



## **HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 5<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2019**

### **DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW MODEL FOR HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING SUPPORT**

#### **REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

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

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the consultation to develop a new model for homelessness and housing support.

##### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. In September 2014, the Cabinet considered the outcome of the strategic review of the Adults and Communities Department's secondary prevention services and authorised the Director of Adults and Communities to implement the proposed prevention offer for Homelessness Support establishing the current service.
3. In June 2016, the Cabinet considered the outcome of an independent review of Early Help and Prevention (EHAP) services and approved the EHAP Strategy arising from that review. The proposed new model for homelessness and housing support is within the scope of this Strategy and will form part of the prevention offer in Leicestershire as set out in the Target Operating Model for prevention in the EHAP review.
4. In April 2018 commissioning responsibility for the service was transferred from the Department for Adults and Communities to Public Health, along with a revised MTFS savings target of £200,000 to be achieved by April 2020.
5. The Council does not bear the statutory responsibility for homelessness support. That responsibility lies with district councils under the Homelessness Act 2002 and latterly the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA), which came into effect from 3 April 2018 and which places a new duty to prevent and relieve homelessness regardless of priority. The Council does however have a duty under the Act to assist the district councils with formulating their strategies and to take these into account when formulating its social service function.
6. In November 2018, the Cabinet approved the public health department's request to consult on a new model for Homelessness and Housing Support Service for Leicestershire.

## **Background**

7. Being homeless has significant negative impacts on both physical and mental health. The average age of death for those who are rough sleeping or resident in homeless accommodation is 47 for men and 43 for women, therefore, the health of the homeless is a priority area for public health.
8. In 2014, 80% of homeless people in England reported that they had mental health disorders, with 45% having been diagnosed with a mental health condition.
9. The most prevalent health problems among homeless individuals are substance misuse (62.5%), and 42.6% report having both substance misuse and mental health issues. Given that these problems are causally linked with homelessness, they add significantly more costs to homelessness due to the need for health and social care support.
10. District councils have responsibility, under the Homelessness Act 2002 and latterly the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017, to prevent and relieve homelessness regardless of priority. The HRA introduced measures whereby all eligible people who are found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness are entitled to more tailored support from the housing authority, regardless of priority need, intentionality, and local connection. The housing authority, in our local case, is the district council. The key duties are:
  - a. Local housing authorities must assess anyone who is found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness and where appropriate, support the individual or family to develop a personalised housing plan.
  - b. Under the prevention duty, local housing authorities must take 'reasonable steps' to help people avoid becoming homeless, with reference to their personal plan. This could mean, for example, supporting them to either stay in their accommodation or helping them find somewhere to live. The intention behind this duty is to help households before they reach a housing crisis situation.
  - c. Under the relief duty, local housing authorities must take 'reasonable steps' to help the applicant into accommodation, with reference to their personal plan. This could be, for example, the provision of a rent deposit or debt advice. Where accommodation is provided, the housing authority must be satisfied that the accommodation will be available for at least six months.

## **Proposals/Options**

11. It is proposed that a future service model provides for those at risk of homelessness who require more intensive support with contributory health and social issues (for example substance misuse, mental health disorders, domestic abuse or sexual violence), where community centred support might help prevent people becoming homeless.
12. This would move away from the current more general housing support service. The new model will work with families at risk of homelessness as well as single people.
13. We are proposing a model that would support:
  - a. Individuals and families at potential risk of homelessness but not 'covered' by the HRA 2017 duties (outside the 56 days 'window' for homelessness prevention

support) with contributory health and social issues (for example substance misuse, mental health disorders, domestic abuse or sexual violence).

- b. District councils who are providing housing support to individuals and families at risk of homelessness and 'covered' by the HRA 2017 duties (within 56 day 'window' for homelessness prevention support) with more intensive community based support around defined contributory health and social issues such as alcohol, drugs, mental health, domestic violence, sexual violence as well as housing related support.
- c. Individuals and families at the end of the 56 days 'window' of homelessness prevention support where ongoing support may enable them to avoid becoming at risk of homelessness again.

14. To deliver this proposed model of support, we are suggesting:

- a. Building the capability of all First Contact Plus staff and local area coordinators to be able to identify and provide advice for issues known to be linked to an increased risk of homelessness. This could include tenancy issues, debt management, neighbourhood disputes, alcohol and drug addiction and family breakdown.
  - i. Additional training to ensure these frontline staff members feel competent to spot and respond to contributory health and social issues would be delivered by new specialist homelessness prevention coordinators.
- b. Using the First Contact Plus service as a central referral hub for accessing advice and support relevant to issues linked to an increased risk of homelessness.
  - i. Individuals, families, professionals and partner agencies can access self-help information, advice and guidance online and over the phone.
  - ii. Self-referral or professional referrals can be made to the First Contact Plus service and staff would then facilitate an assessment of need and, where appropriate, provide onward signposting to homelessness prevention support services (including to housing teams at District Councils) or referral to other County Council services- tailored to the individual's needs <sup>1</sup>.
- c. Utilising the existing cadre of local area coordinators to work across priority patches in Leicestershire and tackle the contributory health and social issues (for example substance misuse, mental health disorders, domestic abuse or sexual violence) that increase the risk of homelessness.
  - i. Coordinators would identify individuals and families to prioritise support to through introductions via other agencies or individuals.

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<sup>1</sup> Leicestershire County Council commissions a range of services, across all departments, to support individuals' wellbeing and prevent homelessness. Examples include Mental Health Reablement, Local Area Coordination service (LAC), Supporting Leicestershire Families (SLF) team and First contact plus (including benefit maximisation and priority visiting offered through the Department for Work and Pensions). This is not an exhaustive list.

- ii. Local area coordinators would receive additional mentoring and support from new specialist homelessness prevention coordinators to discuss complex cases.
- d. Enhancing existing community-based interventions and statutory provision of housing support by District Councils through the recruitment of specialist homelessness prevention coordinators.
- i. Access to targeted information and enhanced support (for a smaller group of people who are within the 56 day 'window' for homelessness prevention support) could be accessed via referral from District Council housing teams (or their HRA provider). This would be enabled through regular direct contact between specialist coordinators and/ or through District Council teams making a professional referral via the First Contact plus service.
  - ii. New specialist prevention coordinators would collectively cover Leicestershire whilst having close working relationships with District Council housing officers in their patch.

### **Consultation**

15. Following the Cabinet's approval in November 2018, a targeted consultation exercise was planned and is taking place for 12 weeks between May and August 2019.
16. The consultation will seek the views of district councils, the current provider, Nottingham Community Housing Association (and its sub-contracted providers), the wider voluntary and community sector, CCGs and health service providers, and the current service providers for substance misuse and mental health services. This will be achieved through an event aimed at these partners and professionals on the 10 June 2019 at County Hall and collating views from an online questionnaire.
17. The consultation will seek the views of existing and previous housing support users. This will be achieved via focus group events on the 31 May 2019 at Loughborough Town Hall, Loughborough and 7 June at the Salvation Army, Wigston. Additionally, views will be collated from an online questionnaire. Respondents are also being given the option to complete this survey by hand if preferred.
18. The outcomes of the consultation will help inform the final model which will be presented to the Cabinet for approval in October of 2019.
19. The consultation can be accessed via the following link:  
<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/have-your-say/current-consultations/homelessness-prevention-support>

### **Resource Implications**

20. The new model for homelessness and housing support is expected to achieve savings of £200,000 per annum which would contribute to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings target. The total remaining budget for this service will be £300,000 per annum.

21. As part of the service remodel, it is likely that TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981) will apply. The purpose of TUPE is to protect employment rights when employees transfer from one business to another, which may be the case with the new delivery model. Further work is required to identify potential redundancy costs.
22. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have advised on the consultation.

### **Timetable for Decisions**

23. The consultation results will be reported to the Council's Cabinet during Autumn 2019.
24. If Cabinet decides to go ahead with the proposed service, further engagement with current providers would take place as part of the transition to the new service.
25. A new service is expected to be in place by 1st April 2020.

### **Conclusions**

26. The report has been submitted to provide an update on the development of a new model for homelessness and housing support. The Committee is asked to note the contents and are invited to comment on the proposals.

### **Background papers**

27. Report to the Cabinet on 17 June 2016 - Early Help and Prevention Review and Strategy  
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=4603&Ver=4>
28. Report to the Cabinet on 23 November 2018- Development of a new model for homelessness and housing support  
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s142331/Housing%20Homelessness%20Cabinet%20Report%20Nov%202018%20v0.7%20final.pdf>

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

Mr. J Miah CC  
 Mrs. M. E. Newton CC  
 Mr. M. J. Hunt CC  
 Mr. T. Parton CC  
 Mr. G. A. Boulter CC  
 Mr. M. H. Charlesworth CC  
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 Mr. D.A. Gamble CC  
 Mr. J. Kaufman CC

This report will be circulated to all Members of the County Council via the Members' Digest .

## **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

29. The Equality Act 2010 imposes a duty on the local authority when making decisions to exercise due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not. An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) report will be completed in relation to the impact of any change to service model. This will be informed by the outcomes of the consultation and will be presented to the Cabinet alongside the consultation outcomes to assist the Cabinet with the exercise of its Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.
30. An EHRIA screening assessment has been carried out, which concludes that although the proposals are likely to have an impact on individuals or groups associated with several of the 'protected characteristics', at this stage the direction and size of the impact is unknown and so a full EHRIA is required.
31. The EHRIA screening has been used to inform the consultation exercise, for example in targeting the cohorts and representative groups who should be involved.
32. A full EHRIA will be completed when the feedback from the consultation has been collated.

## **Officers to Contact**

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