

Meeting: Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Date: 3 November 2014

Title: Child Poverty Study Update

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Service: Governance Services

Directorate: Law and Governance

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of Report

To update the Committee on the implementation of the recommendations made in the Child Poverty Study.

2. Recommendations

- 1 Members are asked to consider the information provided; and
- 2 Note the progress that has been made

3. Details

- 3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of their 2012/13 work programme prioritised child poverty as an important issue and agreed to establish a joint sub-group comprising of Members from Children, Education and Skills and Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Sub-committees to carry out an in-depth review.
- 3.2 It was recognised from the outset that child poverty was a vast topic area and for the sub-group to keep on task, it was important to clearly identify a small number of specific issues to investigate in detail. It was agreed to that it would be best to look at the topic deep and narrow rather than broad but shallow. The sub-group therefore decided to look specifically at 'best start in life, early intervention and prevention' and 'barriers to employment'.
- 3.3 The sub-group identified a total of 26 recommendations, 14 of these recommendations required action from the Council, 11 from Jobcentre Plus and one from the Clinical Commissioning Group. Of these recommendations, subsequently Cabinet accepted 12, Jobcentre Plus accepted 8 and North Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group accepted the one recommendation made in relation to their organisation.
- 3.4 Progress in relation to these recommendations as at 31 September 2014 is summarised in Appendices A, B and C.

4. Appendices

Appendix A – Progress against Council recommendations

Appendix B – Progress against Jobcentre Plus recommendations

Appendix C - Progress against NT Clinical Commissioning Group recommendation

Progress against Council recommendations as at 31 September 2014

Overview and Scrutiny Recommendation	Officer Commentary	Action to be taken and timescale for completion	Progress update as at 31 September 2014
<p>Recommendation 1: Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in receiving the Children and Young People's Plan 2014-18, focus on ensuring that appropriate actions and measures to address the causes and effects of child poverty are included within the Plan.</p>	<p>This recommendation was accepted by O&S at its meeting in January 2014. The Committee will have the opportunity to scrutinise the contents of the plan at its meeting in July 2014.</p>	<p>July 2014</p>	<p>Overview, Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee received, considered and noted the draft Children and Young People's Plan 2014-18 at its 7 July 2014 meeting</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: Children, Education and Skills receive a bi-annual performance report on the delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan 2014-18.</p>	<p>Recommend that Cabinet accept this recommendation and that reports be provided in May and November each year to the Children, Education and Skills sub-committee</p>	<p>End of year summary to June meeting of Children, Education & Skills</p> <p>Mid year progress summary provided to Children, Education & Skills in December</p> <p>First report will be provided in June 2015.</p>	<p>Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee considered the final proposals for the Children and Young People Plan 2014-18 at its meeting on the 21 July 2014.</p> <p>Performance reports will be included on the sub-committee's work programme for 2015/16.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: Wallsend Children's Centre look at the possibilities of selling produce grown on its on-site allotment to parents at low cost price and that the possibilities of extending this scheme to other centres in the borough be examined.</p>	<p>Parents grow small amounts of produce and often use them in the cookery sessions within the setting. Other settings only have small raised beds where children plant/grow and eat their own small amount of produce. There is not scope to develop this further.</p>	<p>This issue has recently been explored. We continue to grow vegetables as part of our healthy eating programme and if there is spare produce this would be given to families. We will continue to plant fruit and</p>	<p>No update is required as recommendation was not accepted.</p>

Overview and Scrutiny Recommendation	Officer Commentary	Action to be taken and timescale for completion	Progress update as at 31 September 2014
		vegetables as part of our annual curriculum with children however we do not have the scope to grow this into an allotment.	
<p>Recommendation 4: Cabinet ask officers to conduct an analysis of the demand for learning courses at children's centres across the borough and provide additional courses or venues if demand outweighs current capacity.</p>	<p>We continue to work with the ALA/Job Centre Plus to meet the needs of the community with regard to adult education. A meeting with ALA has taken place to discuss the future delivery of training in children's centres, along our supporting the delivery of volunteer programmes for trainees aged 19+ by providing work placements.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The Children's Centres have recently undergone a full review of their activities. As a result, they are now looking to deliver a more focussed ALA offer to vulnerable families as well as a range of courses where there is demand. We have recently trained a number of parents in volunteering for example, as they wanted to develop skills for work.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5: Cabinet ask officers to explore the possibilities of utilising the after school room at Riverside Children's Centre to allow parents/carers to access some informal advice in relation to health and well-being issues.</p>	<p>Health and wellbeing information is already accessible in all children's centre reception areas, with reception staff appropriately trained and able to signpost clients. This will be taken forward with the forthcoming integrated working with Health colleagues in centres.</p>		<p>No update is required as recommendation was not accepted.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6: Cabinet ask officers working within children's centres to prioritise outreach and integrated working with healthcare professionals to identify the most vulnerable families so that the provision available is directed to those most in need.</p>	<p>This work is part of the wider agenda of working with our community and vulnerable families and is part of the Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy. Identification of need is through the implementation of Early Help Assessment.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Through the Early Help Assessment we are able to target our services at those most vulnerable families. This will be complemented by our revised CC offer which focuses our resources on these services than on buildings.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 7: Cabinet ensure that officers from Public Health and Children, Young People and Learning continue to work together and prioritise the integration of health and children's services for children under 5.</p>	<p>As with recommendation 6, this work is part of the wider agenda of working with our community and vulnerable families and is part of the Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy. Discussions with health colleagues are taking place to have integrated teams working from Hub children's centres.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>An event is planned for October, bringing together Health Visitors, Midwives, Family Partners and Family Nurse Partnership staff to establish integrated teams initially in Riverside and Howdon Children's Centres, who will work together to deliver a more effective service delivery.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8: Cabinet ask officers to liaise with the relevant authorities in order to obtain live birth data that will assist in the delivery of early intervention and prevention services.</p>	<p>Work is already underway and we are liaising with the Senior Register for Births and Marriages to enable us to deliver the registry of live births at two pilot Children centre hubs.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Riverside and Shiremoor Children's Centre now offer birth registrations. This will be reviewed and it is expected Howdon & Wallsend will offer this service in 2015. In addition, we now have an MOU with Health to enable them to share live birth data, this should be signed off soon.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9: Cabinet ask officers in Adult Social Care to ensure that all frontline services are aware of the Local Welfare Provision scheme, where to signpost individuals for assistance and that regular updates are provided where necessary.</p>	<p>ASC will ensure that information is sent out again to front line services to ensure that all frontline Council staff are aware of the scheme and the eligibility criteria. We will also ensure that information is sent out to our partner agencies again so they have all of the relevant details when they are working with people.</p>	<p>All information will be circulated by end of February 2014</p>	<p>Information has been circulated to all frontline teams. We regularly receive referrals from other service areas.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10: Cabinet ask officers to regularly review the number of successful applications made to the Local Welfare Provision fund and the criteria used to assess applicants.</p>	<p>The number of successful applications is analysed monthly and reported to the Welfare Reform Project Board and the Mayors Task Group for Welfare Reform. Eligibility criteria were reviewed and relaxed in July 2013 and will be reviewed</p>	<p>Review of successful applications is ongoing. Eligibility criteria will be reviewed in July 2014 Cabinet to review options</p>	<p>The number of successful applications continues to be analysed monthly and reported to the Welfare Reform Project Board chaired by the Elected Mayor. We are also reporting the amount of benefit the team has got back into payment for customers and identifying</p>

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	again in July 2014. The fund continues to be used to support the most vulnerable residents of the Borough and the budget is aligned to current demand. The Social Fund Grant was allocated for a period of 2 years and the funding will end in March 2015. Cabinet will reconsider its options at that time.	in relation to cessation of Social Fund Grant early 2015	where people have been signposted to for additional support regardless of eligibility. Eligibility criteria were reviewed and relaxed in July 2013 and reviewed again in July 2014. The main difference is that each case is considered on its merits rather than applying blanket exclusions.
Recommendation 19: Head of Adult Social Care explores the possibility of allowing external agencies to speak on behalf of their client when applying to the Local Welfare Provision.	The Head of Adult Social Care has explored the option of allowing external agencies to speak on behalf of a client when they are applying for support. Providing the client gives consent this option has been agreed and external agencies can assist people making a claim by speaking on their behalf. This allows all clients to have a thorough assessment and feel supported through the process.	Implemented	The service continues to implement this and we are happy for a customer to be supported if this is authorised by them.
Recommendation 22: Head of Environment and Leisure Services explores the possibility of gaining external funding or partnership working in order to provide IT support across the library service.	The library service will explore options for partnership working and external funding to add to the existing IT provision across the service.	October 2014	IT support across the library service is currently under review as part of the commissioning of a new Library management System. Any opportunities for support from partners will be explored as part of this process.
Recommendation 23: Head of Environment and Leisure Services explores how unemployed residents can have more access to email on library service computers.	The library service will review existing use of the people's network and explore ways of increasing access for unemployed residents.	October 2014	A review of the Premier Ease Card is likely to result in charges being reduced or removed with more flexible access for all library users as a result. Details of implementation are being finalised.

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<p>Recommendation 25: The Elected Mayor writes to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to highlight the issues which arose in relation to the suitability of the Work Programme in meeting the needs of clients with more severe health issues.</p>	<p>The Elected Mayor agrees to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in relation to the suitability of the Work Programme in meeting the needs of clients with more severe health issues.</p>	<p>The Elected Mayor will write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.</p>	<p>The Elected Mayor wrote to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on 21 February 2014 and received a response on 14 March 2014. Both letters are attached with this report.</p>

Progress against Jobcentre Plus recommendations as at 31 September 2014

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<p>Recommendation 11: Jobcentre Plus incorporates / appends the Customer Charter to the Jobseekers Agreement or the Claimant Commitment (once it is in place).</p>	<p>The DWP Customer Charter is currently being reviewed as part of a larger Departmental review of quality standards. The Customer Charter will be re-launched later in the year - as part of the review we will explore the feasibility of incorporating / appending the Charter to the Jobseekers Agreement / Claimant Commitment, however this has potential cost implications for the Department. In the interim we will ensure that the Charter is on display in a prominent position in each of our offices for all staff and customers to see. We have recently established an internal Customer Service Group, and have tasked them to make recommendations on how we can raise both staff and customer awareness of the Customer Charter, including through digital channels.</p>	<p>*Consult national colleagues re potential for incorporating the customer charter into future versions of the claimant commitment. (by end Feb)</p> <p>Customer Service Group to make recommendations on raising staff / customer awareness of the Customer charter (by end March)</p>	<p>No update is required as recommendation was not accepted.</p>
<p>Recommendation 12: Jobcentre Plus take account of the negative comments received from unemployed residents in relation to the service received, in particular about the attitude of some advisors and the intimidating</p>	<p>We are committed to using insight from all stakeholders to help us to improve our service – feedback provided through the Child Poverty study has already been taken on board and addressed by the Customer Services Operations Manager in North Tyneside. Our</p>	<p>Findings from Customer Service surveys will be discussed at office communication meetings and Senior Leadership Team meetings/events.</p>	<p>Ongoing. All offices focussed on results during Customer Service week (w/c 6th October).</p> <p>Ongoing. Trends discussed and addressed with relevant colleagues.</p>

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environment which is created.	<p>District Customer Service Group is currently developing a survey which will include questions regarding customer experience of our service.</p> <p>Jobcentre Plus also has a clear complaints procedure where we aim to resolve customer dissatisfaction at the first point of contact (level 1). Where a complaint remains unresolved, there is a clear escalation route. We use complaints data to provide valuable insight to help us learn from our mistakes and improve our services and to help us to avoid similar problems in the future.</p>	<p>Our Complaints Resolution team will analyse complaints to identify root causes / triggers as a basis for improving customer service.</p>	<p>Working with MPs / caseworkers to identify trends in complaints and planning a workshop to improve mutual understanding of topic areas, and understand root cause of issues.</p>
<p>Recommendation 13: Jobcentre Plus hold regular reviews with advisors to ensure that they are meeting customer service standards and that this includes contracted staff such as Customer Services Officers employed by G4S.</p>	<p>DWP recognises that performance management is key to driving up individual and organisational performance and providing greater value for money to deliver high quality public services. Our People Performance policy provides a framework for managing performance throughout the year, laying the foundations of expected standards of performance.</p> <p>All staff receive regular reviews. Performance is evaluated against both the delivery of objectives and the demonstration of behaviours, competencies and values with equal</p>	<p>Existing procedures in place - ongoing</p>	<p>On-going – business as usual. Significant work has taken place during the first 6 months of the year to clarify standards (across all roles), which includes the need to deliver good customer service on a consistent basis.</p>

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	<p>weighting, with a focus on continuous improvement and individual development.</p> <p>DWP is not responsible for directly managing contracted staff, however Customer Care Officers (CCOs) are important members of the Jobcentre Plus Customer Service Team. Jobcentre Managers have regular dialogue with CCOs and will escalate any unresolved issues as set out in our contract with Telereal Trillium, who manage DWP estate and contracted support services.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 14: The local Jobcentre raise claimants concerns at a national level regarding the intimidating environment created through Customer Services Officers wearing security style uniforms.</p>	<p>The need for a CCO presence on a site is determined by a risk assessment. The primary role of the CCO is to manage the safety and security of the public area and not to deal with business tasks which are the responsibility of Jobcentre staff. It is therefore important that customers can differentiate between the CCO and Jobcentre staff, and the uniform of the CCO helps to achieve this. However we will pass on the feedback received from Claimants via the Child Poverty study.</p>	<p>Escalate findings of the Child Poverty survey to contract management team (by end Feb)</p>	<p>Findings escalated – no further action agreed (see commentary section for rationale).</p>
<p>Recommendation 15: Jobcentre Plus ensures that claimants who receive sanctions understand the</p>	<p>The Welfare Reform Act 2012 included changes to the disputes and appeals process. For DWP benefits other than Personal Independence</p>	<p>Existing procedures in place - ongoing</p>	<p>Ongoing – business as usual. Matthew Oakley also published his report into JSA sanctions in July 2014.</p>

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<p>reason why this has happened and that they are made aware of the appeals process.</p>	<p>payment, these changes came into effect from 28 October 2013. In most cases, claimants are notified of decisions made on their claim to JSA in a Single Outcome Decision Notification (SODN) – a computer generated letter. Since 28 October 2013, decision notifications have been amended to inform the claimant of the new disputes process.</p> <p>If a claimant requires clarification of or is not satisfied with a decision given on their claim to JSA, they will be offered a verbal explanation of that decision. They may also request a more detailed explanation. A claimant does not have to accept the offer of an explanation prior to raising a dispute - they may dispute the outcome decision by applying to have the decision revised (via a mandatory reconsideration) or by appealing against it.</p> <p>If the decision was made on or after 28 October 2013 the claimant must receive a Mandatory Reconsideration before then can appeal against a decision.</p>		<p>See GOV.UK for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A copy of the independent review <small>web</small> • The Government response <small>web</small> • A guide to help claimants understand how sanctions work. <small>web</small>
<p>Recommendation 16: Jobcentre Plus ensures at the outset that new claimants are aware of the sanctioning</p>	<p>Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) is a benefit designed to keep claimants close to the labour market to enable them to move more quickly off benefit</p>	<p>Existing procedures in place – ongoing</p>	<p>Business as usual.</p>

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<p>process and the reasons why their benefit will be sanctioned.</p>	<p>and into sustainable employment. There are conditions attached to being eligible to continue to receive JSA and sanctions are used to ensure claimants meet those conditions.</p> <p>Claimants are required to meet the basic labour market conditions which include being available for work, actively seeking work and having a signed up-to-date Jobseeker's Agreement/Claimant Commitment. Active job search, engagement with advisers and participation in some employment support programmes are mandatory requirements for claimants, because there is evidence that compliance with these requirements is more likely to lead to people getting a job more quickly.</p> <p>Failure to meet any of these requirements could lead to disentitlement or a sanction. A sanction is a complete withdrawal of the claimant's JSA award for specified periods. The application of sanctions drives claimants' behaviour, including claimants who would otherwise avoid participating in or taking up the support on offer to them.</p>	<p>JCP to continue work with key stakeholders who can help North Tyneside residents understand the importance of complying with benefit regulations, to ensure that their benefits are not sanctioned.</p>	<p>The Claimant Commitment, which was rolled out between December 2013 and April 2014 for new claims is being rolled out to all claimants by end December 2014.</p> <p>We continue to work with stakeholders to aide their understanding of the benefit system e.g. claimant commitment presentation to Welfare Reform Task Group. Further sessions planned to Homelessness stakeholders in North Tyneside.</p>

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	<p>A revised JSA sanctions system was introduced in October 2012. The system is designed to provide greater clarity about the consequences of not meeting requirements and more robust sanctions for repeated non engagement. The requirements placed on claimants has not changed but the duration of sanctions have changed.</p> <p>The Government introduced a 'claimant commitment' from October 2013 to set out clearly a claimant's responsibilities – taking into account their personal circumstances and capability. For claimants who can work this will include their work search and work availability requirements. The claimant commitment also sets out the consequences of failing to meet those responsibilities. The Claimant Commitment was introduced for people making new claims to benefit and claimants returning from the Work Programme in Killingworth Jobcentre on 1st December 2013. Whitley Bay Jobcentre will follow on 1st March 2014, with North Shields and Wallsend will introduce the Claimant Commitment from 1st April</p>		

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	<p>2014.</p> <p>In November 2013, we also published the JSA Back to Work Schemes guide. This guide gives JSA claimants information about Skills Conditionality, sector-based work academies, Work Experience, New Enterprise Allowance, Mandatory Work Activity and the Work Programme. The guide tells claimants what the schemes involve, the eligibility criteria, when they may be referred and the sanctions regime which apply to these schemes. Jobcentre Plus advisers are informing existing claimants and all new claimants about the guide and encouraging them to read it.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 17: Jobcentre Plus ensures that all advisors are up to date regarding the alternative support available.</p>	<p>All Jobcentre staff have access to a database which details alternative support available to claimants. Managers do undertake observations of staff to ensure that advisory services are effective, efficient and of a consistently high quality. This includes checking that the Adviser understands the range and detail of support available through external partners. In response to feedback from this review, we will work with the Council's Local Welfare Provision team to ensure that information on our system reflects the support available, and will ask all advisers to</p>	<p>JCP to work with the Council's Local Welfare Provision team to ensure that information on our system reflects the support available (by end Feb)</p> <p>All advisers to refresh their knowledge of local support so they can signpost claimants appropriately (by end March).</p>	<p>Cleared.</p>

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	refresh their knowledge so they can signpost claimants appropriately.		
<p>Recommendation 18: Jobcentre Plus produces an information pack outlining the alternative support available and makes this available to claimants who have been sanctioned.</p>	<p>As local support is subject to change, it would not be cost effective for Jobcentre Plus to produce an information pack as information could quickly become outdated. We endeavour to keep the information contained on our database up to date, through liaison with partners and key stakeholders and will continue to signpost claimants to any sources of help that we are aware of.</p>		<p>No update is required as recommendation was not accepted.</p>
<p>Recommendation 20: Jobcentre Plus as part of their programme to increase computers in local jobcentre offices ensures that this is at an adequate level to meet demand and that suitably qualified support is on hand to help claimants complete forms.</p>	<p>Promoting online engagement is a priority for DWP - over 80% of claims to JSA by North Tyneside residents are now made on line however as Universal Credit continues to rollout, more and more claimants will be interacting with the Department over the internet.</p> <p>In order to support our claimants we are introducing 6000 Web Access Devices (WADs) and installing WiFi across the national Jobcentre Plus network enabling access to the internet for job search and job applications and partnership working. Allocation of WADs to individual Jobcentres will be based on the number of claimants registered. Jobcentre Plus is also working in partnership with the</p>		<p>No update is required as recommendation was not accepted.</p>

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	<p>Council to map support available in the community.</p> <p>We will be developing plans for Digital Jobcentres over the forthcoming weeks and months. We are also investing in our staff's capabilities to support claimants prior to Digital Jobcentre Plus roll out.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 21: Jobcentre Plus ensures that all claimants who are not digitally ready are identified and given information on where they can access computers and IT support / training.</p>	<p>We will be conducting a District-wide Digital Customer Survey to help us better understand if and how claimants access the internet. Wallsend and North Shields will be the first two offices to carry out the survey. If claimants do not have the skills to access the internet, we will identify barriers and provide support via local training organisations. We will also signpost claimants who do not have IT access to local services.</p> <p>As part of our World of Work campaign for young people, we are also conducting an audit of jobsearch skills which tests whether they have access to the internet and the skills needed to use it to look for work on a regular basis</p>	<p>Customer survey to be conducted (timescale to be confirmed)</p> <p>Support to be provided to young people identified through the World of Work campaign – ongoing.</p>	<p>Digital Customer Survey undertaken as planned.</p> <p>World of Work campaign completed and best practice re auditing digital skills embedded as part of business as usual.</p>
<p>Recommendation 24: Jobcentre Plus ensures that Work Programme providers</p>	<p>Jobcentre Plus shares information with Work Programme providers via an automated system. This will</p>	<p>Existing procedures in place - ongoing</p>	<p>Business as usual. Work is ongoing to ensure that all changes of circumstances are notified promptly.</p>

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<p>receive all the necessary details relating to a client prior to them commencing the programme and that they keep the Work Programme providers up to date with a client's change of circumstances.</p>	<p>include personal information where the claimant has disclosed it to us and it is recorded on our Labour Market System.</p> <p>We work closely with Work Programme providers to ensure that any changes in circumstances are reported timeously.</p>		<p>Work programme providers are encouraged to flag up any hot spots which require investigation – none have been notified to date.</p>

Progress against North Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group's recommendation as at 31 September 2014

Overview and Scrutiny Recommendation	CCG Commentary	Action to be taken and timescale for completion	Progress update as at 31 September 2014
<p>Recommendation 26: North Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group considers as part of the new Talking Therapies contract to allow self-referrals or referrals from others, such as external agencies.</p>	<p>As the Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Sub-committee is aware the CCG has undergone a procurement for Talking Therapies which ended with no contract awarded. This means the current provider will continue to provide the service.</p> <p>However, as a lot of work was done in developing the specification for the procurement, both the CCG and the provider are keen to make best use of the learning from that. The intention is to work on a reshaping of the service, to achieve some clear outcomes- including around improving access.</p> <p>Self referral will be a new element of the current provider's offer.</p>	<p>We will be working on this from April to June 2014</p>	<p>NT CCG met with the Talking Therapies service regularly. We have made good progress in agreeing an improved model, which includes self referral. However, the move towards the new model has only just begun, and self referral is not the first change to make.</p> <p>We are keen to maintain the quality of the service, at the same time as opening up access, this is best done incrementally.</p> <p>Further updates will be available after Christmas 2014.</p>