

Partnership progress

The Solihull Partnership

One Borough: an equal chance for all

Quarterly newsletter for members of the Solihull Partnership

Spring 2013

A word from the editor..

Over the last few months, since the summer edition of the newsletter, I have been really encouraged by the strength of partnership working in Solihull. Probably the biggest challenge and the most exciting is the development of our Solihull Families First approach, which is a truly partnership response to the needs of families in Solihull who face the most complex issues. The commitment of partners like West Midlands Police, Solihull Community Housing and Solihull Council to work in a different way has already seen a significant change for the first six families. The team are now scaling up, so watch this space for progress as it starts to work with nearly 100 families across Solihull.

I have also recently attended an excellent workshop that brought together a range of people working to

support residents affected by the Government's changes to welfare benefits. The purpose of the event was to provide more details on what the changes are and to create opportunities to join up a number of local responses, particularly from local voluntary organisations. Please read on to find out more on this work and other partnership working that is making a difference in Solihull.



Melanie Lockett
Head of Partnership Commissioning

A big hit!

In November 2012 the Neighbourhood Activity Programme in partnership with the BoxClever Team arrived in Craig Croft to deliver their boxing programme and it has proved a big hit! Organised by SMBC Neighbourhood Activity Programme, Neighbourhood Services and Chelmsley Wood Neighbourhood Police Team, local young people have been participating in weekly 2 hour sessions held on a Tuesday from 6pm.

Craig Croft has a history of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) involving young people, and during October 2012 police calls to the area had significantly increased. The Council and Police joined forces to try to address the issue; and when consulting with young people it was clear Wayne Elcocks' BoxClever team was the answer!

The weekly sessions of non-contact boxing fitness (which continued until 18th December 2012) consisted of boxing circuits and pad and ring work which centred around a mobile boxing ring. The sessions have had a real impact with a 100% reduction in ASB in the area since the activity began. The police have also stated that they have built stronger relationships with local shop keepers, youths and parents as a result. The sessions have acted as a platform for much wider engagement with local people, and are improving access for police in community intelligence.

Young people are now beginning to engage with further positive activity offered by the Neighbourhood Activity Programme, which is supported by a range of partners. We look forward to carrying on the work through 2013.



Best start for children

The Solihull Partnership is focused on addressing inequalities in the borough, and the 'Best start in life' is one of our 11 priorities, that as partners we will work together on to provide the improvement required.

In the last few years this subject has been given overwhelming backing by national policy. In Professor Sir Michael Marmot's, Fair Society, Healthy Lives (2010) Report, he states: 'giving every child the best start in life is our highest priority recommendation.' Research suggests that the first 1000 days (from minus 9 months to 2 or 3 years old) is the most critical period in the development of the social and emotional structure of the infant brain.

So how are we making a reality of 'best start' for every child in Solihull?

Breastfeeding – Solihull's community health services were awarded full UNICEF **Baby Friendly Initiative** (BFI) accreditation in December 2012. The BFI is a worldwide programme that seeks to improve the health and wellbeing of mothers and their babies.

Healthy Start – is a national scheme to tackle health inequalities for families with young children. One part of the scheme provides vitamins to mums during pregnancy and children up to the age of 4. In Solihull

we are working alongside Children's Centres to provide them with stocks of vitamins and promote their take up.

New 'parentcraft' classes – these are based on a 5 week course run by midwives and the infant feeding coordinator in Solihull. They are based on the Solihull Approach which is an evidence based framework for working with children and parents first developed in 1996 by Dr Hazel Douglas, a practising psychologist in Solihull.

Food Dudes – is an approach being implemented in an increasing number of schools across Europe to change children's eating habits for life, including increasing their uptake of fruit and vegetables. The programme is currently being implemented across four schools in Solihull.

'Read Me Well' – a book scheme in schools, libraries and children's centres will be launched in February 2013. It is aimed at children from 3 – 11 years who may be experiencing emotional difficulties. We currently have a library of 48 different books tackling issues such as anger, divorce, bullying, anxiety and depression.

For further information please contact **Ian Mather** on (0121) 704 6917.

Safer Solihull

Domestic abuse in focus

Did you know?

- Domestic abuse occurs across society, regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, wealth and geography and affects individuals, families and the community as a whole.
- National figures estimate that one in four women and one in eight men are likely to experience domestic abuse at some stage in their life; for Solihull that means we potentially have 25,708 female and 12,085 male victims.
- Domestic abuse can have a serious impact on people's emotional wellbeing, leaving them feeling distressed and confused.

In Solihull we have re-established our Domestic Abuse Priority Group and Providers Forum to facilitate our collaborative working to respond to the needs of victims of Domestic Abuse.

In December 2012, we supported a Christmas campaign run by West Midlands Police. The campaign provided Solihull with a designated domestic abuse response car which was able to provide specialist support and help to victims. Awareness was also raised as part of the campaign, through messages on bus tickets, a poster campaign and press releases. We hope to have some outcomes to feedback on in our next edition.

Through the Solihull's Local Safeguarding Children's Board,

Partners have developed a set of standards which will be used to underpin our responsibility to provide information, identify issues and support individuals and families who are affected by domestic abuse to access support.

Our focus for 2013 onwards is to actively concentrate on preventative work, trying to reach those at risk before they are at crisis point. In January 2013 we launched the 'Safer Homes' scheme, which provides victims of domestic abuse who want to stay in their own homes additional security measures installed to improve their safety. We will also be working with young people on their perceptions around healthy relationships.

New service, new start

Changing the way we work with troubled families in 2013 will see Solihull Families First (SFF) come into its own.

In the last edition of our newsletter we informed you that we had designed a new service to deal with families facing multiple problems and that we were in the process of identifying a strategic lead. In September 2012, we welcomed Adrian Bowers, as the Family Recovery Service Development Manager and towards the end of last year we agreed on Solihull Families First as the name for our service.

National Research shows that the key to working with troubled families are:

1. A dedicated worker to a family
2. Practical 'hands on' support
3. A persistent, assertive and challenging approach
4. Considering the family as a whole – gathering the intelligence
5. Common purpose and agreed action

Adrian explains progress so far in Solihull: "We have already started working with fifteen local families that agencies agreed would benefit from a different approach. They now have a dedicated family worker who acts as a single point of contact for the family. The family worker can build trust and really understand their issues; they can also help with practical things such as arranging school places and transport to and from school.

We know that on occasions we will need to be

persistent and assertive. Sometimes leaning on that doorbell as long as necessary, implementing daily routines to promote stability and structure in the family home, working on the basis that when you are fit and well 'not' getting out of bed is 'not' an option whether you are going to work or school."

With the arrival of new staff throughout January and February, SFF are now set to scale up quickly engaging with up to 30 families with complex needs by April this year. This will rapidly increase to 96 families as we coordinate support across a range of different services.

We are looking forward to the National lead, Louise Casey CB, attending our annual Partnership Assembly on 1st May, to see our progress so far.

If you would like to find out more about Solihull Families First, contact **Adrian Bowers** on (0121) 704 8258.

Solihull Families First

Working with families to achieve happier lives



Adrian Bowers

Synergy: Partnership Assembly 2013

This year's Assembly will take place on Wednesday **1st May, 5:30-8:30pm, at Solihull College Conference Centre, Blossomfield Road**. The theme is Synergy, focusing on how we can make a greater contribution through partnership working.

We are pleased to announce our keynote speaker will be **Louise Casey CB, Director General, Troubled Families Team**, Department for Communities and Local Government.

If you still haven't booked your place at this event, please click on the following link and complete the **booking form**.

For more information please contact **Hannah Colson** on (0121) 704 8258.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Into work

Solihull's Work Clubs support residents to find jobs and can be especially useful to younger members of the community who are just starting out in their careers.

Shelley Cornish, a young person from Solihull, attended our work clubs and said:

"I was unemployed for 11 months which made me depressed and my confidence was at rock bottom. Then I went to Work Clubs and was helped to re-write my CV and I realised that I do have skills. I had several interviews and I ended up with a choice of 2 apprenticeships. I am now half way through my Business Administration apprenticeship and I won Employee of the Month for November 2012. I genuinely believe if it wasn't for the support the Employment and Skills Team provided me I would still be unemployed"

Shelley Cornish is one of nearly 100 young people who have benefited from the Council's Employment and Skills Team over the last 12 months.



Shelley Cornish

If you would like more information about our **Work Clubs** or would like some of our literature to pass on to your clients, please email us on: employmentteam@solihull.gov.uk

Preventing homelessness

Solihull's multiagency Homelessness Strategy (2012 -2015) aims to prevent people from becoming homeless in Solihull and provide a response to those affected by it. A key priority is addressing youth homelessness, which two activities have already proved successful in 2012:

- July 2012 saw the launch of '**Young, Alone & Without a Home**', which provides an Education Programme, including a classroom workbook and DVD. The DVD resource uses drama and real life case studies of young people from Solihull who have been homeless to highlight the responsibilities that come with living alone and the need to make plans for their future. Evaluation on the impact of the scheme is underway to gain young people's views and the effect on reducing homelessness.
- The development of a Supported Lodgings Scheme to ensure that suitable accommodation and support is available to anyone aged 16 or 17 (and potentially up to the age of 21) who is homeless and requires emergency accommodation. The scheme relies on host families providing a spare room and supporting young people to prepare for independent living. A 12 month pilot is being run in Solihull which has to date found six rooms; and one young person has successfully been placed and settled in well with a family.



For more information contact **Gemma Thompson** on (0121) 704 8144.



Building Stronger Communities

Communities are doing it for themselves!

CAFÉ, CHiP and SWANN are all examples of resident led groups in north Solihull. They find out what local residents want to do to improve their area and then work with partners to make it happen.

Community Action in Fordbridge (CAFÉ) came together in 2010. Following research with local people on what they want in their area, the group has:

- Organised litter picking and planting projects.
- Brought Bennett's Well field back into community use, opening the field at weekends and in the school holidays.
- Organised successful Christmas Fairs for the past 2 years

- Organised the FUNbridge Games which took place during the Olympics. There were events and races for all ages including a tug of war, egg and spoon race, three legged race and a penalty shoot out.

The work of CAFÉ and groups like it are helping to create a real sense of community spirit. They are also making a real difference for residents in developing their skills and improving relationships between residents and partners. It is just one of a number of exciting things that's happening where residents are taking the lead in north Solihull, and making a difference for their community.

For more information please contact **Sarah Barnes** on (0121) 704 8347.

Welfare Reform in focus

New Partnership Approach to welfare benefits and debt advice

The Solihull Partnership Governing Board recently approved funding to provide additional capacity and improve access to welfare benefits and debt advice. This funding will be used to pilot a one year partnership between the Solihull Citizens Advice Bureau, DIAL and Age UK – who will each have a lead role in supporting customers affected by the Welfare Reform.

Practical support delivered by partners will include: help to fill out complex forms, budgeting advice, help to submit benefit claims, drop in clinics and appeal decisions. Wider support on employment, housing and financial inclusion will also be provided.

New web pages to explain Welfare Reform

Solihull Council has created new web pages to help people prepare for the Government's response to benefits – also known as Welfare Reform. People who have reached the age to qualify for state pension credit will not be affected by the majority of the changes.

However, for people currently claiming benefits or tax credits or who may claim them in the future, information is now available about what the changes are, how they might affect people and the local support that's available.

The pages can be found at: www.solihull.gov.uk/moneycounts



which contains tips and advice about how people can access training and employment, managing household finances and dealing with debt.

For further information contact **Jason Ward** on (0121) 704 6284.

Contact Information

If you have any comments and feedback about this issue we would like to hear from you. We're always on the look out for relevant articles, news and events for the newsletter, so please contact **Hannah Colson** on (0121) 704 8258.