

## **HERTFORDSHIRE WORKS**

**MONDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2009**

### **REPORT: RECESSION TASK FORCE**

**Lead: Cllr Charles Goldstein, Hertsmere Borough Council**

#### **Purpose of the report**

To provide an overview of the activities of the Recession Task Force, its proposals for distributing that element of PRG allocated to supporting families and individuals through the recession and its SMART Action Plans.

#### **The Recession Task Force**

Now led by Hertsmere Borough Council, the Recession Task Force was established by Hertfordshire Forward to develop and coordinate responses to the recession across a number of public sector agencies. It is made up of representatives of district councils, FE colleges, Probation, Job Centre Plus, HCCI, Herts Careers Service and Business Link. The Group has produced a Recession Pledge, endorsed at the March meeting of the Board, which provides a framework for a range of local activities aimed at supporting families and businesses.

Within the framework of the pledge, the Dacorum Economic Situation Group has developed a 'beat the credit crunch' poster which gives information and contact numbers for a range of services including money and debt management, support for businesses and counselling and advice. Hertsmere Borough Council has produced similar information in the form of a booklet. HCC's Money Advice Unit is currently advertising for three new advisers, one of which will work with BME families while the NHS has launched a new 'Credit Crunch Stressline'. Both HCC and Stevenage are promoting the benefits of Credit Unions to their staff. Executive jobs clubs have been established at Oaklands College and Next Steps, Bishops Stortford while 'In Town Training' at Stevenage is offering a free service to those affected by the recession.

#### **The effects of the recession**

An update on the effects of the recession on the Hertfordshire economy is provided elsewhere on the Board's agenda. As well as businesses, families and individuals are affected and they often turn to local councils or the CAB for advice. Hertfordshire CABs report a 14.5% increase in people seeking debt advice and a 43% increase in enquiries about Job Seekers allowance with demand for debt advice increasing fastest in Welwyn Hatfield, Stevenage, Three Rivers, Dacorum and East Herts.

### **Proposals for allocating PRG**

The Recession Task Force is the route through which the £630,000 of PRG revenue funding for supporting families and individuals through the recession will be managed (item 4 on the Agenda). This will involve -

- Additional funding to CABx to provide 5 specialist advisers and increased volunteers (£480,000 over 2 years);
- A coordinated campaign related to energy advice, fuel poverty, welfare rights and raising awareness of credit unions more widely (£30,000) and
- Strengthening counselling services for families and individuals under stress (£100,000).

To date the group has been made up of professionals working in the areas of economic development, further education and skills and the group will need to widen its membership to include representatives of the VCS in order to manage the PRG funding allocation. This will form part of the agenda for the next meeting in September. Now the recession pledge is in place and is being developed by partners, the role of the group will change to acting as a forum for sharing information and overseeing the spending of the PRG monies.

### **Action Plans**

An Action Plan for the Group is attached as appendix A.

**APPENDIX A**  
**Recession Task Force Action Plan**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Partner Organisations</b>	<b>When by</b>	<b>PI's</b>	<b>Targets</b>
Recruit additional specialist advisers to CABx  Recruit additional volunteers	CABx (lead Marion Hurle Stevenage CAB  Recession Task Force	50% of outputs delivered by 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2010  Remaining 50% by 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2010	No. of extra clients with complex needs supported  No. of volunteers recruited  No. of people assisted to draw up financial statements	1000 extra clients supported  100 new volunteers recruited  4000 people assisted
Develop a coordinated fuel poverty, welfare rights and credit union campaign	HCC Money Advice Unit DWP CAB District Councils Recession Task Force	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2010	Number of promotional activities Number of BME communities worked with	tbc
Increase counselling services for families/individuals suffering stress	VCS Recession Task Force RELATE	31 <sup>st</sup> December 2010	Number of families and individuals assisted	tbc through discussions with the VCS
Develop a recession-busting web site	Recession Task Force	31 <sup>st</sup> December 2010	Web site developed Number of 'hits'	1 web site
Produce a recession newsletter	Recession Task Force	31 <sup>st</sup> December 2010	Number of copies distributed	tbc