



Subject:	Multi-Agency Support Hubs – Belfast Pilot
Date:	12 January 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Alison Allen, Neighbourhood Services Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide Members with details of the Multi-Agency Support Hub concept and to seek a decision on Council's participation.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree to Council's participation as outlined in the report below and to support Botanic DEA as the pilot area.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	The Multi Agency Support Hub concept brings key professionals together to facilitate early, better quality information sharing and decision making to work together to improve a vulnerable person's situation. Support hubs are designed to help vulnerable people get

	<p>access to the right support, at the right time, from the right organisation in their local area in keeping with the following principles:</p>
3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately assessing and meeting need. (Information sharing) • Enabling agencies to cooperate in order to prevent “persons of concern” from suffering significant harm. (Coordinated intervention) • Promoting sound decision making. (Collaborative decision making) • Ensuring the provision of appropriate services – and the integration of these into a coherent plan. • Avoiding duplication of assessments and service provision. • Ensuring compliance with statutory duties. • Preventing “persons of concern” from having to repeat their ‘stories’. • Reducing the impact of harm and promoting good outcomes for “persons of concern”. • Preventing or managing risk with respect to “persons of concern”,
3.3	<p>All partners are equal within the Multi-Agency Support Hub with a chairing organisation/individual identified from within the group. Administrative support is normally provided by the Community Safety Team within each local authority but this has yet to be discussed for Belfast (with a small amount of additional financial support available from Department of Justice to cover costs).</p>
3.4	<p>The Support Hubs can help people who may be experiencing a range of problems. This can include being a victim of ongoing antisocial behaviour or crime. Other people may need support in order to avoid being drawn into behaviour which may lead to offending. Others may find themselves in difficult situations which can affect their personal safety, physical or mental health. The person seeking help will be asked for their consent to be supported by the hub as the individual's opinions and welfare are at the centre of any decision and action taken. Support Hubs firmly focus on reducing the vulnerability for individuals.</p>
3.5	<p>With specific focus on early intervention, the work of those in the support hub also includes identifying concerns about individuals who as yet may not have been referred to the hub. In these cases, agencies will work together to provide early intervention with individuals in order to reduce vulnerability and improve wellbeing.</p>
3.6	<p>To date, Belfast is the only local authority area in Northern Ireland without an operating Multi-Agency Support Hub.</p>

Belfast Support Hub Proposal

3.7 The proposal for the Belfast Support Hub was discussed with partner agencies (detailed below) at a collective meeting on 17/01/2020.

3.8 Proposed Partners:

- PSNI
- Health and Social Care Trust
- Local Council
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- Youth Justice Agency
- Probation Board for NI
- Education Authority
- Northern Ireland Ambulance Service
- Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

3.9 Representatives from these agencies participating in other Support Hubs were present and were all very positive in relation to the benefits it brings, specifically acknowledging the following:

- Having health partners around the table ensures that where there may be an underlying mental health issue contributing to the wider vulnerability, it can be properly identified and the person appropriately supported.
- It creates streamlined information sharing arrangements. There is no need for ISA or GDPR considerations as this is all done with the persons consent.
- Opportunity to refresh existing collaborative structures and focus service on the most vulnerable
- Co-ordinated support and cutting down on duplication of work by different services
- Improving the life of vulnerable people in society whilst at the same time easing the pressure on front line services.
- Focuses on the underlying causes of problems, facilitates information exchange and contributes to early intervention.

3.10 It was acknowledged however, that in Belfast there are a range of existing multi-agency working arrangements e.g. Family Support Hubs, Anti-Social Behaviour Forums. Whilst this is the case, there remain a significant number of individuals who are not meeting the threshold for the more specialist services in these multi-agency groups but may still require

	<p>additional help and support from more than one agency. These individuals often do not know who to turn to for help and will contact multiple organisations or engage in the wrong services because their needs are not being looked at holistically.</p>
3.11	<p>It is for this reason partners agreed that because Belfast was a much larger area than other local authority areas and also had higher degrees of vulnerability, it would be extremely complex to establish Support Hub arrangements across the city and that a pilot area should be taken forward to test the concept in Belfast. A Support Hub pilot area will allow for appropriate evaluation and 'ironing out' of any implementation challenges in a Belfast context before consideration is given to whether a wider roll out is appropriate and it should not automatically be assumed it will work effectively in Belfast, just because it works in other local authorities in Northern Ireland.</p>
3.12	<p>Following discussion on possible pilot areas, Botanic DEA was suggested as a suitable area for a pilot within Belfast. The reasons for this were that it is a diverse community with a range of complex needs, there are high levels of crime and ASB and there is a mixture of settled and transient communities co-existing within the area.</p>
3.13	<p>Partners present at the meeting agreed that Botanic DEA should be the pilot area within Belfast, however, Council Officers present reminded those at the meeting that a formal Council position could only be taken on this after Committee decision and ratification at Full Council.</p>
3.14	<p>The Support Hub concept aligns well to the Belfast Agenda, Belfast: Our Recovery and our Inclusive Growth agenda ensuring all partners in the city work to make life better for residents, support vulnerable people more effectively by addressing any barriers they face, supporting early intervention/prevention and ensuring Belfast's success can reach every citizen.</p>
3.15	<p>For Members information, the proposal for a Multi-Agency Support Hub Pilot to be established in the Botanic DEA has been endorsed by Belfast PCSP and the Living Here Board of the Belfast Community Planning Partnership.</p>
3.16	<p>Members are asked to consider if they will endorse this and Council's participation in the pilot.</p>

<p>3.17</p> <p>3.18</p> <p>3.19</p>	<p>Next Steps:</p> <p>If Council endorses the recommendation that there should be a Support Hub Pilot established in Botanic DEA, a small project team of Officers from each partner agency will be pulled together to plan implementation.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are not expected to be any financial implications beyond staff time. In other local authorities, administrative support is usually provided by the Community Safety Team within the Council. This is yet to be agreed for Belfast and will need to be considered carefully considering the high demands on Council Officers at present. Department of Justice will provide a small grant to cover administrative costs for up to 3 years.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None at present, but will be kept under continuous review.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None</p>