



HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
11 SEPTEMBER 2024

UPDATE ON THE NEW MODEL OF SUPPORT FOR THOSE AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Committee on the new model of support for those at risk of homelessness and to provide assurance that the concerns highlighted during the consultation on the proposed model have been mitigated.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 – 2026/27 (agreed by the Council on 22 February 2023) included a target of saving £300,000 by 1 April 2024 through a review of homeless support services. The outcome of the review was that the existing homeless support provision was to be decommissioned by 31 March 2024 with an alternative approach put in place through the First Contact Plus Service and Local Area Coordinators from 1 April 2024. The proposal was supported by this Committee and approved by the Cabinet in November 2023.
3. Provision of support for those at risk of homelessness is aligned with the Public Health Strategy "Delivering good health and prevention services 2022-2027", the Leicestershire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2032 "Staying Healthy, Safe and Well", and the County Council's Strategic Plan 2022-26, in particular the outcome keeping people safe and well: ensuring that people are safe and protected from harm, live in a healthy environment and have the opportunities and support they need to live active, independent and fulfilling lives.

Background

4. The Council previously commissioned a homeless support service which aimed to improve the health of this population by providing support to adults who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. This was provided for the Council by Falcon Support Services and Nottingham Community Housing Association. The contract value was £300,000 per annum and ended on 31 March 2024.
5. Following a review of the service and a period of public consultation, a proposal was presented to this Committee and to the Cabinet to decommission the existing service with an alternative approach put in place through the First Contact Plus Service and Local Area Coordinators. This was approved in November 2023 and commenced on 1 April 2024.

6. This report describes the new service offer to support adults at risk of becoming homeless, the communications plan that was mobilised in response to feedback from the public consultation, and activity data highlighting performance of the service so far.

Description of new service offer

7. First Contact Plus helps adults in Leicestershire to access information, advice, help and support on a range of services. Referrals to First Contact Plus are made via an online form. For those individuals who may have difficulties in self-referring via an online platform, a referral can be made on their behalf by a professional or friend/family member/carer.
8. Local Area Coordinators work with individuals who may be vulnerable or at risk of crisis by building a supportive community around them thereby reducing social isolation.
9. The principles of the new offer centre around the following:
- Coverage across the whole of Leicestershire.
 - Eligibility that includes any individual who is currently homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, irrespective of whether they fall under the priority need group or not.
 - Access to support via a central point of access.
 - Support that is tailored to the needs of each individual with no defined timescales for the support offer.
 - Greater focus on improving the health and wellbeing of individuals.
10. This model uses First Contact Plus as the referral hub into services which include the following:
- Department for Work and Pensions for support to access the right benefits.
 - Citizens Advice for debt management support.
 - The Health Inequalities and Local Area Coordination Teams for one-to-one support.
 - Warm Homes Service for support on housing issues such as damp, mould, draught proofing, and signposting to funding for energy efficiency measures.
 - Health and wellbeing services such as smoking cessation, drug and /or alcohol misuse, healthy weight, physical activity, and sexual health services.
 - Mental wellbeing services such as Vita Minds (a talking therapies service for low level mental health support).
 - Services provided by the Council's Adults and Communities Department, including community support workers and social care.
 - Adult Learning and Multiply for support on accessing learning and educational courses, including support on budgeting. Multiply is a programme aimed at helping adults to improve their numeracy skills.
11. Where one-to-one support or face to face support is required, the Local Area Coordination service is well established within communities and so meets this need through their links with community groups, drop-in sessions and through the direct provision of one-to-one support. Local Area Coordination has a focus on self-help and solution finding rather than service and crisis management. Other services

commissioned by Public Health such as the substance misuse treatment service and the sexual health service already provide outreach services on a one-to-one basis.

Communications plan

12. A public consultation on the proposed model took place from June to September 2023. Feedback from the consultation highlighted limited awareness of First Contact Plus and Local Area Coordination Services among the public and professionals. Feedback also highlighted concerns around accessibility of the proposed service, and concerns around capability and capacity of the workforce delivering the proposed service.
13. A robust communications plan was implemented to ensure an increased awareness of the service offer and to strengthen referral pathways into and out of the service. This plan consisted of:
 - Outcomes of the proposal being shared with over 200 individuals representing 82 groups and organisations across Leicestershire. Examples include county council colleagues (e.g. adults and communities), district council colleagues, voluntary sector organisations (e.g. Falcon Support Services, The Bridge, Women's Aid), health partners (e.g. GP federations, ICB, Inclusion Healthcare), criminal justice partners, and commissioned services (e.g. Turning Point, sexual health services).
 - Drop in roadshows allowing stakeholders to find out more about First Contact Plus, including how to refer into the service and what to expect from the service. This was well received with 55 individuals attending the sessions. Attendees represented organisations that linked directly with the previous offer; this included charities, parish councils, district councils, Children and family services and Adult Social care.
 - Discussions with the First Contact Plus team and Local Area Coordinators on the outcomes of the proposal and to allow an opportunity for questions, comments and concerns to be openly discussed.
 - Publication of an article in Leicestershire Matters to promote First Contact Plus. The article included case studies that were specific to the homeless cohort. The service saw a 30% increase in referrals following publication of the article.
 - Changes to the First Contact Plus service model that was bespoke to the eligible cohort. This included additional contact points which has been received positively by individuals receiving support.

Activity data

14. Activity data is collated on a quarterly basis. Activity specifically for the cohort at risk of homelessness during the transition period (Q4 2023/24) and Q1 2024/25 shows:
 - 42 referrals were received by First Contact Plus. The previous service received 40 referrals in the last 6 months of being operational.
 - During the First Contact Plus triage process, 21 individuals were identified as having additional health and wellbeing needs (in addition to the needs identified from the referral). This highlights the strength of the First Contact Plus triage process in identifying additional needs.
 - 30 individuals received information, advice and guidance.

- 28 outbound referrals were made. Some individuals were referred to more than one service following the triage process.
- The time taken from referral to assessment has remained within one day compared with 5 working days for the previous service.
- 54 people were supported by Local Area Coordinators.

15. Case studies have been collated that demonstrate the work that has taken place within the Local Area Coordinator team which are documented within Appendix A.

Resource Implications

16. There have been no additional resource implications required. The MTFs savings were met and the current staffing levels for both First Contact Plus and Local Area Coordinators have been adequate to cover the increased need.

Timetable for Decisions

17. No decisions required.

Conclusion

18. Following the decommissioning of the homeless support service and implementation of a revised model of support through First Contact Plus and Local Area Coordinators, extensive communications have taken place to promote the new offer.
19. Activity data provides evidence that the perceived barriers to accessing the new model of support that were flagged during consultation, have not materialised, although will continue to be monitored.

Background papers

20. Report to the Cabinet - Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 - 2026/27 - 22 February 2023 <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s174734/MTFS%202023-27.pdf>
21. Report to the Cabinet – Review of homeless support services - 23 June 2023 <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s177126/2023.06.23%20Cabinet%20Report%20Homelessness%20Consultation.pdf>
22. Report to Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Review of homeless support services – 13 September 2023 <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s178338/Homeless%20scrutiny%20paper%20Sept%202023.pdf>
23. Report to Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Review of homeless support service – 1 November 2023 https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s179275/2023.11.01_HOSC%20paper_Review%20of%20Homeless%20Support%20Services.pdf

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

24. None

Equality Implications

25. The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) in Appendix B, identified several areas that are to be addressed during the transition period. This included a clear communication plan which is to include making wider linked services aware of the offer, ensuring the offer is in a format that can reach all persons, and to monitor the impact of the process via data collation and dashboards; all of which has taken place and is described within this report.

Human Rights Implications

26. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Health Implications

27. It is intended that the proposed model will enable individuals to access a broader range of health and wellbeing services therefore providing a more holistic support offer for individuals.

Appendices

28. Appendix A – Local Area Coordination case studies

29. Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment

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