



**Equalities Committee**  
2 May 2017

**Report from the Director of  
Performance, Policy & Partnerships**

Wards affected:  
Harlesden

**Delivering the next phase of the Harlesden Community  
Hub**

**1.0 Summary**

- 1.1. Brent Council worked in partnership with the local community and partner organisations to develop and test a community hub model in Harlesden in November 2016. The prototype was developed as part of three Outcome Based Reviews (OBRs) carried out in 2016 focusing on housing, employment and regeneration. The OBRs set out to help us reimagine future services through a better understanding of the issues and challenges people face, as well as the things that can support and enable them.
- 1.2. The prototype was developed to trial a community hub model in Harlesden and test how it could work in practice over a two-week period. The approach enabled the model to be tested quickly and without the need for huge investment. It brought together a range of partners to work together in one place to offer access to advice and guidance and a range of community activities. The prototype was also an opportunity to see whether there was an appetite among the local community and partners to jointly build a longer-term model.
- 1.3. Following the success of the prototype, it was agreed to further test the approach by setting up a short-term model to run from Harlesden Library for two days a week as the second phase of development. The short-term model provides further opportunities to trial the approach and to continue to develop the hub partnership while building a business plan for a longer-term, sustainable model. The second phase of the Harlesden Hub was officially launched on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017.

- 1.4. A report on the OBRs and community hub prototype was presented to the Committee in December 2016. This report provides an update on phase 2 of the community hub model in Harlesden.

## **2.0 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1. The Committee is asked to note the progress and next steps for the development of the Harlesden hub.

## **3.0 Detail**

### *Background*

- 3.1. Brent Council carried out three OBRs, using design-led processes, focusing on employment support and welfare reform, housing for vulnerable people and regeneration in 2016. The OBRs set out to:

- gather rich insights and understand challenges through new perspectives;
- create something different (new solutions, different relationships and ways of working);
- build new capabilities in service design processes and innovation capacity; and
- deliver improved outcomes for Brent residents.

Delivering a customer-centred approach was a key component of this work, engaging residents and partners in research, visioning, design and testing.

- 3.2. Working closely with communities we set out to better understand the challenges people face and develop ideas for how we can work together to address these. The team conducted community research including ethnographic research. The ethnographies put the voices of residents at the centre of our learning, enabling us to listen to their stories, journeys and experiences to better understand challenges from an individual perspective. While some of the review work was carried out across Brent, there was a particular focus on Harlesden.
- 3.3. One key area which came out of the research was the difficulty some individuals and professionals face in navigating the system, knowing which organisations to connect with or refer to. Through a stakeholder visioning event and co-design workshops, principles and ideas for new models of resident support were developed. The idea of a community hub was a key theme across all three OBRs and it was agreed to run a prototype in Harlesden. The development of a hub prototype was identified as a way to test how we could create well-connected communities, bring together local organisations to work under one roof and to jointly address needs. The community hub prototype was designed to create something different which offered a more localised, personalised and holistic approach.
- 3.4. The temporary hub was developed through a co-design process with partners and ran for a two-week period from 31<sup>st</sup> October to 12<sup>th</sup> November 2016 in Harlesden town centre. The community hub prototype provided a physical

space enabling a range of local organisations to work together with a focus on offering a cross-agency advice, support and well-being solution with a range of local organisations, focusing on prevention/early intervention work, targeted approaches for people with complex and multiple needs, and support for people in crisis. There were over 600 visits to the hub during the two weeks of operation.

*A continued focus on learning*

3.5. We were keen to build on the momentum and success of the prototype phase of the community hub and at the same time ensure we maintain a focus on learning in developing a flexible model, responsive to local needs. Key learning from the prototype included:

- the benefits of a multi-skilled team working together in one space to support people to tackle often complex and wide-ranging issues
- the importance of targeting the approach to local needs
- the need for a flexible space and friendly atmosphere
- the benefits of working with the community and local organisations to build on local knowledge, positive work and strong networks
- the added value of bringing local groups together to make connections

This learning informed the development of the second phase of the hub model.

*Getting phase 2 up and running*

3.6. A core group of partners was formed in December 2016 to start work on plans to get the next phase of the hub up and running. This focused on delivering the hub at a small scale in setting up a short-term project in Harlesden, operating two days per week, to expand the offer and provide a live environment to further design and test the approach with partners and residents. The branding, partnership and ideas and experiences were already in place. Harlesden Library was identified as a location for the Harlesden hub and a plan for minor works required to create a hub space within the library was put in place. The library offered a visible location with direct access from the street, provided a space with an established footfall and, as a Council building, the ability to get the hub in place quickly.

3.7. The core partners include:

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Key areas</i>
<b>Brent Council</b>	Responsible for setting up the hub premises and coordinating resources including involvement of council services (e.g. benefits advice) and other public services in the hub delivery
<b>Brent Advice Partnership</b>	Coordination of local organisations' involvement, including Brent Community Advice Network (BCAN) and Advice4Renters, and provision of information and advice
<b>Crisis Brent</b>	Provide risk of homelessness support and deliver a range of activities including employment, housing, art and gardening within the hub. Also ensure links with Harlesden Working Together place shaping programme.

Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum	Coordinating links with the community regeneration agenda and local community representatives
Local resident volunteer	Providing outreach and community links
Harlesden Town Team	Helping shape and inform the hub approach

- 3.8. Phase 2 consists of a core offer of advice and support services with a wider programme of themed events and activities, as well as outreach activity to ensure the hub is reaching residents who most need support. The vision for the hub, developed by the core group of partners, is outlined below:

*The vision for the hub is to connect and empower local organisations and initiatives so we can work together to inform, guide, support, develop and celebrate the diverse communities of Harlesden.*

*In delivering this vision, the hub will be:*

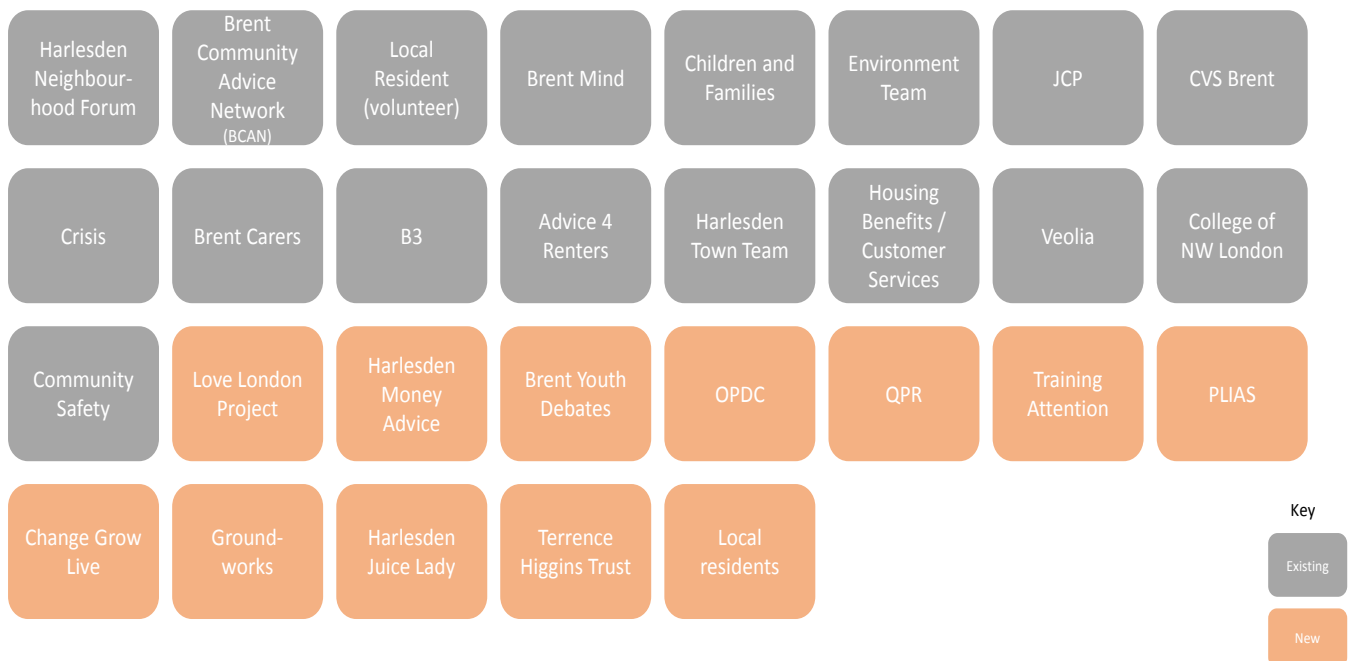
- Sustainable
- Responsive
- Collaborative
- Aspiring
- Empowering
- Inclusive
- Adding value

- 3.9. A core team was onsite from early February 2017 and phase 2 of the Harlesden hub was officially launched at the beginning of March 2017, with an event attended by the Mayor, Leader, Deputy Leader, local councillors, partner organisations and residents.
- 3.10. The hub operates on a drop-in basis, with no appointment required. The aim is to support residents within the hub and to minimise the need to signpost. This may involve supporting the resident with making phone calls, arranging for other professionals to come into the hub or working with a resident over a period of time. The library has regular footfall and the team has seen visits to the hub build during the time onsite, with some residents returning on a regular basis.

*Developing the partnership*

- 3.11. The partnership is the foundation of the hub model and the growth of this partnership during the prototype phase of the work was a key success of the approach. During the prototype the partnership grew from 17 organisations, community groups / residents and services to 29 (as illustrated in Figure 1). An invitation was extended to all these groups to continue to be involved in the second phase of the hub, whether this was through a regular presence or running ad hoc community events or activities.

*Figure 1 – Hub partnership at prototyping phase*



3.12. While keen to build on the partnership developed through the prototype and wider OBR work, it was acknowledged that resourcing an ongoing hub would provide additional challenges for some partners. The core partners are resourcing a multi-agency team who are on site two days a week and a wider group of organisations and local residents are delivering support to residents and activities in the hub (as illustrated in Figure 2).

3.13. With a range of organisations and residents working in the hub, the current offer includes:

- Support with housing related and benefit issues
- Support with form filling
- Employment, housing, volunteering / community involvement, wellbeing and positive relationships and networks for people at risk of or who have experienced homelessness
- Employability skills, education and training advice, support with CVs and job search
- Health and well-being information and advice, including healthy lifestyles, drug and alcohol awareness and mindfulness tasters
- Childcare information and advice
- Family activities including training for parents and children on human rights, face painting and school holiday activities
- A place to have a tea or coffee and a conversation

*Figure 2 – Hub partnership in phase 2*



*Feedback from hub users*

3.14. Some examples of hub users:

Case study 1

A woman came into the hub who had been made redundant as her cleaning company had gone into liquidation. She was seeking help in applying for a new job, but felt intimidated and apprehensive as she was in her early 50s, not computer literate and did not have access to the internet. The Team Hub advisor was able to sign her up to the library so she could access the internet and computer services from there, making it easier to eventually apply for jobs. The adviser then set an email address up together with the woman and wrote down steps to remind her how to access her account.

The adviser went on to make an appointment for the woman with the Brent Start Team who could offer her further advice and assistance finding work and signposted her to Brent Start for information on entry level computer courses to help with her online job search. Finally, as she no longer had a working income, the Team Hub Adviser was able to direct her to the job centre, to not only get help applying for Job Seekers Allowance but also to enquire about the National Careers Service available for claimants who were looking for work. The woman had come into the hub with an issue and had left with multiple means of getting help towards resolving this problem and much better informed.

### Case study 2

A local woman, originally from Somalia, came to the hub to seek advice about an employment application. She had experience working in healthcare but required support to navigate the complex application form for a permanent NHS position. A Team Hub advisor was able to help her complete the form and she was very happy to be able to access this support as she was not aware that any help was available unless she was out of work. In return she has agreed to plan a henna hand painting workshop at the Hub that she will invite members of the hard to reach Somalian community to participate in.

### Case study 3

A local man in his 50s first came into the hub prototype for support with a problem with his housing benefit. He is a self-confessed alcoholic with mental health issues. Follow up work by a Team Hub adviser has included arranging a support worker for the man, referring him to the Salvation Army and a local food bank to get access to food, liaising with Brent Housing Partnership to arrange for an assessment of his property which had fallen into disrepair, arranging for clothes vouchers via the Local Welfare Assistance team and providing action plans to support him in making improvements to his lifestyle. The man attends the hub regularly for support and has also volunteered to help out in the hub by putting up posters. This support is ongoing.

### Case study 4

A man came into the hub and said he was having problems getting around and accessing services. The Team Hub adviser printed out a Blue Badge, Freedom Pass and Taxi Card application form for the man and assisted him to complete the parts he felt he could not do unaided. He agreed to take the forms home with him when we had finished, complete the sections he felt confident filling in and then send the forms off. The Team Hub adviser also then went through a Brent Care Place assessment with the client, which at the end indicated he may be entitled to some care support and so took his details and submitted these with the form.

Two weeks later the man returned informing the hub team that he had completed an assessment for the Freedom Pass, Blue Badge and Taxi Card and had been awarded these, and was now just waiting on a response from Brent Adult Social Care Team about his eligibility for care. The client felt a sense of independence he had received assistance with aspects of the forms but had ultimately taken on the responsibility to complete the rest of the forms and submit them.

Some comments from hub users:

*“When I go to Brent [Civic Centre] I get stressed out. Since coming to the hub the help has been good and not stressed. I’ve been helped with Council Tax, housing benefit and other queries. Everyone is helpful and patient. I’ve been telling people about it.”*

*“The help at the Harlesden Hub is very good. I come and you help me. Very helpful. Very good because I don’t understand very good English and I not go to Civic as I have crutches.”*

*“Thank you so much for all your hard work and being a valuable member of Team Hub that developed a service that the Harlesden community needed so badly. I will pass on my experience of visiting the hub to others.”*

*“What a great service Team Hub gave me around my issues today, I came wanting them to sort out two issues but ending up getting four issues sorted.”*

*“I had no one who could help me do these things. This is a good and important service and a good thing for the people of Harlesden”.*

*“The hub has been brilliant, it has helped me with a range of issues. I am off sick from work but the hub is helping me to prepare to return. I can’t praise you highly enough, I feel like I can start to be myself again.”*

#### *Measures of success*

- 3.15. The design and testing of a community hub was not about re-inventing what already exists but creating something different and bringing together resources, skills and expertise to address local needs. The hub model is being developed through an iterative process and phase 2 of the hub allows us to continue to engage a wide range of partners in the process of testing a hub approach and an opportunity to learn, experiment and try something new.
- 3.16. At the start of this work we set out to understand how a hub model could deliver against the following four areas:



- 3.17. A set of measures will be established to assess how effective the model is in delivering against these key areas. The recent focus has been on getting the next phase of the hub up and running but work is now underway to design the evaluation process for the hub and agree on measures of success. The evaluation process will be co-designed with partners and community members involved in running the hub at an event in early May 2017. Possible measures which may be included are:

- a growth in the number of visits
- tracking outcomes for individuals accessing support and advice (including employment and housing outcomes)
- an increase in the number and range of groups working through the hub



- the number of residents engaged in an outreach programme to ensure the hub is reaching out to those in most need who may not otherwise engage

3.18. The evaluation will also consider how well the approach builds and strengthens relationships between the Council and key partners to develop and establish a sustainable model.

*Future development of the model*

- 3.19. The longer-term arrangements will be developed through three phases:
- **Delivering at small scale** (*current arrangements*) – setting up a short-term project in Harlesden to expand the offer, delivering core advice and support around employment, housing and benefits for two days a week, as well as a programme of themed community activities. This will offer a live environment to design and test new assessment pathways, extend the partnership, develop a volunteering base and carry out further evaluation of impact and financial implications.
  - **Embedding the hub** – having a dedicated core resource across partners in place to deliver services from both a centre and outreach basis. This phase will include opportunities to share best practice.
  - **Ongoing delivery** – an established hub in the community connecting the whole system.
- 3.20. The learning from the Harlesden hub will also help inform an approach for adapting the model to meet the needs of other parts of Brent. There are discussions currently taking place to look at other possible areas for testing the approach, including within a health setting.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1. Costs to establish the second phase of the hub have been kept to a minimum. Initial set up costs of approximately £4,300 were incurred in establishing phase 2. This includes minor works to prepare the space in the library, as well as purchasing furniture.
- 4.2. There are ongoing running costs associated with the hub, including backfilling of customer service staff at a cost of £2,115 per month and resource / refreshment costs. Arrangements to fund a full-time coordinator post to support the development of the hub model are currently being explored.
- 4.3. The future financial implications will be need to be assessed as part of the business case development for the longer-term community hub model.

#### **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1. None at this stage.

## **6.0 Equality Implications**

- 6.1. The hub approach aims to engage a wide range of residents in an accessible and inclusive environment. In developing the hub consideration has been given to the needs of disabled residents, people whose first language is not English, parents with children and carers, older residents and young people. Equality implications will continue to be considered and diversity monitoring will be introduced as part of the development of future models.
- 6.2. An equality analysis will be carried out as we develop the blueprint for the hub model, informed by learning from phases 1 and 2.

## **7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)**

- 7.1. There is a need to provide sufficient staffing levels to meaningfully engage residents as they come into the hub, as well as ensuring a range of skills and expertise to support residents with a range of needs. This is delivered through a multi-agency approach, bringing together resource and expertise from a range of organisations and community groups. There is, however, a need for a minimum level of Council staff at this stage of the hub development. To resource this, backfilling arrangements have been put in place for customer services staff working in the hub. There is also an identified need for a dedicated coordinator post to oversee the running of the Harlesden hub and to continue to build the partnership. Arrangements for this post are being discussed with partners.
- 7.2. Future staffing arrangements will be considered as part of the business case development for the longer-term model.

## **Background Papers**

Update on Outcome Based Reviews and the Harlesden Community Hub – Report to the Equalities Committee (December 2016)

<http://democracy.brent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=471&MId=3238&Ver=4>

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