

**Decision Session - Cabinet Member for
Housing and Adult Social Services**

19 July 2013

Report of the Assistant Director of Housing & Community Safety

Homeless Review 2012/13

Summary

1. This report outlines the activity governed by the Housing Act 1996, the Homelessness Act 2002 and the City of York Council's Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 in respect of the financial year 2012/3. The primary focus is to report on prevention work, the trends in statutory homelessness, Youth Homeless Services, use of temporary accommodation and the work of the Resettlement Services and Housing Registrations Team and to outline service developments throughout the year and future targets.

Background

2. 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 2008-13 and the Resettlement and Youth Homeless Action Plans.
3. Management responsibilities remain as last year: The Service Manager Housing Options and Homeless is responsible for Housing Options, Resettlement Service (Peasholme Centre and Howe Hill for Young People), Housing Registrations, North Yorkshire Home Choice Co-ordinator and Single Access Point. The Supported Housing Service Manager is responsible for Sheltered Housing, Emergency Temporary Accommodation, Traveller Sites and YorHome.
4. The Homeless Strategy 2008-13 sets out 4 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.

Current and Ongoing Targets

5. The Communities and Local Government (CLG) and City of York Council targets for 2012/13 were to:
 - Target for reducing temporary accommodation for 2012/13 was 85, actual numbers at 31/03/13 were 99; Nationally, homeless is increasing (CLG figures show a 10% rise nationally during 2012 from 48,510 to 53,450). The number of young people accepted as homeless in York has reduced significantly as 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 5 households in B&B);
 - There were 746 homeless prevention cases in 2012/13, which is less than 2011/12 but a considerable achievement in light of current economic climate;
 - Following the publication of 'No Second Night Out' our target has changed slightly – focus is now on reducing numbers of 'new' rough sleepers. In York there has been some success in this however the generic rough sleeping target of 0 rough sleepers, has not been met, in December 2012 the official submission was 8.
 - Contribute to the achievement of housing performance targets within the departmental service plan (reported elsewhere);
 - Deliver actions points set out within Homelessness Strategy 2008-13, Resettlement and Youth Homeless Action plans 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 homeless preventions (i.e. existing accommodation sustained or alternative accommodation secured) has decreased; figures for 2012/13 have reduced from 993 cases to 746. 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.
 - There has been a slight decrease in York of the number of homeless acceptances (146, a 3% reduction on the 2011/12 position). The national trend has seen an increase in homelessness in England and Wales of 10%.
 - The Housing Options Team has seen an increase in demand for services – evidenced by increase in contacts at Customer Services Centre to 4925, a 47% increase on the previous year. This represents a 159% increase in customer demand over the last 2 years.
 - The number of rough sleepers in the city has increased. The quarter 3 submission to government (based on CLG assessment criteria) was 8, an increase from previous year of 2. This increase is despite additional funding from central government to tackle rough sleeping and the implementation of the 'No Second Night Out Initiative'.
 - The number of households in temporary accommodation remains high despite a reduction in homeless acceptances and the opening of Howe Hill for Young People. The target for 2012/13 was 85. The final number in temporary accommodation as of 31/3/12 was 99 which, when considered against in the context of the economic climate, it is still a significant achievement.

Service improvement during 2012-13

7. Throughout 2012/13 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 2012/13:

- Development and publication of an 'Older Persons Housing Options Guide in conjunction with Adult Social Care, Age UK York, York Older People's Assembly, Older Citizens Advocacy York
- Development of older persons housing advice 'drop-ins'
- Begin reviewing North Yorkshire Home Choice allocations policy in light of Welfare Benefit Reform Act and Localism Act (approved on the 18th July 2013)
- Separate out the allocation process of sheltered and sheltered with extra care from the NYHC process to ensure vulnerable applicants are allocated specialist accommodation without bidding via NYHC.
- Inform the 'Fairness Commission' report which identified six headline recommendations including the need to address the city's housing and accommodation needs to support growth and improve affordability. Of the ten key fairness principles underpinning these recommendations the most relevant is to support and empower the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups
- Consult on and writing of a new homeless Strategy "A City Partnership to prevent homelessness" 2013-2018 (Adopted 5/3/13)
- Establish a mental health tracking panel
- Support the development of the City's Tenancy Strategy 2013/18
- Assist in developing a mental health accommodation agreement for 22 The Avenue to tie in with resettlement / developing independent living skills
- End the Young Persons Guarantor Scheme (replaced by Young Person Trustee Scheme)
- Reconfigure the Holgate Road (temporary accommodation) to create an additional 3 units
- Reconfigure the Howe Hill for Young People to create an additional 2 units.
- Hosted a Danish student from University College Nordjylland on Social Education programme

- Worked in conjunction with CYC Housing Benefit, Housing Options and Salvation Army to provide a pro-active advice service to people affected by (HB) welfare reforms. Identified 1075 households may be affected, contact and targeted support offered and provided to 384
- Appointed a Business Support apprentice (start date 2/4/13)

Forthcoming projects and priorities – 2013/14

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 work to provide prevention advice at an earlier point
 - To work alongside Community Safety to tackle street drinking and begging
 - To involve customers, faith and community groups in work with homeless
 - To respond to changes to welfare reform
 - To complete the review and implement North Yorkshire Home Choice common allocations policy
 - To use affordable rents and flexible tenancies in York as appropriate
 - To develop approaches to, where appropriate, discharge homeless duty into private rented sector
 - Consider options for the 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)
 - Provision of mental health accommodation
 - Publish Homelessness Strategy 2013-18 'A City Partnership to Prevent Homelessness'
 - Contribute to Supported Housing Strategy
 - Strive to achieve 'Gold Standard' as set out by DCLG

Consultation

10. Consultation has taken place with staff, stakeholders and customers as part of developing the Homeless Strategy 2013-18
11. Consultation took place with staff, stakeholders and customers regarding changes to North Yorkshire Home Choice common allocations policy

Council Plan

12. 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

13. 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 support the most vulnerable leading to a 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.
14. The historic 'homeless prevention grant' which funds a number of posts and interventions is no longer ring-fenced and there is concern for the ongoing support of these schemes in future should this finding be redirected.

Equalities Implications

15. An equalities impact assessment has been completed for the housing options and homeless strategy.

Legal Implications

16. The provision of a homeless service is a statutory requirement under Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002.
17. Services should 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

18. 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, voluntary organisations and the resources channelled into homeless that we are able to continue to address the issues..
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 is asked to:
 - a. note the contents of the report
 - b. Agree the priorities for 2013/14 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

Author:

Becky Ward
Service Manager,
Homelessness
CAN's
Tel No. 01904 554040

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Steve Waddington
Assistant Director Housing and Community
Safety

**Report
Approved**



Date

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 2012/13 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

CLG - 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