded through NELFT discretionary funding until April 2015.

The Mental Health Needs Assessment service user engagement events stimulated much local enthusiasm to develop a peer programme similar to the highly successful Lambeth Peer Programme, to meet the needs of the people in Barking and Dagenham experiencing mental health problems. The Peer Programme enables people with mental health needs to work through difficult emotional issues and take more control of their own lives. Evaluation of the programme demonstrated the programme increase their coping skills, which in turn had increased their resilience and improved their well-being. As well as emotional support, peers were able to share practical information regarding welfare rights and other sources of useful information.

The Mental Health Needs Assessment has made a recommendation regarding the development and implementation of a Peer Support Programme within Barking and Dagenham. This is being considered by both mental health service commissioners.

2.1.4 **The primary care depression pathway should be reviewed to ensure it is holistic and not overly reliant on the prescription of anti-depressants.**

Recognising that patients presenting with depression may exhibit mild through to severe symptoms, work has been progressing with Barking and Dagenham practices to review the primary care depression pathway to provide a step care model that will offer an holistic approach to managing depression.

- Where depression presents as mild to moderate a range of psychological and social interventions will be offered e.g. cognitive behavioural therapy; benefits, housings, education/employment/training; peer and voluntary sector support.
- Where depression presents as moderate to severe, in addition to the range of therapies listed above, prescription of anti-depressants and referral to secondary care will be also be considered/offered.

Promotion of the ‘Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies’, (IAPT), has seen some increase in referrals to the service over the last three months. The service is working very closely with the GP lead for mental health and the practice improvement team within the CCG to liaise and support GP’s in the borough mainly to re iterate the Management of Depression pathway, referral pathways into IAPT, and increase written and verbal exchange of clinical information between GP’s and
IAPT. The rationale for this is to increase identification of common mental health presentations and signpost to IAPT.

2.1.5 **The effects of the austerity and welfare reforms should be measured so that the Council and its partners understand the impacts on residents and levels of need.**

The Mental Health Needs Assessment also considered the impact of austerity and welfare reforms as part of its remit and will report on this in Spring 2015.

There is recognition that through enhancing floating support, residents with mental health problems will be assisted to maintain tenancies and avoid homelessness. The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham currently commission 3 supported living schemes for mental health service users, all three are due to expire in September 2015. The commissioned mental health supported accommodation schemes will be subject to a re-design in 2015. A number of options are currently being explored, including how floating support can better support mental health service users. Consultation will begin with mental health service users, professionals and organisations from February 2015 on these new plans.

2.1.6 **Demand on local services (advocacy, local emergency support, credit unions, welfare rights) should be closely monitored.**

Through continual contract monitoring and evaluation, commissioning officers within LBBD have ensured that services commissioned by the Council remain fit for purpose and meet the needs of residents in the Borough, including those with mental health needs.

These services include:
- Enhanced Welfare Rights
- Specialist Advocacy
- Local Emergency Support services
- Credit Union

However, central government funding reductions from April 2015 to the Local Emergency Support Service will have an impact on level of services offered within Barking and Dagenham. To minimise this impact the Council has agreed to continue to fund a reduced service from Council reserves.

The Credit Union and the Enhanced Welfare Rights service will continue to be funded for 2015/16.

The specialist advocacy provision is funded for 2015/16 and council officers are working to ensure this complies with new Care Act legislation. The council will be reviewing all of their advocacy services in 2015, including mental health advocacy provision, to ensure there is a ‘joined up’ approach for everyone who needs statutory advocacy.
2.1.7 **The Mental Health First Aid training programme should be delivered to professionals across the partnership and other local employers. Additional mental health awareness training should be provided where appropriate**

The Mental Health First Aid training programme is on track to meet the target for participants completing by the end of March 2015. To date 875 people across a range of services have received the training and evaluation of the two day programme has been extremely positive. Plans are being developed to continue training for 2015/16 which will be more tailored to Barking and Dagenham services and staff. This will include the possible development of mental health champions within services to provide additional front line support in raising awareness of mental health issues.

A recommendation of the Mental Health Needs Assessment is that as part of the primary care improvement plan, GPs and other primary care professionals should be supported to undertake training, such as Mental Health First Aid, and development in mental health. Ways of encouraging those who do not see that they have a specialist role in mental health should be identified, and a broad view should be taken of those professionals who would benefit from such development.

2.2 In order to ensure that the issues raised by the Scrutiny Review into Mental Health and austerity continue to receive priority they have been incorporated into the wider piece of work on a full needs assessment around mental health. This work led by Public Health incorporates the Borough’s response to Closing the Gap and the Mental Health Crisis Concordat.

2.3 At a recent development session members of the Mental Health Sub-group have reviewed the actions required by this wider needs assessment and developed a plan, which now includes the work identified by the Select Committee. The sub-group will take ownership for monitoring progress and provide reports as required to the Health and Well Being Board and other relevant committees.

3. **Options Appraisal**

3.1 Not applicable as this paper is to inform HASSC of progress made in the implementation of the Scrutiny Review action plan.

4. **Consultation**

4.1 Two service user and carer engagement events have taken place since September 2014 to gather information and feedback to inform the Mental Health Needs Assessment. Following these events the membership of the Mental Health Sub Group has widened to include a service user and a carer.

5. **Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

6. **Legal Implications**

As this report is for noting, there are no direct legal implications relating to the report itself or in the action plan.
7. Other Implications

7.1 Customer Impact

The review found that residents were bewildered by the scale of the welfare reforms and did not always know where to go for support or understand the information they were given. Recommendation 1 should result in better information about welfare benefits advice and advocacy preventing the escalation of problems that might affect a person’s health and mental wellbeing.

It is expected that the delivery of recommendations 2 and 3, which seek to build resilience and support people’s recovery through training, volunteering and peer support, will have a positive impact on those experiencing emotional distress or mental ill-health.

7.2 Health Issues

The public’s mental health and well-being is a complex area of policy. It demands our attention because focusing more on mental well-being and improving people’s mental health is the right way to go. This report shows that improving mental well-being is a significant and growing priority in spite of, and because of, the poor economic situation we find ourselves in. It is clear that building community resilience and improving mental well-being will improve social, health and economic outcomes. The pending refresh of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy should continue view the causes of our major health challenges with a mental health lens – from obesity to drug and alcohol misuse to smoking. Without a focus on how people think, feel, behave and relate (their mental wellbeing), we will not make the progress we need to.

Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:

Health and Adult Services Select Committee’s scrutiny review on the ‘Potential Impact of the Recession and Welfare Reforms on Mental Health’: