

**Southend: A Better Start
Workforce Development**

Background

A cornerstone of the Better Start approach is the conviction that meaningful and sustained change starts with local people. Successful programme implementation requires a supportive climate across all partner organisations with genuine and explicit buy-in from the workforce and community members.

The Health and Wellbeing Board will recall that, at the April 2016 board, members identified and considered some of the key issues and challenges in integrating children's services including workforce recruitment issues. Building on that discussion, this paper sets out a strategic approach to workforce development for implementation over the next 18 months.

1) Scoping the Better Start workforce and community

The Big Lottery Fund (BLF) is currently procuring a provider to help the five Better Start partnerships gain a more detailed understanding of the capacity, capability and motivations of local people – both professionals and the community. This work will be key in helping us design and plan how we engage with the workforce and the community to deliver the Better Start vision. The total value of the BLF contract is £750k over approximately 15 months, with the 5 local partnerships each contributing £40k and the remainder funded centrally].

The ABS workforce is conceived as being wider than paid practitioners whose primary focus is on the ABS outcomes (health visitors, midwives, practice nurses, Speech & Language therapists, family support workers, social workers, paediatricians, dieticians, children's centre workers, GPs, parent-infant psychologists, psychotherapists, psychiatrists, day care workers, Home Start, charity sector etc.) It also includes paid practitioners with an indirect focus / influence on the ABS outcomes (housing officers, workers in CAB/Advice services, drug and alcohol treatment services, adult mental health services, domestic abuse services, employment advisors, and the police etc.) Plus the diverse pool of people with the potential to improve children's early development: current and potential volunteers and members of the community. At present, we have a limited picture of who these people are and what knowledge, skills, values, motivations and experiences they bring.

The contract will commence in February 2016 and comprises 3 strands:

- a) **Insight and exploration:** Work with individual ABS programme teams, local practitioners and defined groups within the community to articulate the shared vision; develop a shared definition of the ABS workforce; and explore current awareness of these amongst practitioners and the community. To understand organisational, professional and policy contexts and history of managing change and collaborative working. (Method includes site visits, multiple focus groups, in-depth interviews, analysis and design of Strand 2)
- b) **Measurement:** Survey design to measure the 'ABS workforce'; pilot test web and community components of survey; fieldwork; analysis [Aiming for 7,500 members of the workforce across the 5 sites for web-based interviews)
- c) **Applying the findings and Action Planning:** Support to each partnership and their stakeholders in interpreting the findings, understanding the opportunities and threats, and applying the findings to our communications, workforce and community action plan

In addition, the project will develop a toolkit or resources to enable future replication of the methods used, so could be applied to cross-system scoping and planning with other workforces across Southend for example.

The ambition longer term is to promote a cross-system shift in ways of working from remedial intervention to universal prevention, by influencing the content of professional qualifications and curricula, for example; and to support integrated working across children's services through the development and use of multi-disciplinary core competences for all practitioners and volunteers. We cannot progress this work however until findings from the scoping work starts to emerge, so in the meantime we are proposing to move forward with two more modest projects:

2) Building an ABS Workforce Community of Practice

Following a recent engagement event for the development of the Enhanced Healthy Child Programme (eHCP), we have the opportunity to grow a group of practitioners and volunteers from across the Southend system into an ABS Workforce Community of Practice. This will provide a forum for identifying cross-system challenges for the ABS workforce, identifying solutions and looking at how we can develop best practice and learning from the other ABS sites and beyond. This group will have an initial meeting in early 2017 and will be key in designing the proposed ABS learning and development programme referred to below.

The work of this Community of Practice will be linked into our on-line Knowledge Centre which is currently under development through the ABS website. This will provide a catalogue and dissemination function for research and best practice evidence and, from April 2017, the facility for on-line discussion forums and webinars.

3) Engaging the paid ABS workforce through Learning & Development

In parallel to the scoping study above, we are planning to deliver a programme of cross-agency training and development opportunities throughout 2017 in order to:

- a) Engage workforce leads and senior practitioners in cross-system collaboration through the planning, design and delivery of a multi-agency learning and development programme
- b) Provide cross-system learning and development to practitioners to support them with key practice challenges (quick wins) and at the same time engage the workforce the values and ambition of ABS.

To inform this work we would like to undertake a mapping exercise to identify Continuing Professional Development pathways and requirements and existing learning and development provision, to identify gaps, duplication and opportunities. We are currently reviewing how best to take this work forward

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:

1. **NOTE** the direction of travel
2. **NOMINATE** people from their respective organisations who can take an active role in taking forward these ABS workforce development projects
3. **ADVISE** on any key people or resources across the borough whom we should join up with.