

Submission to Cabinet23rd June 2023

From Jewel Miah CC, Labour Adults and Communities Spokesperson and County Councillor for the Division the Falcon Centre is located in.

Item 14: REVIEW OF HOMELESS SUPPORT SERVICES

I am concerned that the withdrawal of funding would lead to the closure of the Falcon Center, Loughborough and the loss of a vital service to some of the most vulnerable people in Leicestershire.

The Falcon Centre is an established service provider for homelessness, and I am informed by it's CEO, Marie Davis, that the Cabinet's decision if enacted will lead to its closure.

Marie has been in contact to make the following points which I echo,

*Existing Service Provision**Point 20.*

We agree that the funding does not pay for the running of homeless hostel buildings, such as the Falcon Centre. However, for the Falcon Centre to be classed as exempt accommodation and therefore eligible for the Housing Benefit, the residents must receive 5-7 hours per week, per person of care, support, and supervision.

"If the support stops it would mean that the Falcon Centre would no longer be classed as exempt accommodation and all Housing Benefit would have to stop."

Capita Team Leader

Therefore, if this funding is withdrawn, the Falcon Centre would close, and the County would lose a 30-bed homeless hostel building.

Point 21.

We would like to express our opinion on the word 'underutilised' which we feel is an unfair comment. Our bed spaces are always full and oversubscribed due to the increasing demand for homelessness services across Leicestershire, seeing 269 referrals for the Falcon Centre last year (a 42% increase over the last 5 years) we provide accommodation to 100 vulnerable homeless individuals each year.

We have met all contractual obligations throughout the contract, which includes the eligibility set by Leicestershire County Council of non-priority need. Districts do not have a duty to accommodate:

- *non-priority homeless*
- *priority but found intentionally homeless.*

We deliver services from Loughborough (where the highest need of homelessness is) for the benefit of the whole of Leicestershire. There used to be a provision based in South Leicestershire called Kennedy House that had its funding cut by Leicestershire County Council in 2015 and subsequently closed; demonstrating the impact of the support contract cuts on providing homeless hostel buildings.

Therefore, if this funding is withdrawn, the Falcon Centre would close, and the County would lose a 30-bed homeless hostel building.

Proposed Service Provision

Point 22.

We agree that First Contact Plus and the Local Area Co-Ordinator service are good existing public health services where eligibility is wider. But evidence shows that the homeless population are the most marginalised group with the worst health outcomes, and they struggle to engage in generic health service offers. I would also ask why we have increasing numbers of homelessness and complex needs when the First Contact Plus and Local Area Co-Ordinator's are already in place? Is the proposal to extend these services?

Point 26.

The First Contact Plus is an online tool which assume adults have access to the internet, computer or phone access, digital competency, and literacy skills. It also relies on information being up to date, which currently, it is not. We would like to highlight that the existing service provision of homeless support services actively undertake and engage with all the services listed, with many operating out of the Falcon Centre in order to engage our client group.

Point 27.

The Local Area Co-Ordinator service delivers low level generic support which lacks the specialised knowledge and expertise with regards to homelessness. Given the numbers of individuals we work with, do the Local Area Co-Ordinator have knowledge and capacity for this?

Health Implications

Point 34.

We would like to understand what the broader range of health and wellbeing services are as part of the proposed model.

The Falcon Centre is regularly used as a community hub to deliver health and wellbeing services in partnership with; Hep C Network, Opticians, Dental work, Turning Point nurse, Vita Minds, to those that don't engage in the current health and wellbeing services.

"The Falcon Centre have been a key external partner for the Leics Hepatitis C Network, supporting our service with testing and identification of patients at significant risk of Hepatitis C and other liver health concerns. We have been able to have 40+ patients supported on to treatment and cure this virus, as part of the NHS England elimination strategy. Having their clients have an available site to stay and attend regularly has been integral to this success" Hep C Network.

Therefore, if this funding is withdrawn, the Falcon Centre would close and remove 30 bed homeless hostel building where health and wellbeing services are delivering to those facing the biggest health inequalities.

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Taking all the above and more that the center provides It is clear to me that the Falcon Centre gives back more to us in outcomes and benefits to those that use it then the cost of our funding to it.

It would make no sense to withdraw the funding, face the total loss of the service and move the issue on to other service providers and authorities where the cost to the public purse may be greater.

I ask Cabinet to consider the services provided by the Falcon Centre as an essential service and continue it for at least the entire period of this MTFS and the loss of savings to be mitigated by the unexpected higher gains in the Councils investment portfolio and interest receipts.

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