

Leicestershire Strategic Senior Officers Group

19th October 2006

Invest to Save Budget

Report of Leicestershire County Council

Purpose of Report

1. To consider three proposals for Invest to Save Bids.

Background

2. The Invest to Save – Inclusive communities Budget (ISB):
 - encourages new and joined-up ways of working by funding pilot projects that develop innovative ideas,
 - brings together organisations from the third sector and public sector in partnership; and,
 - funds delivery of more efficient and effective public services that are responsive to the needs of local people.
3. Bids should be submitted by a local authority, be endorsed by the LSP and a third sector organisation, support the Community Strategy and be aligned to the LAA. There can only be one bid per local authority area. Bids must not exceed £800,000 over a three year period and 25% match funding is needed.
4. Priority areas for this round are:
 - the third sector's role in delivering public services and building fairer communities
 - projects that deliver cash releasing efficiencies;
 - projects that address the priorities set out in the Local Area Agreement and support the Community Strategy; and,
 - projects that are additional to those already funded by statutory bodies and which address recognised gaps in local service provision.
5. At its last meeting SSOG agreed to consider proposals and select bids to go forward. Bids have to be submitted by the 27th October.

Proposals

6. Three proposals have been received:
 - (a) A multi area bid is being organised by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) for restorative justice and mentoring in childrens homes – see Appendix 1. YJB

is seeking local authority partners to support the bid for their area. In Leicestershire the project is most relevant to the childrens homes in North West Leicestershire, Harborough and Oadby and Wigston Districts. At present there is no third sector organisation to support the bid. However, there is a good fit with the Community Strategy and LAA and match funding is available.

(b) A proposal for improvements to the sharing of business intelligence and managing consequent changes in service delivery - see Appendix 2. The principles of this bid were supported by SSOG at its last meeting and it also builds on the Melton digital challenge bid that was supported by SSOG earlier in the year. It would be taken forward with the support of the County Council's Information Management Team. Match funding is available, the bid has the support of Age Concern and it is aligned with the LAA.

(c) A proposal for a new community centre for older people in Charnwood – see Appendix 3. It builds on a model already applied in the Melton area. It is consistent with the Community Strategy, aligned with the LAA, has the support of Age Concern and has match funding.

Recommendation

7. It is recommended that SSOG considers whether the proposals outlined in this report should be developed into bids for Invest to Save funding.

Appendix 1 - Restorative Justice and Mentoring in Childrens Homes - Summary

The YJB is keen to submit a bid to the Treasury's Invest to Save Budget, which provides short-term funding for innovative schemes, to pilot programmes delivering restorative justice training to staff in children's homes, and encouraging volunteer mentors to work with children in care. The bid would be for funding for a post within seven YOTs to provide training to staff in restorative justice, supporting volunteer mentors and working on local protocols on reducing offending by children in care. The pilot would last for two years, and expressions of interest from YOTs are encouraged where there is clear local commitment to addressing this issue, and where a small amount of funding (no more than £15k per year) can be committed to fulfil the Treasury's expectation that 25% of funding for the scheme is found locally.

Offending by Children in Care

The YJB has long been aware of concerns expressed by YOTs and Magistrates that children in care have been entering the criminal justice system at a disproportionate rate. While some risk factors for becoming looked after are the same as risk factors for anti-social behaviour and offending, it is of concern that around one quarter young people in custody have been in care at some stage of their lives, when only 2% of the general population have been in care.

There is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that this over-representation of young people who have been in care within the criminal justice system may be due to in the high rate of call outs of police by children's home staff faced with the challenging behaviour of young people. Once called, the police have been obliged to treat the behaviour as criminal even though such behaviour might not be considered criminal within a family home.

The concern that this practice is widespread was recorded by the Annual General Meeting of the Magistrates Association in November 2005, which stated: "This AGM deplores the prosecution of so many looked after children in private care homes for minor criminal offences which should be dealt with by disciplinary measures within the homes." The Magistrates' Association went on to urge swift government action to address the issue.

Earlier this year, the YJB chaired a meeting of colleagues from the Home Office, Department for Constitutional Affairs, Department for Education, Magistrates Association and the Association of Directors of Social Services to discuss the issue. One of the outcomes of the meeting was that it was agreed that the YJB should lead a bid to the Treasury's Invest to Save Budget (ISB), which provides short-term funding to innovative schemes. The latest bidding round for the ISB has recently opened (see www.isb.gov.uk for more details), and a bid is now being prepared ahead of the deadline of 27 October. The YJB is seeking seven YOTs to be partners in the pilot process

Further Details of the Proposal

The YJB bid to prevent offending by looked after children aims to address both the factors behind challenging behaviour by looked after children, and to improve approaches to the behaviour by care home staff. To address the factors which cause challenging behaviour, a programme of volunteer mentoring is planned, to give children in care suitable, reliable role models; to improve approaches to behaviour by care home staff, a programme of restorative justice training would be rolled out, and local protocols outlining when police intervention in challenging behaviour is necessary would be developed.

Central to this process would be a post within the local YOT, where a 'champion' of looked after children would be appointed. The postholder would be responsible for training and supporting volunteer mentors, working with partners to develop local protocols to reduce offending by looked after children, and training care home staff in restorative justice approaches to challenging behaviour. It is envisaged that the YJB would bid for posts in a maximum of seven pilot YOT areas as part of this ISB funding round.

The key objectives for the pilot areas would be to reduce the numbers of looked after children entering the criminal justice system (relative to other young people in the area) and to reduce police call-outs to children's homes.

Mentoring

One particular issue for young people who are looked after is a lack of consistent role models. Children in Care may have limited or no contact with their natural parents, and the YJB is also aware that building relationships with staff at care homes is inhibited by frequent movement of young people between placements and high staff turnover.

To try to provide a consistent role model in the lives of young people, a central role of the proposed staff member in YOTs would be to recruit, train and support volunteer mentors to work with children in care. The local volunteer bureau would be central to this process to bring expertise in recruiting and supporting mentors, with the YOT staff member responsible for providing training and advice to those mentors paired with young people showing challenging behaviour.

Volunteer mentors would be required to commit to at least two years to enable strong and stable relationships to be built. It is hoped that those relationships would continue even if a young person moved from one care home to another, enabling the mentor to ease the transition and remain as a figure of stability in the young person's life.

Restorative Justice Training for Staff in Care Homes

The most central aspect of the pilot proposal is for the YOT staff member to provide restorative justice training to staff in children's homes across the local

authority area. To enable this to happen, the YJB and its bid partners would work to provide a national training programme for the new YOT staff members in each of the pilot areas. This would be based on Nacro good practice guidance on reducing offending by looked after children (<http://www.nacro.org.uk/publications/youthcrime.htm>), and YJB Key Elements of Effective Practice in Restorative Justice (<http://www.yjb.gov.uk/Publications/Scripts/prodList.asp?idcategory=16&curPage=5&sortField=description&eP=>).

Once trained, it would be the role of the YOT worker to go out to children's homes, training staff in the first instance and then working with the home management to ensure that restorative justice approaches to challenging behaviour were embedded within the standard induction process for all new members of staff.

In order to ensure the practice of using restorative justice was correctly used in the suitable circumstances, it might also be necessary for the YOT worker to 'sit in' on restorative conferences dealing with challenging behaviour, both as an impartial observer and in order to evaluate practice.

Local Protocols

To ensure restorative justice approaches are used in appropriate circumstances, the YOT worker would also be responsible for working with local partners to develop protocols for dealing with challenging behaviour by looked after children. Such protocols would be drawn up locally but guided by the YJB, with the aim of ensuring that restorative justice was used wherever possible before criminal action was taken.

As well as working with local partners to draw up the protocol, it would be important for the YOT worker to monitor adherence to the protocol, for example looking at police call-out rates to different children's homes and ensuring that staff were using restorative approaches where appropriate. Where this was not the case, there would be an expectation that this would be raised at the local strategic level.

In this respect, it is clear that the YOT worker alone would not be able to achieve all the strategic aims set out, and the managers of any YOTs seeking to be involved in the pilot would have to be fully involved in this strategic aspect themselves to ensure action was taken at an appropriately senior level.

Appendix 2 - Service Improvements through Shared Business Intelligence – Summary

A project to facilitate the sharing of business intelligence on:

- Community Safety, with probably focus on anti-social behaviour
- Older people, with probably emphasis on health

It will focus on one or more priority neighbourhoods.

Discussions have been held with Help the Aged about supporting this bid. Support of the voluntary sector via the CCP would also be helpful.

The project will seek to implement a model for information sharing, analysis and change management that helps to inform:

- strategic decision makers of the key issues facing Leicestershire, and
- preventative action for individuals via neighbourhood management processes

Through these forums, recommendations will identify changes that will help improve service delivery across partner organisations, largely through pro-active and preventative action, including action that can be undertaken by the third sector, who will be involved in the decision making process.

A diagrammatic representation of the model is set out below.

The specific processes that the project will implement are:

- A common method of recording business intelligence:
 - this does not necessarily mean integration of information or systems across partner organisations, but rather exploring the standards and quality needed to make information compatible, so that it can be brought together to carry out analysis.
- Supporting the costs of sharing information:
 - resources will be sought to provide support to sharing information. This will include costs of cleaning, reformatting, transporting, and consolidating information where it needed, as well as providing cleaned information back to the source organisation that will enable them to repeat the process as necessary. Over time, this should harmonise the information infrastructure across partner organisations, enabling easier sharing and analysis of information.
- Analysis:
 - this will include additional costs of analysis that arise from the project, plus additional research into best practice in other parts of the Country, that help provide solutions to strategic decision makers.

- Change management resource:
 - the costs of resources that help manage short and longer term changes that improve service delivery, through strategic decision makers.
- Further development of forums and processes for sharing case-based information between partner organisations

Saving would be achieved through informed preventative action, directed by strategic decision makers, and supported by change management processes. This leads to more effective service delivery, and a reduction in responsive action, particularly around critical case work.

The project will improve understanding of key client groups, and the focus on older people will support the development of cross-organisation information management processes that enable improved understanding of key segments of the population. In addition, the focus on priority neighbourhoods will enable a focus on the chosen issues in the areas of greatest need in the County.

The project will seek to put a scalable model in place that can be extended to other geographies, and other client groups.

The project will build on good practice. In particular, there are processes in place in projects such as Bridges (for young people) and also for Older people that form a foundation for collection and sharing of case information. This project will seek to enhance the ability to share issues across cases (i.e. anonymised) and analyse the key issues emerging from case work, as well as more broadly from transactional systems.



Appendix 3 – Community centre for older people in Charnwood

KEY PRIORITIES OF BID

- To reduce health inequalities with local communities.
- To reduce crime and improve community safety
- To develop a community centre for older people in the Charnwood area.
The centre would bring together resources already invested by a range of agencies in that area. It would shift resources from statutory agencies e.g. Health and Social Care to the new facility.
- The community centre would become a focus for older people in the community to receive both Health and Social Care advice as well as a range of structured activity aimed at reduced health inequalities e.g. falls prevention and maximising income, as well as providing a venue for structured input of home and community safety.
- The £800K would be used for a mixture of capital work and staffing to establish the new community centre.