

Report of the Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods

Overview of Strategic Housing Services

Housing Standards & Adaptations Team

Adaptations to homes

- The team delivers 400/500 adaptations each year to enable council tenants to remain in their homes. These range from minor works such as grab rails to major adaptations such as stair lifts and level access showers.
- The team also organises adaptations to home owners, private rented homes and housing association properties through the Disabled Facilities Grant process. Around 1,800 minor adaptations and 200 major adaptations are carried out each year.

Private sector loans/assistance

- Working with Homes and Loans service hosted by Sheffield City Council to provide recoverable loans to help vulnerable homeowners maintain their home.

Licensing of Homes in Multiple Occupation

- Enforce standards in private rented sector; licensing and inspecting houses in multiple occupation.
- Operate the YorProperty accreditation scheme for private rented accommodation. Run training programme for landlords and letting agents

Addressing fuel poverty

- Help to deliver regional initiatives to reduce fuel poverty:
 - Collective Switch – helping residents save money by switching energy providers;
 - Better Homes – a new initiative to provide low cost energy efficiency measures including insulation, heating and boilers, in private sector housing.

Reactive Complaints

- Provide a regulatory service to enforce standards in private sector housing including illegal eviction cases, hazards in the home and harassment. Range of powers from advice to prosecution used.

Empty Homes

- Work to maintain low numbers of long term empty homes using advice and enforcement powers.

Public Health/Caravan licensing

- Licensing of caravan sites, enforcement of public health standards where caravans are “filthy and verminous”.

Gas Warrants

- Ensuring access to council owned homes for annual gas safety checks where tenants have not responded to requests for appointments to carry out this work.

Housing Development & Investment Team

Strategic housing functions

- Represent the council’s strategic housing interests with housing associations, the Homes and Communities Agency, Leeds City Region and Local Enterprise Partnerships.
- Assist in development of Local Plan policies in relation to affordable housing delivery and alternative housing delivery models such as custom and self-build.
- Assist in identifying departmental and corporate assets that can be remodelled or redeveloped for housing of all tenures to meet the objectives of the Housing Strategy and council’s corporate priorities.
- Support commissioning of housing market assessments to inform housing demand and types of homes needed.
- Consider scope for new investment opportunities for housing delivery including low cost home ownership, intermediate market rented and new models of funding and delivery.

- Coordinate writing of Housing Revenue Account Business Plan & Housing Strategy.
- Advising on the implications and policy responses of new government initiatives that relate to the delivery of affordable housing.
- Interpreting and disseminating national legislative and policy changes that relate to the Council's strategic housing activities.

Affordable Housing

- The team is responsible for negotiating the provision of affordable housing on private housing developments in accordance with the council's planning policies and development viability.
- Responsible for the delivery of the council house building programme (phase one 71 homes across 5 sites) including bids for funding, procurement of contractors, project management of the programme.
- Delivery of new temporary homeless accommodation at Ordnance Lane comprising a mix of 39 one, two and three bedroom units.
- Identification of sites and development appraisals for new affordable housing.
- Ensuring opportunities to deliver affordable housing are maximised through all routes – grant funded, planning gain, living over the shop, with housing associations or as new council housing. Submitting bids for funding.

Housing Options, Housing Registrations & Homelessness

The City of York Council provides advice and information to anyone with a housing query but is restricted on providing accommodation and support to customers who are in housing need, threatened with homelessness or actually homeless taking account of legislation and case law – including Immigration Law, complex eligibility criteria, Housing Act 1996, Homeless Act 2002, plus cross departmental work in respect of Children Act 1989 and National Assistance Act 1948.

Future targets are set out Homelessness Strategy 2013-18 'A City Partnership to prevent homelessness' which is currently being reviewed as a mid point exercise.

Housing Options and Housing Registrations

- The main priority of housing advice is to prevent homelessness either by enabling people to remain in their own home or to move in a planned way to alternative accommodation (private rented, supported housing, social housing or owner occupation). Where homelessness is imminent the council has a duty to provide emergency accommodation in certain circumstances.
- Advice is generally provided though CYC HOUSING OPTIONS team including the Youth Homeless Workers and Older Persons Specialist (externally funded until March 2016) but other external agencies / staff will also provide specialist advice (in particular Salvation Army). Staff are trained to deliver advice to a high level through an 'accredited scheme'
- Additional prevention work is carried out by Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) Housing and Debt Project funded through Homeless Prevention Grant
- The Housing Registrations team deal with housing applications and manage the North Yorkshire Home Choice waiting list for the City. At end of the financial year there were around 1500 applications registered on the waiting list.
- The policy was amended in September 2013 which has reduced the numbers of people with no housing need on the register and restricted access for some owner occupiers or those with savings / income over £60,000

Register as at 31/3/15	Emergency	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total by LA
YORK	4	223	835	484	1546

Rough sleepers

- For those people who are rough sleepers or at risk of rough sleeping, there is a comprehensive range of services to help someone into accommodation. More recently a Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) specialist was employed by ArcLight Charity on a 1 year pilot to work with entrenched rough sleepers, those with complex needs.

- Rough sleeping in York has generally been low but in the last 12 months there has been a significant increase with 19 people at the last count. Many beggars in York are not actually homeless and CYC work with the Police and Salvation Army to tackle this issue.
- York operates 2 schemes to provide emergency accommodation - the 'severe weather provision' and 'No Second Night Out (NSNO)' which offers a 'rough sleeper reporting line' and access to emergency beds.

Supported accommodation / planned housing

- Single Access Point – majority of referrals for supported housing and floating support across city are now processed via Single Access Point (SAP) giving consistency to service and overview of waiting list ensuring minimum waiting times and best use of bed spaces. SAP processed 857 referrals in 2013/14, forwarded to 23 providers
- Supported accommodation schemes include Arc Light, Peasholme Centre, York Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (YACRO), Southlands Road, Scarcroft Project, Safe and Sound Homes (SASH), Foundation Shared Housing, Melbourne Project, Feversham Crescent.
- Resettlement category – under North Yorkshire Home Choice (NYHC) common allocations policy when a rough sleeper has engaged in support and can demonstrate they are ready for independent living they will be priorities for housing – to prevent bed blocking and free up bed spaces for those who need it. This process typically takes 1 - 2 years

Young People

- In general, other than in cases of abuse or violence it is better that young people live in family home or with family friends / relatives. All young people who are at risk of homelessness are assessed and where appropriate undergo a Child in Need assessment with social services support in accordance with Children's Act 1989 and recent case law. Adults Children and Education (ACE) and Communities and Neighbourhood Services (CANS) have a joint protocol setting out this arrangement.
- Classified as aged between 16-21 years. The authority has created a planned pathway similar to that used for Adults. Howe Hill for Young People is a tier one scheme where young people are initially placed.

It is staffed 24/7 and clearly the aim is to stabilise the young people preparing them to move on to tier two scheme such as Southlands Road, Scarcroft project and Safe and Sound Homes (SASH). The young people undertake a comprehensive training programme preparing them with life skills and also educationally and employment opportunities.

Statutory Homelessness (predominantly Family homelessness).

- In general, households who meet criteria under Housing Act 1996 are placed in Ordnance Lane, Crombie House, Howe Hill (family block) or Holgate Road hostels. CYC manage a total of 70 hostel places plus other dispersed properties. Hostel units vary – some are shared accommodation and others are self contained flats. Staff are based in Ordnance Lane hostels and work 8.30am – 8pm daily with security guard cover at night
- Use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation remains low – in part due to use of Housing Benefit ‘Spend to Save’ budget to prevent homelessness.
- The revised approach to addressing statutory homelessness through early intervention and looking at an individuals ‘housing options’ rather than just addressing through the homeless provision has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of homeless presentations and acceptances.

	2003/04	20014/15
Presentations	1430	188
Total Accepted Homeless	409	103

YorHome

- YorHome is a social letting agency that manages 50-60 homes on behalf of private landlords for an 8% fee (lower than market rates). It offers landlords peace of mind by taking over for all aspects of property management, including rent collection, arranging repairs, etc.
- The agency helps homeless families and individuals to access the private rented sector, without charging the fees usually levied by high street letting agents.

- YorHome works closely with housing benefit team, housing options team and support workers to ensure that tenants receive the right support to help them to sustain their tenancy.
- The service is looking to expand into managing different tenancy types in order to be able to support more customers to access private rented sector.

Key challenges

- The review and procurement of housing related support. This will mean a fundamental rethink of the resettlement services that exist at present. There is a need to save £700K on a £2.5M budget.
- Protecting the preventative approach to tackling homelessness at a time of budget reductions.
- Meeting the need for suitable medium term accommodation for complex mental health cases.
- Replacement of Ordnance Lane temporary homeless accommodation by autumn 2016 with new 39 unit scheme.

Gypsies, Travellers & Show People

- There are three travellers' sites with a combined total of 61 pitches managed by the council.
- The evidence base for the development of the Local Plan has identified a need for an additional 72 pitches up to 2030.
- A review is considering the management of the traveller sites including the potential to outsource this.
- The housing needs for show people are being address through the Local Plan.

Abbreviations

ACE – Adults, Children & Education

CAB – Citizens' Advice Bureau

CANS – Communities and Neighbourhood Services

CYC – City of York Council

MEAM – Making Every Adult Matter

NSNO – No Second Night Out

SAP – Single Access Point

SASH – Safe and Sound Homes

YACRO – York Association for the Care & Resettlement of Offenders

NYHC – North Yorkshire Home Choice