

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Executive Meeting
Date: 3/12/13
Report for: Information
Report of: Councillor Dr. K. Barclay, Executive Member, Health and Well Being

Report Title

Six month evaluation of "Trafford Assist", following Go Live on the 2/4/13

Summary

The purpose of the report is:

- To update Executive on the positive implementation of Trafford Assist following Go Live on the 2/4/13
- To provide a statistical breakdown of claims and a range of case studies to evidence the positive impact of Trafford Assist.

Recommendation

That the Executive note the positive evaluation of Trafford Assist

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Rachel Burns, Discretionary Payments Team Manager
Simon Lewis, Acting Head of Revenues and Benefits
Joanne Willmott, Joint Director of Operations, CFW

Background papers: None.

Executive Report

1. Introduction

Trafford Assist, Trafford's local welfare assistance programme, went live on the 2/4/13, following the abolition of the Department of Work and Pension's Social Fund. This formed part of the Government's wide ranging Welfare Reforms and Localism Agenda.

This report provides a six month update on implementation, providing a variety of statistical information and a number of case studies to evidence the positive impact of the programme.

Within the first 6 months of operation Trafford Assist has received over 1500 applications. A radical area of improvement that needs celebrating is how quickly people are receiving help – the waiting time for a decision regarding a Community Care grant application under the old Social Fund was 14 weeks, while Trafford Assist are completing the decision making process in 1.44 days.

2. Overview of Trafford Assist

Trafford Assist consists of the following core elements:

- A collaborative model based on a partnership between Trafford Council, Trafford Housing Trust and Trafford Citizens Advice Bureau supported by a range of trusted assessors from the community and voluntary sector.
- Delivery of 6 key strands of Local Welfare Assistance

Establishment of a Borough wide food bank and issuing of food parcels to residents in need (Citizens Advice Bureau Trafford).

Provision of furniture and white goods through Rainbow Recycling, a Trafford Housing Trust Social Enterprise

Using request for help as positive intervention point. This includes delivery of budgeting and debt advice

Limited use of automated payments via Pay Point where a cash alternative is unavoidable.

Triage provided by a range of third sector organisations, with Citizens Advice Bureau Trafford as lead partner.

Assessment, decision making and project co-ordination provided by the Trafford Assist Team, Revenues and Benefits Department, supported and overseen by a partnership steering group.

3. Trafford Assist Pathway

Trafford Assist is working in the following way:

- Citizens Advice Bureau Trafford and a number of information and advice providers are operating as trusted assessors. They are contacted by individuals in need and discuss people's specific circumstances. If people meet initial eligibility criteria the trusted assessor completes an on-line referral form.
- The referral form is submitted electronically to the Trafford Assist assessment team, located within Revenue and Benefits Department
- A decision is made within 1 working day on whether an individual meets eligibility criteria and if they do allocates the most appropriate award.
- Individual applicant receives food bank voucher, furniture voucher, or electronic code to receive loaded utility card or cash payment via Pay Point.

4. Programme Update

Trafford Assist went live on the 2/4/13. Implementation has been seamless with all new processes working well. The collaborative partnership, consisting of Trafford Council, Citizens Advice Bureau Trafford and Trafford Housing Trust is thriving, with all stakeholders working together to best meet the needs of vulnerable customers. Feedback from customers and stakeholders has been very positive, with many people contrasting the excellent performance of Trafford Assist with the poorly performing Social Fund. Particular recognition needs to go to the Trafford Assist Team who has worked very hard to ensure the success of the programme.

The Department of Work and Pensions has held Trafford up as an area of excellent practise recognising the innovative and creative nature of the scheme which maximises positive outcomes for a very vulnerable cohort of customers while ensuring value for money for the Council

5. Project Developments

- Alston, the company developing the Carrington Waste plant, helped fund the decoration of the Trafford Assist Building (the former Partington Youth Centre) which is the food distribution centre for Trafford Assist and is used by a new Social Enterprise called Ear 4 U. Ear 4 U has been set up by community leaders in Partington to provide a clothes recycling scheme. Alston have also donated £6,000 to Ear 4 U which has paid for an additional washing machine, dryer, robust hanging rails and money towards a large van. Trafford Housing Trust has applied for match funding so they can buy a van quickly.

- Alston have also donated £2000 to Citizens Advice Bureau Trafford to fund additional food parcels. This is being used to fund additional and enhanced food parcels during the Christmas period.
- Lyondellbasell, a chemical company based in Carrington, have provided a day of volunteering at the Trafford Assist Building to provide external cleaning and tidying.
- Trafford Housing Trust staff volunteered at the Trafford Assist Building in May, working with Styal Prison to provide landscaping and planting.
- The Trafford Assist Team are working on the next collaborative partnership opportunity whereby Ear 4 U will provide clothing packages where people are in need such as fleeing domestic violence or experience a catastrophic event such as a fire or a flood
- We are developing a new partnership with Credit Union whereby Trafford Assist will refer customers to the Credit Union for low cost loans. The Credit Union also provided stakeholder briefings and visited Trafford Town Hall and Sale Waterside to advertise their services and encourage staff to save with them.
- We are receiving excellent feedback from stakeholders and customers. Agencies are particularly impressed with the impressive turn- around time for claims and the friendly customer interaction.
- Joint working with HR has resulted in the organisation of an internal donation with staff asked to donate toiletries and household goods. This has been very successful and will be rolled out further
- To date we are hitting all objectives, and are exceeding original agreed timescales. Trafford Assist is currently running within budget, whilst maintaining a high award rate and exceptional levels of customer satisfaction

6. Citizen Advice Bureau Trafford

Trafford Assist has a dedicated phone line which is operated through Citizens Advice Bureau Trafford.

Citizen Advice Bureau Trafford trainees are completing some of the Trafford Assist applications. This is giving the trainees the experience and opportunity to speak to clients directly and offer on the spot advice and is improving volunteer retention and satisfaction.

Trafford Assist has allowed Citizens Advice Bureau Trafford to offer expert advice to residents who would not usually use their service for advice/debt support.

There has been a marked increase in the number of under 25 year olds requiring assistance.

Example positive case study:

- A client was made redundant due to the company they worked for going in to administration. They called the Trafford Assist line for help towards daily living expenses as their salary did not go into their account. The CAB completed a gateway assessment. The client was given details on how to make a claim through the National Insurance Fund. They were also provided details of how to apply for JSA including getting help towards their mortgage after 13 weeks. The client was also supported to contact the Tax Credit Helpline.

At least 50 Trafford Assist calls have resulted in face to face appointments with Citizens Advice Trafford to offer a wrap - around support service.

Citizens Advice Bureau Trafford also manages the food bank. To date the scheme has awarded over 880 food parcels, to residents in every ward of the borough. 11% of clients have made a second claim for assistance.

96% of emergency assistance (food & fuel) applications received before 3pm have resulted in the person receiving assistance through a food parcel or fuel voucher the same day. All applications after 3pm have been dealt with the next day.

From the data collated, we have identified there is a high demand in the North of the Borough. As a result the Citizen Advice Bureau is establishing an additional collection point in this area.

From the launch of the scheme it became apparent there was a need for a toiletry pack. For a small cost of £1.80 per application we now offer a toiletry pack which is also managed and distributed through the Citizen Advice Bureau Trafford.

7. Rainbow Furniture

The Furniture awards are distributed via Rainbow Furniture.

Rainbow Furniture is non-profit making Social Enterprise in the heart of the North of the Borough. They provide low cost quality recycled furniture. To date they have supplied furniture to over 270 homes. Rainbow Furniture processes an average of 43 applications per month.

Demand in this area has been greater than originally expected. Rainbow Furniture has dealt with demand, and ensured clients furniture is delivered within a maximum of 10 days.

There have been several occasions in which emergency furniture is required. On these occasions Rainbow furniture has delivered the items the same day.

An example of this is:

A seriously ill patient at Trafford General Hospital was previously living in a caravan.

The client was unable to return to the caravan, as it would have had a detrimental effect on his health. Housing Option Service Trafford arranged a property for the client; however he could not be discharged as he had no furniture.

Trafford Assist and Rainbow furniture prioritised the application. The award was made on the same day the application was received and a delivery date of the items arranged.

With the previous scheme this would not have happened and the client would still be in hospital or admitted to high cost respite care.

There have been very positive comments from clients who have voiced their appreciation and gratitude to staff at the Rainbow Furniture shop.

8. PayPoint

The PayPoint scheme has been running extremely well. The system is very simple to use and a number of other Local Authorities have contacted Trafford to enquire about the service and the opportunity to replicate the Trafford model.

9. Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)

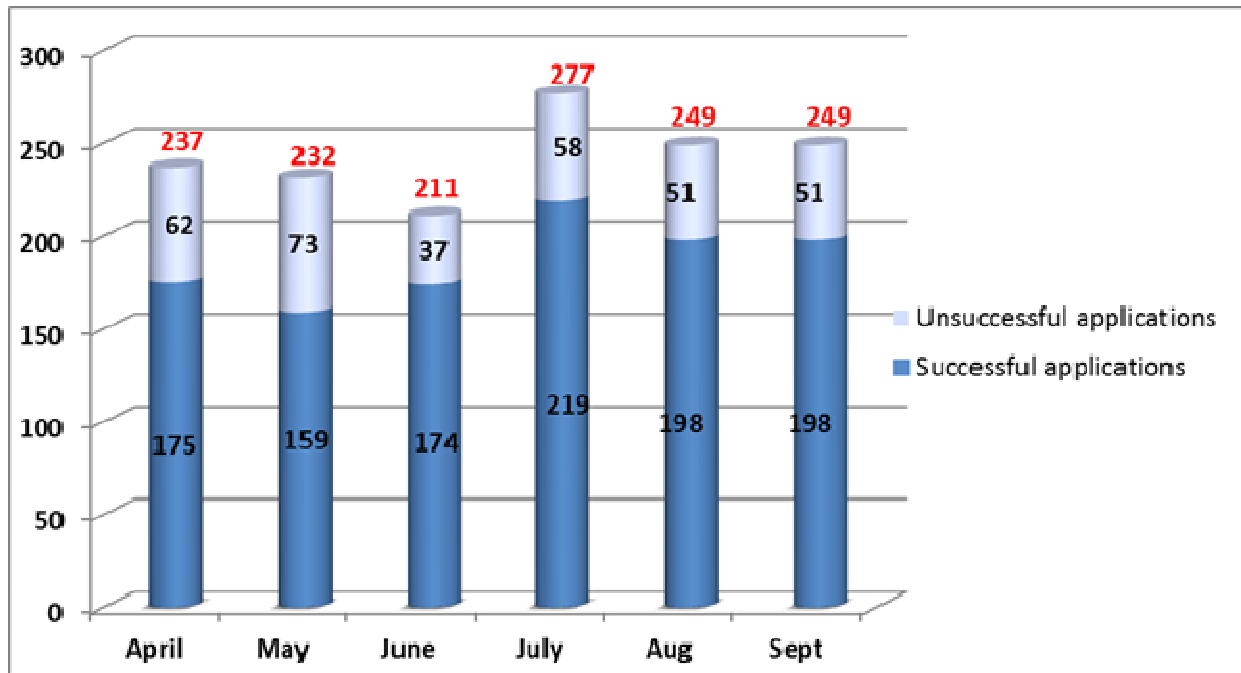
A key objective of Trafford Assist was to build a positive working relationship with the DWP. Our local connections have ensured the most vulnerable adults in Trafford have received priority in appealing challenging DWP decisions. In some cases decisions have been overturned, and the clients have received payments the same day.

- An example of this was when a client with mental health problems had not received benefits for several months. He had no food, and had not put any fuel on his meter for over a week.

The team made a call to the DWP and explained the situation. They asked for the client to go in. They managed to fast track the application and the client received a payment the next day.

Trafford Assist and DWP hold regular meetings to jointly discuss issues and devise collaborative solutions.

10. Statistical Analysis



Reason for successful applications

Reason	% of all applications	% of awarded applications
Protection of children	0.4%	0.5%
Supported to Independent living	5.3%	7.5%
Customer in Hardship	61.2%	86.8%
Community independence	1.7%	2.1%
Released from prison	1.3%	1.4%
Domestic Violence	1.5%	1.7%

Reasons for unsuccessful applications

Reason	% of all applications	% of declined applications
Customer declined before awarded	7%	23.6%
Outside Scheme	4.5%	19.5%
Does not meet criteria	5.5%	22.5%
Alternative funds	5.5%	19.8%
Previously claimed within 12 months	2.2%	10.7%
Sign Posted Elsewhere	0.7%	3.9%

Please see below for the breakdown of awards:

Food

Month	No of collected parcels
September	129
August	131
July	169
June	153
May	141
April	157

Furniture

Month	No. of household claims
September	TBC
August	38
July	54
June	44
May	31
April	50

PayPoint vouchers

Month	No of items	Issued amount
September	95	£1203.00
August	104	£1428.00
July	110	£1502.10
June	98	£1568.00
May	113	£1835.50
April	124	£1694.50

Client Information

Average Age	37
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Male	51%
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Female	49%
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<u>POST CODE</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>	<u>POST CODE</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
M33 Sale	18.4%	M31 Partington	10.1%
M32 Stretford	26%	WA15 Altrincham/Hale	7%
M15 Old Trafford	6.3%	M23 Brooklands	0.25%
M16 Old Trafford	10.7%	WA13 Warburton	0.2%
M41 Flixton/Urmston/Davyhulme	10.75%	NFA	4%
WA14 Dunham Massey/Altrincham/Timperley	6.3%		

11. Budget Position

A grant of £562,219 has been awarded to the Council for the implementation and operation of a local welfare assistance scheme. As at 30 September 2013 the following costs have been incurred:

Activity	Expenditure to 30 Sept 2013 £
Staffing	44,029
Advice & Support Services (CAB)	26,490
Premises	23,155
System software development and maintenance	15,488
Awards:	
• Furniture	61,868
• Food	9,091
• Paypoint (utilities)	9,231
TOTAL	189,352

In addition to having sufficient budget remaining to manage forecast demand based on current activity levels we have established a 100K contingency fund to manage an anticipated increase in demand for fuel and food parcels over the winter months

12. Conclusion

Trafford Assist is based on positive intervention and provides the best possible outcomes to vulnerable Trafford residents while also delivering value for money for the Council.

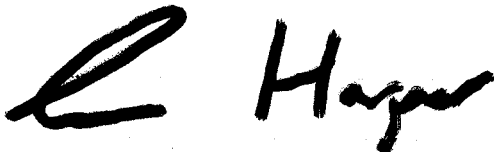
Implementation has gone well, with positive feedback from customers and stakeholders. Trafford's collaborative model of positive intervention is being recognised on a local and regional basis as a beacon of excellence.

Reports will not be accepted without completion of the following section - THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER AND DIRECTOR MUST CLEAR ALL REPORTS before they are sent to Democratic Services.

Finance Officer Clearance (type in initials) *ID*

Legal Officer Clearance (type in initials) *MJ*

[CORPORATE] DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Hager'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'E'.

(electronic).....

To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Executive Member has cleared the report.