

Decision of Cabinet Member for Homes and Safer Communities July 2014

Report of Assistant Director for Housing and Community Safety

Homeless Review 2013/14

Summary

1. This report looks at the activity governed by the Housing Act 1996, the Homelessness Act 2002 and the City of York Council's Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018 in respect of the financial year 2013/14. The primary focus is to report on prevention work, the trends of statutory homelessness, Youth Homeless Services, use of temporary accommodation and the work of the Resettlement Services and Housing Registrations Team to outline service developments throughout the year and future targets.
2. Commitment and partnership working over the last decade has resulted in the cementing of an effective service across the city, meeting needs of many of the most socially excluded people in society. Each agency contributes to this success and is a vital part of the jigsaw.

Background

3. There is a duty on all Local Authorities to provide an advice service to homeless people and those at risk of homelessness in addition to the provision of accommodation for certain households in accordance with Housing Act 1996. The remit of the work is set out in legislation and in the Homelessness Strategy 2013-18 'A City Partnership to prevent homelessness'.
4. The Homeless Strategy 2013-18 sets out 5 strategic aims which have been amended in the Housing Options and Homeless Strategy Action Plan 2011-13 to:
 - a. **Strategic aim 1.** Ensure people who are at risk of homelessness are aware of and have access to the services they may need to prevent it.

- b. **Strategic aim 2.** Ensure the provision of, and fair access to, accommodation sufficient to meet the identified housing needs
- c. **Strategic aim 3.** Ensure that people with housing related support needs have these fully assessed and have access to service required to sustain successful independent living and prevent homelessness
- d. **Strategic aim 4.** Ensure the effective multi-agency and partnership working occurs across all services to prevent homelessness and provide appropriate accommodation and support to meet the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- e. **Strategic Aim 5.** Deliver and develop early intervention strategies to tackle predicted trends in homelessness.

Current and Ongoing Targets

5. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and City of York Council targets for 2013/14 were to:
 - Target for reducing temporary accommodation for 2013/14 was 85, actual 79;
 - Nationally, homeless has decrease slightly (2.3%) while York's has decreased by 25.5%. The number of young people accepted as homeless remains minimal as a result of provision of young persons hostel
 - Ensure the use of Bed and Breakfast for families and young people (16 and 17) is only for emergencies and then for no longer than 6 weeks (as of 31/3/13 there were 7 households in B&B none of whom were families);
 - There were 683 homeless prevention cases in 2013/14, which is slightly less than 2012/13 but a considerable achievement in light of current economic climate;
 - 'No Second Night Out' target is to reduce the numbers of 'new' rough sleepers. In York this scheme has been successful in improving responses and provision to accommodate single homeless but is facing additional pressures from the impact of welfare reform and difficulty in accessing the private rented sector. The generic rough sleeping target of 0 rough sleepers, has not been met as in November 2013 the official submission was 9. National statistics show a 6% increase.

- Achieve housing performance targets within departmental service plan around voids and rent arrears.
- Deliver actions points set out within Homelessness Strategy 2013-18 2013-18 'A City Partnership to prevent homelessness' action plan within identified time scales;

Key Points

6. The details of the activity and performance of the service are contained in appendix 1. In light of the current economic situation and changes to services the key points of this report are:
 - The number of rough sleepers has increased fractionally. The quarter 3 submission to government (based on CLG assessment criteria) was 9, an increase from previous year of 1. This increase is despite additional funding from central government to tackle rough sleeping and implement the 'No Second Night Out Initiative'. National statistics show a 6% increase.
 - The concept of resettlement is firmly established and working well, with 55 customers being resettled into permanent accommodation
 - The number of homeless preventions (i.e. existing accommodation sustained or alternative accommodation secured) has decreased slightly from 746 in 2012/13 to 683 in 2013/14. Despite the reduction this is still a significant number of homeless prevention, especially in light of national changes around benefit reforms and difficulty in accessing private rented sector. Prevention statistics record complex cases and the work is carried out by a number of agencies including CYC Housing Options Team, Youth Homeless Workers, CAB, Salvation Army Early Interventions and Prevention Team, floating support teams all of whom contribute to this final figure. Despite reduction in number of prevention cases, homelessness has not increased.
 - A new post, Older Persons Housing Specialist has been funded on results basis through DCGL grant for an 18 month pilot.
 - There has been a decrease in York of the number of homeless acceptances (109, 25.5%). The national trend has seen a small decrease (2.3%)

- Housing Options Statistics 2013/14 shows a stabilisation in contacts with Housing Option Team, identifying a continued high demand for the advice service
- The number of households in temporary accommodation has reduced as a result of the reduction in homeless acceptances and the ongoing provision of Howe Hill for Young People. The target for 2013/14 was 90 and the final number in temporary accommodation as of 31/3/14 was 79 which is an excellent achievement.
- Rent arrears in CYC projects have reduced.
- The North Yorkshire Home Choice Common Allocation policy was reviewed and adopted in September 2013, resulting in a reduction on the register as a result of no housing need or no local connection. The success of this policy is seen in the use of the resettlement category and potentially homeless category, ensuring that people in housing need are offered accommodation without having to resort to statutory measures.
- The Housing option/homeless strategy was reviewed and re-launched in April 2013

Service Improvement

7. Throughout 2013-14 significant work has continued both internally and with partner agencies to improve the direct service to customers and the overall provision.
8. A number of service improvements were achieved in 2013/14:
 - Following on from the success of the older persons housing options guide an Older Persons Housing Specialist post has been established. This has been funded by DCGL for as an 18 month fixed term project
 - Adoption of revised North Yorkshire Home Choice allocations policy resulting in a reduction in 'waiting list' numbers with no housing need or no local connection. due to new qualification criteria

- Howe Hill for Young People - installation of new staircase and upgrade entrance to improve management and safety of the building.
- Develop emergency rooms in Peasholme Centre (1), Howe Hill (1), Yacro (1) and Arc Light (2).
- The Business Support apprentice completed her training and is currently on a 6 month secondment as a support worker
- Agreement to transfer Youth Homeless Workers from Foundation as money saving exercise (due to transfer April 2014)
- Awarded MEAM (Making every adult matter) status to tackle complex needs amongst rough sleepers

Forthcoming projects and priorities – 2014/15

9. The following work is identified in the Homelessness Strategy Action plan 2013-18 and will be given priority within the team in 2013/14:
 - To streamline Youth Homeless Workers into Housing Options Service provision
 - To work alongside Community Safety to tackle street drinking and begging, especially in light of new Anti-social behaviour team
 - To involve customers and faith and community groups in work with homeless
 - To respond to ongoing changes to welfare reform
 - To use affordable rents and flexible tenancies in York as appropriate
 - To increase portfolio of YorHome and to develop private rented sector and discharge homeless duty to private rented sector as appropriate
 - Re-provision of Ordnance Lane hostel
 - Continue to be lead Local Authority for sub regional work around rough sleeping and distribution of personalisation monies (Communities and Local Government funded)
 - Work alongside partners to develop additional specialist mental health accommodation

- Strive to achieve 'Gold Standard' as set out by DCLG
- To work within corporate parameters to retain and improve services as part of the 'rewiring' programme
- To continue to adapt / redesign services in light of national changes (welfare benefit)
- To analyse success of Older Persons Housing Specialist and seek mainstream funding if appropriate.
- Redesign of deliver of floating support as part on the adult social care rewiring transformation process.
- To appoint MEAM Co-ordinator (Arc Light lead agency)

Consultation

10. Consultation with partner agencies on North Yorkshire Home Choice Board. In the development of the Strategy there has been extensive consultation with partners/stakeholders and customers

Council Objectives

11. The Homeless strategy is closely link to a number of strategies and priorities with the new Council Plan.
 - Build strong communities
 - Protect vulnerable people
 - Protect the environment.

Implications

Financial Implications

12. There are no direct financial implications to this report, although there is evidence that by not investing in preventative measures there is a greater cost to the city in the long-term through failure to meet targets and potential for an increase in homelessness. There is heightened concern over impact of welfare benefit reforms on demand for social housing and on effect of 'bedroom tax' on exiting tenants.
13. There are financial risks as a result of Ombudsmen complaints if CYC fails to act within its statutory duties regarding homelessness.

Equalities Implications

14. A community impact assessment has been completed for the housing options and homeless strategy.

Legal Implications

15. The provision of a homeless service is a statutory requirement under Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002.
16. That services adhere to national Guidance on “Provision of Accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who maybe homeless and/or require accommodation”.

Risk Management

17. There is a continued risk that due to current economic climate and national agenda that homelessness will increase significantly. It is only through the ongoing concerted effort of staff and the resources channelled into homeless that we are keeping this at bay.
18. That any future local and national funding cuts will impact on services
19. The risk/s associated with the recommendation of this report are assessed at a net level below 16. The risks have been assessed as moderate at 14, the strategy will be regularly monitored at the Homeless Strategy Steering Group

Recommendations

20. The Cabinet member for Housing is asked to:
 - a. note the contents of the report
 - b. Agree the priorities for 2014/15 as set out in paragraph 9, the targets and the forthcoming plan.

Reason – To ensure the council continues to meet its statutory responsibilities and supports the most vulnerable in society.

Contact Details

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**Report
Approved**



Date 1st July 2014

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Appendix 1

Homeless Review 2013-14 Appendix 1

Background Papers:(provided upon request):

2013-18 Homelessness Strategy

Glossary:

B&B - Bed and Breakfast

BGS - Bond Guarantee Scheme

CAB - Citizens Advice Bureau

CBL - Choice Based Lettings

DCLG - Communities and Local Government (now Department Communities
and Local Government)

CYC - City of York Council

RSL - Registered Social Landlord

SP - Supporting People

YOT - Youth Offending Team