

Community Budgets and Community Safety

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

In its proposals for Rewiring Public Services the LGA argues that local public services can be made more effective while waste and red tape is cut by bringing local services and decisions together in one place. The LGA believes that a community budgets approach is central to redesigning public services. As a community budget pilot, Cheshire West and Chester have been invited to give a presentation to the Board on their approach to domestic abuse services.

Recommendations

Members are invited to:

1. note the presentation from Cheshire West and Chester;
2. discuss the wider possibilities of community budgets in addressing community safety issues; and
3. discuss the lessons learned to date, for dissemination to the sector.

Action

Officers to action as appropriate.

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Community Budgets and Community Safety

Background

1. The LGA has been and remains a champion of community budgets, reflecting an ambition in local government to strengthen the local democratic accountability for public services, improve the outcomes for local people, families and communities, and maximise the value for money of public spending.
2. A major theme within the 10 key demands set out in *Rewiring Public Services* is improving public service effectiveness by bringing local services and decisions together in one place. The community budget approach – at both the whole place and neighbourhood levels – is about fundamentally redesigning public services. The pilots have shown that by rewiring services around people and places, with the right people and determination, radical and positive results can be achieved which can be replicated elsewhere. Community budgets are particularly relevant in relation to community safety issues where more integrated working across agencies can deliver reduced costs and go some way to helping community safety partnerships tackle significant funding reductions. A number of Police and Crime Commissioners have signalled enthusiasm about community budgets and are exploring this approach with their community safety partnerships and wider partners to tackle cross cutting crime issues.
3. At the end of last year the Board had a presentation from Essex County Council about the business case they were preparing for their whole place community budget pilot and the work they were doing around domestic abuse services. Since then the pilots have started their work. Although still in its infancy, Cheshire West and Chester have drawn some early lessons learned which we are keen to share with Members and more widely across community safety portfolio holders. Information about all the pilots and practical tools to get started are all set out at www.communitybudgets.org.

The Cheshire West and Chester Community Budget Pilot

4. Altogether Better is the banner under which West Cheshire has been taking its Community Budgets work further. It aims to reduce duplication, promote an integrated approach to service delivery, and improve outcomes for residents. By pooling or aligning the thinking, expertise and resources of local public services, the costs and benefits will be shared between partners resulting in both better services for citizens and better value for money.
5. The Living Well part of Altogether Better addresses services that impact directly onto communities and neighbourhoods. The Safer Communities Project proposes a new delivery model for West Cheshire partners that works with a cohort of 1,160 victims of domestic abuse, and 156 known perpetrators.
6. West Cheshire is a relatively low crime area, and there have been ongoing reductions over recent years. However, tackling domestic abuse remains a significant challenge, with Cheshire West and Chester's business plan estimating the cost of domestic abuse as £16.5 million a year, though the actual costs were thought to be nearer £20 million. It is estimated that 98% of these costs address the consequences of domestic abuse,

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with only 2% funding prevention. A new delivery model was therefore proposed which would reduce the risks, demand on public services and cost of domestic abuse thereby delivering better outcomes for victims and their children.

7. At the heart of the new approach was a move to tackling the underlying causes of domestic abuse alongside better support for victims, and improved offender management. This would result in fewer repeat victims, less re-offending and fewer children with a child protection plan or taken into care as a result of domestic abuse. The plan looked to achieve this through changes such as:
 - 7.1 an access team to identify need earlier and provide joined up support to reduce escalation of a problem;
 - 7.2 a common assessment process to manage risk in a co-ordinated and consistent way;
 - 7.3 an improved core offer to respond to 'medium' risk involving awareness raising, training, signposting and enhanced victim support;
 - 7.4 multi-skilled locality based case management teams to provide the right interventions for medium and high risk victims and perpetrators involving professionals in police, probation, family advocacy and others;
 - 7.5 a menu of interventions as core support including personal and household security, a new refuge offer, therapeutic services and advocacy for victims;
 - 7.6 an integrated offender management approach with medium and high risk offenders which includes electronic monitoring and alcohol monitoring;
 - 7.7 a joint outcomes framework to ensure all agencies assess their success against common objectives; and
 - 7.8 a data and intelligence hub to ensure up to date information.
8. The cost of implementing the new service was estimated to be £2 million a year, but reducing net costs by £7.6 million over 5 years.
9. Having started to implement the proposals from November 2012 Cheshire West and Chester realised that another strand of work within Altogether Better, Families Together, were working with the same individuals or families. It was therefore decided to combine the proposals around tackling domestic abuse with those for early intervention with children and troubled families so there is now one project around integrated early support. The amended plan therefore incorporates an additional two workstreams:
 - 9.1 a families together agreement to outline what is expected of the family and the individuals within it; and

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- 9.2 pooling of investment to enable partners to have a shared view of the flows of money and benefits across organisations in the new model.
10. The team that assess people referred through the gateway have access to 11 different databases in different agencies so they have a considerable amount of information on the families and individuals they are dealing with. Even though they may have sought assistance from the council on an area unrelated to domestic abuse the team can see if they may have reported incidents to the police. The case is then passed to one of three case management teams, and a key worker who is then responsible for delivery of the support against the single plan for that case. Overall the expectation is that the pilot will produce savings of around £106 million in total over five years, with the net saving being £51 million.
11. Commissioning some key Domestic Abuse services may be more effectively done across local authority or police boundaries. For example, Refuge and IDVA services in Acute Trusts are likely to serve populations from outside any one borough. As a minimum, knowing what neighbouring authority resources and commissioning plans are is key. In addition to that, Police and Crime Commissioners and HMIC are likely to be interested in service consistency across Constabulary areas.

Lessons so far

12. The local success factors which Ernst and Young identified include commitment and will, appetite for innovation and risk, leadership maturity, operational maturity and workforce productivity. Some of these have been identified in Cheshire West and Chester. Members may wish to explore these – particularly around political leadership – in order to encourage other areas to adopt this approach.
13. Lessons learned so far:
- 13.1 The political leaders in the different organisations need to be closely involved and understand all the issues so they are aware of blockages and issues that need resolving if the project is to progress. Consider the role of opposition members and scrutiny committees.
- 13.2 There needs to be a narrow focus on the particular issues the community budget process is looking to solve.
- 13.3 While pace is necessary, patience is as well as progress will take time to realise.
- 13.4 Those involved need to be confident enough to constantly challenge what is being done as the issues and problems are continually changing as progress is made.
- 13.5 Focussing efforts on earlier support will require the retention of existing high-risk approaches, at least until there is evidence of a reduction in high risk cases.

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- 13.6 Ensuring effective governance of pooled budgets so that any required re-profiling to support outcomes is relatively prompt and straightforward.
- 13.7 Domestic Abuse cuts across a variety of partnerships (Local Safeguarding Children's Board, Local Safeguarding Adults Board, Community Safety Partnerships), as well as agencies, and often has a long history of local voluntary sector provision. Reviewing and re-commissioning this area of work requires viewing it as a whole system, rather than a small number of components. Change should be programmed carefully.

Conclusion and next steps

14. Cheshire West and Chester's experience in implementing a whole place community budget in relation to domestic abuse may have relevance and lessons for councils work in other areas of community safety. We have previously identified other themes such as community cohesion, tackling child sexual exploitation, tackling anti-social behaviour and reducing re-offending as benefitting from a community budgets approach. Members may wish to consider ways in which this approach can be adopted and encouraged more widely.

Financial Implications

15. As both community budgets and domestic abuse have been identified as priorities in the LGA's business plan, any work arising out of this report will be met from existing resources.