



Self Reliance Initiatives in Tandridge Interim Report

23 June 2006

KEY ISSUE

To review the position of the two self-reliance initiatives in Tandridge which are currently in their third and final year of pilot funding.

SUMMARY

A report was brought to Committee on 1st October 2004 detailing the background to these projects and giving an update following the recruitment of the workers to the two schemes in Caterham and Hurst Green. The essential difference between the two projects lies in their initial funding and their day to day line management but the aims remain the same, to work with vulnerable families to improve the social and educational integration of children into school and therefore to reduce future dependence on social care and other services. Both projects have had measurable successes and, now that they are nearing the end of their pilot funding, are considering ways in which the benefits of the schemes can be maintained.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Tandridge Local Committee:

- a. Notes the contents and
- b. considers ways in which it can continue to actively support these projects

INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND

1 Caterham School Community Worker

- 1.1 Officers last reported to the Local Committee on this issue at a meeting on 1st October 2004 at which time, Surrey County Council's (SCC) stated self reliance policy was to promote Individual and Community Self Reliance. Without repeating the content of that report, which is now on public record, suffice it to say that, the local response to that policy was to broker a series of meetings in Caterham with partners to identify the most cost-effective response to the identified need in Westway for early intervention.
- 1.2 From discussions with services, other professionals and local partners, the agreed model involved recruiting a full time professional to work in schools with identified families to support children to improve attendance and behaviour in school, while reducing the potential future risk of becoming increasingly disaffected from mainstream education, reliant on social care intervention or, in extreme cases, involvement in criminal activity.
- 1.3 The Caterham project received some funding from the Surrey County Council self-reliance budget, some from what was then the Community Support Service (now Local Partnerships Team) budget and the remainder from a generous donation from Local Committee Members' allocations to pilot the project over three years.
- 1.4 While not contributing financially, the Children's Service offered the services of the Education Welfare Manager (EWM) to line-manage the post. She also assisted with drafting the job specification and put together a robust induction and training programme to ensure that the worker would comply with current legislation and had an understanding of service requirements. The East Surrey Children's Service manager made a further commitment to mainstream the project, should it prove successful, picking up costs from April 2007.
- 1.5 The current costs of the project are around £20,000 per annum.

2 Family Link Worker Project, Hurst Green

- 2.1 At the same time, early 2003, the Children's Fund made available a sum of money for a similar project specifically targeting families in temporary accommodation. Again meetings were brokered with local partners, which resulted in a successful bid taken forward by Holland School for funding in the region of £50,000 over three years.
- 2.2 A job specification was duly drafted and coincidentally both posts were advertised at the same time.
- 2.3 Initially, the terms of the Children's Fund bid limited the scope of the project. However, because of refurbishing works, these families were scattered across a variety of locations and were, therefore, not readily identifiable. So, the Children's Fund agreed to extend the remit to all vulnerable families in Hurst Green, with the understanding that there would be some overlap.
- 2.4 The Hurst Green project supports only two schools, Hurst Green and Holland and the worker is line-managed directly by the Head of Holland School, with some additional mentoring and professional support from the Children's Team in Caterham.
- 2.5 The Hurst Green Family Link steering group, which includes a member of the Local Committee and an officer from the Local Partnerships team, continues to meet on a

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regular basis, to discuss progress and ways in which the project can expand and integrate further into the community. A Children's Fund representative attends the steering group and works closely with the project worker and school head to ensure that the project meets the agreed aims and targets.

3 Evaluation

- 3.1 While the Family Link project is regularly evaluated through the Children's Fund to strict criteria, the School Community Worker (SCW) regularly updates the management group and has recently produced an interim evaluation report. This report refers to specific families and is therefore confidential at this time.
- 3.2 The project workers have each drafted a short briefing note giving an indication of the challenges and successes (Annexes A and B) to date which demonstrate the breadth of the projects.
- 3.3 At a recent Management Group meeting, the headteachers of the Caterham schools who benefit from the project were enthusiastic about the impact this project has had in terms of reducing their workload and liaising between school, home and other services, as the project worker has both the time and skills to deal with situations which are difficult for busy school staff to address effectively.
- 3.4 The feedback from Holland School for the Family Link worker is in a similar vein with demonstrable benefits for the school headteacher in terms of reducing pressure from families coping with difficult social situations; improved attendance and behaviour and stronger links to the local community.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 Both projects are in their final year of pilot funding. In each case the Local Committee has lent support, financial and practical, to the projects and has given its approval to the work undertaken.
- 4.2 A report on the projects, due at the end of the year, was intended to share with Members the ways in which the projects had been taken forward and to look at other priorities that could be addressed in partnership. However, this interim report will make members aware of the current difficulties that may prevent this from happening.
- 4.3 Firstly, the Children's Fund (CF) is in negotiation with the Children's Service to transfer its budget into the preventive strategy. CF staff are working to ensure continuity for 27 of its current projects, including the Hurst Green Family Link, but at this stage there are no guarantees that any one project will be successful.
- 4.4 If the project does secure continuity of funding, there are issues around location and future development as the school does have accommodation problems and space is at a premium. Alternative arrangements are therefore being considered. If the project is adopted by the Children's Service under the terms of these negotiations this will become the subject of further future discussion.
- 4.5 Further information will be available in the coming months and it is hoped to have a definitive answer on the budget by December 2006.
- 4.6 However, the Caterham project is arguably more vulnerable as the circumstances surrounding it have changed significantly following the business delivery review and there is no longer any guaranteed funding for 2007.

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- 4.7 Two of the four schools, Hillcroft and Marden Lodge will receive enhanced funding this year and would consider contributing to costs in order to maintain the project, as its benefits have been considerable. However, this would need to be matched by Children's Service funding. In the past, managers could have made use of the Development Fund but this no longer exists and there is currently no leeway for managers to enter into this kind of local agreement. This situation is not local to Tandridge but is countywide.
- 4.8 The success of these local neighbourhood-based projects can be considered in the formal countywide review of Self Reliance Policy. This review is expected to align itself under Safer and Stronger Communities activities and may recommend resource allocations from funds ring-fenced under the LAA initiative. Regardless of this, however, the financial commitment of mainstream services will still be essential for the forward development of local self-reliance projects.
- 4.9 If funding, short- or long-term, was identified, it would still leave a number of unanswered questions about location, line-management and ongoing support but it would relieve the immediate anxiety for the schools, the project workers and the families with whom they are involved.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The period immediately following Surrey County Council's business delivery review will require time for services to bed down and for new ways of working to become established. This is contributing to the current uncertainty. It is not possible to second-guess how future partnership initiatives will be taken forward. However, Members may be able to address some of these issues when Children's Service officers attend the next Local Committee meeting in September.
- 5.2 Should the projects not continue, professional expertise would be lost and there would be a risk of undoing the good work that has been achieved in the interim. However, if this is the necessary outcome, it is important to identify ways in which the lessons learned from the pilots can be captured and to review Surrey County Council's approach to future partnership projects.
- 5.3 In the meantime, it would be disappointing to lose the projects due to poor timing and officers from the Local Partnerships Team will make every effort to ensure that all avenues are explored to try to support continuity. Members are asked to consider ways in which projects such as these can be supported.

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