



**Briefing 18/38 November 2018**

## **Insights into Social Care Practice**

'*Insights*' is a series of case studies, intended to promote and share pioneering practice among APSE member authorities in delivering adult social care.

### **London Borough of Barking and Dagenham: Transformation to facilitate Early Intervention**

*Barking and Dagenham's transition away from a traditional working model to **Community Solutions**, a working model designed to provide support for residents' needs at the earliest opportunity and facilitate residents taking confident, self-directed approaches to resolving problem situations and caring for the needs in their own lives and communities.*

It is commonly recognised in the delivery of adults, children's, housing and other 'people-based' services that early intervention to resolve emerging difficulties is strategically advantageous since it avoids complex, more challenging situations at a later stage. Late intervention cases are often harder to resolve and are likely to result in more costly interventions and greater suffering. For example, supporting tenants with debt management can help avoid eviction, inviting older people to attend strengthening exercise classes can help avoid falls and working with young people as they leave care to find employment and housing will help avoid their lives being stung by economic deprivation or homelessness at a later stage in life.

Currently, most funding for social care is reserved for immediate intervention. Unfortunately, this means public service professionals are committing themselves to only responding to vulnerable people when they are at crisis point. As pressures on funding increase, it is now widely acknowledged that if social care professionals are to secure funding for early intervention it is necessary for them to build a robust 'business case'.

At the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, the workforce have re-imagined their working model to make 'early response' the norm. The Borough has re-designed services away from a model fit for providing specialist support in particular crisis situations and towards a model that provides holistic responses at the point of

emerging need with - in the less likely event of it being required - specialist support available. In this way, early intervention is not the 'added extra' for which funding is argued for but the everyday. By adopting this approach, the Borough hope to reduce the frequency of emergency and complex situations of need arising.

The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham is ranked the twelfth most deprived local authority area in the country with an estimated 32% of children living in poverty, and the highest percentage of DWP benefit claimants of any borough within London. It is also a growing economy; in the next 20 years, the Council aims to build 50,000 homes and create 20,000 new jobs. Motivated by the level of need within their borough and eager to see residents seize the availing opportunities in the local labour market, the Council sought to redesign its services to support residents to get upstream of emerging difficulties early on and be ready to play their part in the borough's growing economy. Furthermore, as demand for services was growing, the Council sought to embed an approach that would help stem demand away from specialist services and in so doing, realise savings necessary to meet a funding shortfall of 68m.

In 2014, 200 managers at the Council were invited to participate in a staff consultation on the future direction of the local authority. Among them was a strong drive for bold service redesign around customers, with a focus on integration at the point of delivery and early intervention, enabling residents to find their own solutions, taking a less paternalistic approach and responsive to the borough's changing population and economy.

As a consequence, a proposal was taken to the Council's Cabinet in April 2016 for **Community Solutions**, a working model amalgamating the following services in to a single service area, with customer interactions directed and teams organised by the level of difficulty faced by the customer, providing a holistic service coordinated across specialisms and service areas.

**What's included in Community Solutions?**

Adult College  
Children's centres  
Libraries  
Employment and Skills  
Home and Money Hub (HAMH)  
Early Intervention – Universal  
Healthy Lifestyles  
Adult Intake  
Multi- Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)  
No Resource to Public Funds  
Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)  
Housing Management  
Housing Advice  
Housing Options and Homelessness Prevention  
Anti-Social Behaviour  
Welfare Reform  
Youth Services  
Economic Wellbeing  
Early Intervention – targeted support  
Baby Intervention  
Social Care step-down  
Housing reviews  
Lettings  
Temporary Accommodation  
Hostel Services

**What's not included in Community Solutions?**

Tier 3 Social Care Assessments  
Detailed finance assessments  
Adult Care packages/assessments

In effect, this extended the troubled families paradigm of a holistic response, delivered by a single staff worker, helping to weave together specialist support in a way that responds to a customer's whole situation to all of the Council's 'People' services.

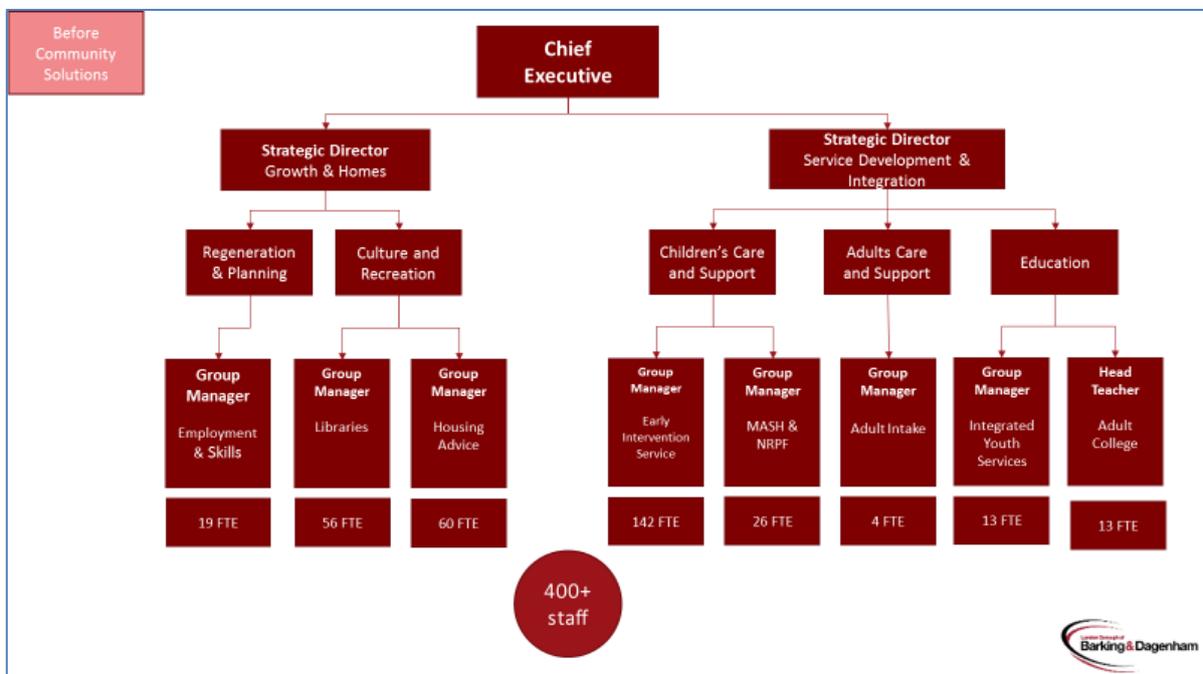
Customer support is now provided at the level of 'Access', 'Universal', 'Triage', 'Support' or 'Intervention'. The nature of support provided is outlined below:

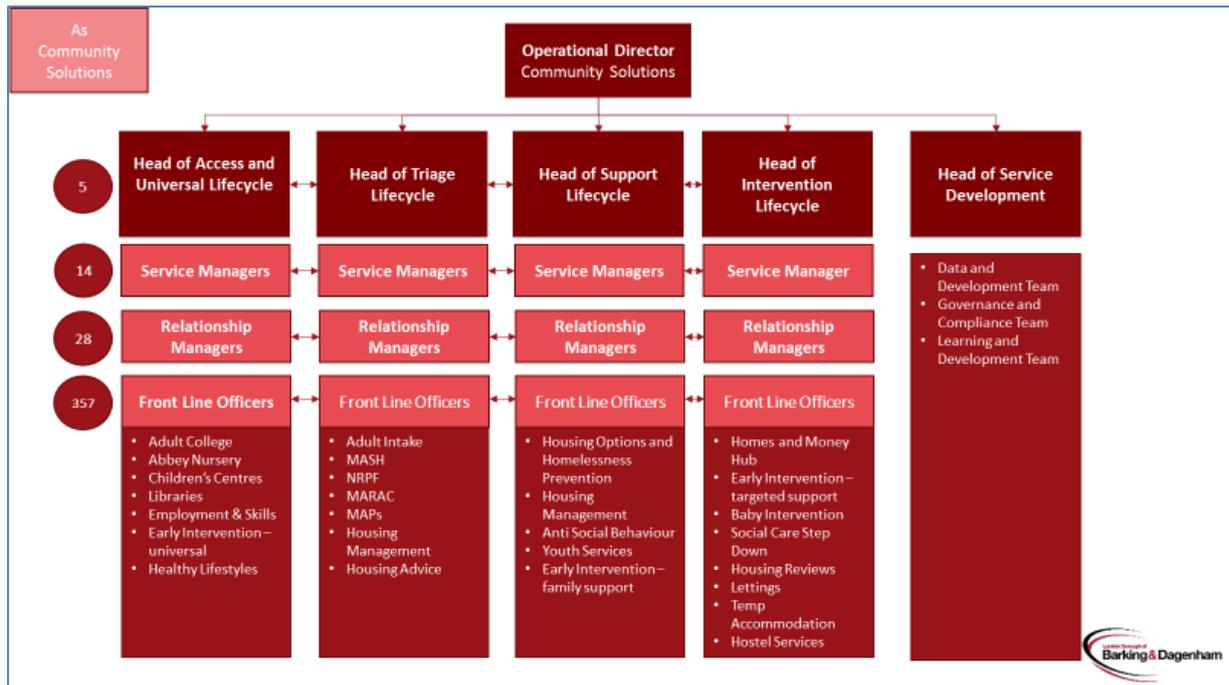
	<b>Customers</b>	<b>Staff</b>
<b>Access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• could be any resident in the borough, with varying personal circumstances (in terms of family, tenure, income etc.)</li> <li>• are self-sufficient – they will be very comfortable finding stuff out themselves and going online.</li> <li>• will have straightforward requests such as ‘Am I eligible for benefits?, ‘How do I report an environmental hazard?’.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are a first point of contact</li> <li>• support customers by helping them to find what they need to know online, sign-posting to a Council partner or making a referral to Triage (i.e. in case of a safe-guarding risk or a need for specialist support)</li> <li>• are officers with a background in Children’s Services, Community Safety and Employment &amp; Skills</li> <li>• are located in libraries and children’s centres.</li> </ul>
<b>Universal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• could be any resident in the borough, with varying personal circumstances (in terms of family, tenure, income etc.)</li> <li>• may need some help to find out stuff themselves and going online</li> <li>• will have requests which might require some advice or a conversation to help them find the best support available such as ‘I need help finding a new job’, ‘what childcare is available to me?’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are a point of contact for those needing advice and support to access services</li> <li>• support customers by helping them to find what they need to know online, sign-posting to a Council partner or making a referral to Triage (i.e. in case of a safe-guarding risk or a need for specialist support)</li> <li>• are officers with a background in Children’s Services, Libraries, Youth Services and Leisure.</li> <li>• are located in libraries, children’s centres and leisure centres</li> </ul>
<b>Triage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• could be any resident in the borough, with a support need experiencing any of the following: low skills, unemployment, poor health, housing issues, family issues, domestic violence, substance dependency amongst others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• receive referrals from colleagues in Access and Universal</li> <li>• carry out assessments to understand resident needs, first undertaking a general assessment to understand the customer’s wider circumstances and then specialist assessments if required, for any particular areas of need.</li> <li>• refer to Support to plan and</li> </ul>

		<p>deliver any specialist support required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• refer directly to teams outside of Community Solutions where relevant</li> <li>• are officers with professional experience across Children's services, Housing, Community Safety, Adult Social Care, Employment and Training Support. All are 'assessors' and some are qualified Children's Social Workers.</li> <li>• are located in Council offices</li> </ul>
<b>Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• could be any resident in the borough, with a support need experiencing any of the following: low skills, unemployment, poor health, housing issues, family issues, domestic violence, substance dependency amongst others.</li> <li>• issues they are facing are causing them trouble and they have limited resources to resolve this independently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• receive referrals from triage</li> <li>• engage as a coach and mentor to help find a resolution to the issue the customer is facing</li> <li>• aim to see the customer's self-sufficiency restored</li> <li>• prepare a support plan with the customer, liaise with partners and specialists involved in providing the support, monitor delivery of the support plan</li> <li>• refer directly to teams outside of Community Solutions where relevant</li> <li>• are officers with professional experience across Children's services, Housing, Community Safety, Adult Social Care, Employment and Training Support and some are qualified practitioners in their field.</li> <li>• are located in the Community, Children's Centres, Youth Centres, Libraries, Council offices</li> </ul>
<b>Intervention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• could be an individual resident or a whole household with multiple needs at risk of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• receive referrals from triage</li> <li>• aim to see the customer's self-sufficiency restored through sustained support</li> </ul>

	<p>breakdown/crisis experiencing any of the following: deprivation, financial pressures/debt, unemployment, poor housing conditions, homelessness, crime, anti-social behaviour, family breakdown amongst others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• issues they are facing are causing them trouble and they have very limited resources to resolve them independently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prepare a support plan with the customer, liaise with partners and specialists involved in providing the support, monitor delivery of the support plan</li> <li>• refer directly to teams outside of Community Solutions where relevant</li> <li>• are officers with professional experience across Children’s services, Anti-Social Behaviour, Youth Services and Employment &amp; Skills. All are used to working with vulnerable adults and children and some are qualified social workers.</li> <li>• are located in the Community, Children’s Centres, Youth Centres, Libraries, Council offices</li> </ul>
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The change of organisational structure is depicted below:





Throughout this process, redundancies were avoided wherever possible and although the re-structure encompassed 400 roles, just two individuals left the organisation due to redundancy whilst 18 left to pursue other opportunities. Job-matching and recruitment to the new working model was undertaken within 3 months and without challenge although one appeal was received from a staff member on the outcome of their matching process. Reflecting the intention to focus resources on early intervention, the frontline cohort of the staff has been boosted through the restructure, which has enabled a reduction in baseline staff costs.

After 6 months of operation, positive signs are emerging of the efficacy of this new model:

- Placements in temporary accommodation have fallen by 17%
- Through income maximisation support, a further £600,000 has been accessed for residents entitled to support.
- All social worker roles have been filled permanently, avoiding the need for agency staff and reducing staff costs by £150,000
- The Council has seen a reduction in referrals in to social care
- 1.8 million has been removed from base costs through both asset rationalisation and reduction in staff costs.

Whilst it is too early to credit the Community Solutions model with superseding its predecessor, it is a bold new adventure in organisational structure with a model of delivery for People based services, designed from the 'first principles' of early intervention, holistic support, fostering self-sufficiency. The approach may be construed as the sector, 'putting its money where its mouth is', testing foundational beliefs about 'what works' in supporting people services and examining the opportunities of structural transformation to deliver this vision.

Having transitioned to the new working model, the Council now intends to significantly improve digital access to services through improvements to the information about Council and partners' services online and further to improve joint-working with partners, to encapsulate the community's wider services within the Community Solutions' vision.

### **APSE Comment**

Over decades, APSE has sought to advocate for the inclusion of preventative measures to mitigate against arising need or demand for services within the overall approach to service delivery, particularly where the outcomes will impact public health outcomes and demand for social care services.

Often, investment in preventative measures rides on business case assumptions less 'concrete' or quantifiable than other opportunities for service investment. Since the investment averts demand, it is not always straightforward to measure the level of service demand that may have otherwise arisen in the absence of such a measure. For example, it is difficult to place a figure on the costs averted in the light of inclusion of green space in our towns and villages on health services, given the well-evidenced positive impact of living near green space on mental health outcomes yet the impact is certainly there. Therefore policy makers must protect the concept of intrinsic value as a driver for policy change – the intrinsic value of an action ( it is simply the 'right thing to do') and the intrinsic value of people as a reason to put policy in to place, where expenditure cannot (or cannot straightforwardly) otherwise be justified for financial reasons. In other words, the absence of a 'Business case' may not be the absence of a case for action. Political leadership can help to bridge the gap between what makes most financial sense in each instance and the right decisions to make.

Technology-based care provision and increased online engagement with Council services positively widens access to service information and significantly reduces costs of customer contact and where this effectively serves resident needs, should be fully availed but needs to be carefully managed such as in the Community Solutions model to ensure quick escalation to specialist and professionally managed care where needed and avoid 'self-help' becoming 'no help'.