

Member visit to the Bromley by Bow Centre Thursday 11 May 2107

In attendance

Cllr Peter Hollick Julie Ogley – Director of Social Care Health and Housing
Cllr Paul Downing
Cllr Eugene Ghent
Cllr Tracey Stock
Cllr Susan Goodchild

Members visited the Bromley by Bow Community Centre which is a facility to 'To enable people to be well and live life to the full in a vibrant community'. It showcases a good and effective example of services delivered at neighbourhood level with shared ownership of the facility.

Bromley by Bow, which is run by an independent charity, provides access to integrated health and care services. The Centre also includes a learning centre, a day care centre, social welfare advice, a park (abutting the centre and rescued from dereliction), a creative arts centre, digital inclusion (courses in IT), money management, employment programmes, debt advice, time banking, café, gym, gardening/food growing. The staff that provide these services work together as a team and there is no sense of organisational boundary.

The relationship between the wide variety of staff and services we saw at the Centre reminded us of a quote from Michael Brodie, Financial and Commercial Director, Public Health England who said: "The Bromley by Bow Centre is the most fantastic example of public health in action with a unique and sustainable community based approach to health and wellbeing. In many ways it moves past the concept of health and care integration and on to the next level of unleashing healthy communities designed and delivered locally".

Social prescribing (SP) is at the heart of the enterprise and is sometimes referred to as a community referral, is a means of enabling GPs, nurses and other primary care professionals to refer people to a range of local, non-clinical services. Social prescribing is designed to support people with a wide range of social, emotional or practical needs, and the scheme has helped those with varying decreases of mental health problems, vulnerable and social isolated people. There are three social prescribing services available at the Bromley-by-Bow Centre:-

- Generalist SP – serves Bromley by Bow and 4 neighbouring GP practices
- Macmillan SP – serves those living with an beyond cancer
- Healthy Cities SP – works with families with children under 5 and serves 1 GP practice.

Members gained a clear impression as to how people were empowered to gain control of their lives by working effectively in partnership with many organisations; local people were involved in the development and delivery of services which empowered the community to get involved. Clearly, the Bromley by Bow initiative has been in place for 17 years and they have achieved a multi-faceted facility offering the community a very different approach to health and wellbeing.

The community and voluntary sector play a key role in the Centre. We have the opportunity to build on the work of our Village Care Schemes and expand the role of the voluntary and community sector in our localities and the Hubs to build on the excellent work already being undertaken in our communities.

The concept of Bromley by Bow would be very suited to our localities hubs models like Biggleswade. Clearly we are not designing or prescribing what the Hubs should like, this is a matter for the localities but would wish alignment of a wider range of services and community ownership of the facilities. This collaborative approach supports the Councils aspiration to provide support to identify 'what matters to you'. There is also the potential for development and alignment of services in Dunstable alongside the refurbished Leisure Centre (which will be the new venue for the Library and the CAB,) and close to a wide range of educational, entertainment and other facilities that could compliment a 'Bromley by Bow' like facility.