

**Executive Member for Homes and Safer
Communities – Decision Session**

20 July 2015

Report of the Assistant Director – Housing & Community Safety

Homeless Review 2014/15

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 2014/15. 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 an effective service delivery 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.

Recommendations

3. The Executive Member for Housing and Safer Communities is asked to:
 - a. note the contents of the report
 - b. Agree the priorities for 2015/16 as set out in paragraph 13, the targets and the forthcoming plan.

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

Background

4. There is a duty on all Local Authorities to provide an advice service to all 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'.

5. There have been some important legal decisions and new allocations code of guidance which have been considered / incorporated into the service.
6. The Homeless Strategy 2013-18 sets out 5 strategic aims which have been amended in the Housing Options and Homeless Strategy Action Plan 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

7. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and City of York Council targets for 2014/15 were to:
 - Target for reducing temporary accommodation for 2014/15 was 76 actual 65.
 - Reduce statutory homelessness in the city. The number of young people accepted as homeless remains minimal as a result of provision of young person's 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 31/3/15 there were 2 households in B&B and only 1 was a family);

- To prevent homelessness. There were 665 homeless prevention cases in 2014/15, which is slightly less than 2013/14 but a considerable achievement in light of current economic climate and with no negative impact on homeless acceptances;
- To maintain rough sleepers at 0 but has not been met as in November 2014 the official submission was 13.
- Achieve housing performance targets within departmental service plan around voids and rent arrears.
- Deliver actions points set out within Homelessness Strategy 2013-18 'A City Partnership to prevent homelessness' action plan within identified time scales;

Funding / contracts in 2014/15

8. City of York Council via Adult Social Care Commissioning, DCLG Homeless Prevention Fund, CYC Housing and CYC Children's Services supports a number of services across the city which contribute to the delivery of both prevention work, housing advice and housing related support including Salvation Army Early Intervention and Prevention Team, Peasholme Charity, CAB Housing and Debt Project, IDAS, YACRO, Arc Light, Foundation, York Housing Association, SASH (Nightstop and Supported Lodging Scheme), Youth Homeless Workers, Single Access Point, Peasholme Centre, Ordnance Lane hostel, Crombie House hostel, Holgate Road hostel, Howe Hill family block and Howe Hill for Young People, and Housing Options and Housing Registrations teams.
9. The Older Persons Housing Specialist is funded via First Stop (DCLG).

Key Points

10. 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:
 - Despite significant work and resources, including Street Link rough sleeper reporting line, regular street walks and drop-ins (Salvation Army), 'No Second Night Out' and the MEAM (Making Every Adult Matter) pilot the numbers of rough sleepers in York has increased.

The quarter 3 submission to government (based on DCLG assessment criteria) was 13, an increase from previous year of 9.

National statistics show a 13.7% increase. The majority of rough sleepers are known to services but choose not to engage.

- The concept of resettlement is firmly established and working well, with 56 customers being resettled into permanent accommodation this year
- The number of homeless preventions (i.e. existing accommodation sustained or alternative accommodation secured) was 665 in 2014/15. This is a significant number of homeless prevention, especially in light of ongoing welfare 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, IDAS, Castlegate, Salvation Army Early Interventions and Prevention Team, floating support teams and landlord services all of whom contribute to this final figure. Despite reduction in number of prevention cases, homelessness has not increased.
- The Older Persons Housing Specialist has been funded on results basis through DCLG grant for an 18 month pilot and has had contact with 1860 people
- There has been a decrease in York of the number of homeless acceptances (103 - 5.5%).
- Housing Options remains busy with 3795 (contacts) of which 1454 are in depth interviews. This is a slight reduction which may be because of improved joint working with Housing Registrations, supported housing providers, tenancy support and ongoing training with external agencies. However, cases are becoming increasingly complex
- 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 2014/15 was 76 and the final number in temporary accommodation as of 31/3/15 was 65 which is an excellent achievement.
- The complexity of immigration law, homeless applications and supported housing referrals via SAP result in staff requiring more detailed knowledge, skills and time to deal with individual cases.

Service improvement during 2014-15

11. Throughout 2014/15 significant work has continued both internally and with partner agencies to improve the direct service to customers and the overall provision.
12. A number of service improvements were achieved in 2014/15:
 - The Older Persons Housing Specialist has been extremely successful and has been refunded until 31/3/16.
 - The introduction of a new customer portal on North Yorkshire Home Choice has made the system more user friendly
 - Successful transfer of Youth Homeless Workers to CYC from Foundation
 - MEAM (Making every adult matter) pilot started in January 2015 (12 month post)
 - CYC Housing achieved Customer Excellence award
 - CYC achieved Equality Peer review
 - Howe Hill for Young People converted a 2 bed unit into a scheme for young parents, in particular 16 and 17 year olds to assess them and prepare them for independent living.
 - Approval in December 2014 to replace Ordnance Lane hostel (statutory homeless hostel) as it no longer fit for purpose
 - Pilot project at Salvation Army for a part time private lettings officer (sub regional money)
 - Increased work with faith and community groups in work with homeless, including introduction of a volunteer training session and meetings
 - White Swan development will provide 18 flats let as intermediate (affordable 80% market) rent in April 2015
 - Undertook the Gold standard peer review assessment (achieved 71% allowing us to move onto the 10 Gold Standard challenges)
 - Expanding Single Access Point to Offender services

Forthcoming projects and priorities – 2015/16

13. The following work is identified in the Homelessness Strategy Action plan 2013-18 and will be given priority during 2015-16:

- To complete an interim review of the Homeless Strategy 2013-18 and action plan and prioritise any relevant actions (June – October 2015)
- To continue to tackle rough sleeping, street drinking and begging (in conjunction with ASB Hub) and explore need for day facilities and night shelter in light of rising numbers of rough sleepers and associated street drinking and begging
- To increase portfolio and business model of YorHome to ensure future sustainability of project
- To revisit the option of using the private rented sector to discharge homeless duty to private rented sector as appropriate
- Re-provision of Ordnance Lane hostel
- Work alongside partners to explore opportunities to develop additional specialist mental health accommodation
- Work towards achieving the 10 'Gold Standard challenges' as set out by DCLG
- Continue to adapt services in light of future legislative changes and welfare reforms
- To seek mainstream funding of Older Persons Housing Specialist if appropriate.
- To work in conjunction with Adult Social Care Commissioners around the transformation of housing related support and ensure services including in house services are fit for purpose
- To analyse and if appropriate work to extend MEAM Project (Arc Light lead agency)
- That YorHome will take over the management of the properties (owned by Thirteen Housing Group) let on intermediate rents (White Swan development).
- YorHome will work towards becoming an accredited landlord through CYC Housing Standards and Adaptations.

Consultation

14. Consultation has taken place regarding the effectiveness of Older Persons Specialist which resulted in continuation funding.
15. Consultation will be undertaken in respect of the homeless strategy review, and ACE housing related support

Council Objectives

16. The Homeless strategy is closely link to a number of element of the administrations 12 point plan:
 - It delivers key Frontline and customer services
 - Financial inclusion and support for vulnerable residents

Implications

Financial Implications

17. 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 met targets and potential for an increase in homelessness.

Equalities Implications

18. A community impact assessment has been completed for the housing options and homeless strategy. Individual CIA's will be completed for major pieces of work outlined in this report.

Legal Implications

19. The provision of a homeless service is a statutory requirement under Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002.
20. 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".
21. There are financial risks via judicial challenge if the service does not meet its statutory duty and as a result of Ombudsmen complaints if CYC fails to act within its statutory duties regarding homelessness.

Risk Management

22. There is a continued risk that due to current economic climate, failure to ensure appropriate support to the most vulnerable will result in homelessness increasing significantly. York has seen an increase in rough sleeping despite the commitment of agencies. It is only through the ongoing concerted effort of staff and the resources channelled into homeless that we are able to maintain the current levels.
23. Changes to funding formulas and allocations may impact on the council's ability to deliver critical services in the future.
24. 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

Contact Details

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Report**Approved****Date**

8 July 2015

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 2014-15 Appendix 1

Background Papers (provided upon request):

2013-18 Homelessness Strategy

Glossary:

ASB- Anti Social Behaviour

AST- Assured Shorthold Tenancy

B&B - Bed and Breakfast

BGS - Bond Guarantee Scheme

CAB - Citizens Advice Bureau

CBL - Choice Based Lettings

CYC - City of York Council

DCLG - Communities and Local Government (now Department Communities and Local Government)
EDT- Emergency Duty Team
IDAS- Independent Domestic Abuse Services
MEAM- Making Every Adult Matter
NSNO- No Second Night Out
NYHC- North Yorkshire Home Choice
PRS- Property Redress Scheme
RSL - Registered Social Landlord
SAP- Single Access Point
SASH- Short Term Accommodation
YACRO- York Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
YEW- Youth Education Project
YOT - Youth Offending Team