



Meeting: Housing Rental Company Committee

Date: 4 December 2017

Wards Affected: All

Report Title: System change to a Housing First/Housing Led system for Homelessness

Is the decision a key decision? No

When does the decision need to be implemented? December 2017

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1. Proposal and Introduction

Background

The current system around adults who are homeless in Torbay involves the Council's Housing Options team, and commissioned/grant funded services.

At present, people who present to the Council's Housing Options team may be placed in temporary/emergency accommodation whilst a decision around statutory duty is made. People/families to whom the Council has a duty will receive assistance with housing. Single homeless people with complex needs, or who are not owed a duty by the Council, are placed in the Leonard Stocks hostel.

People may also enter the system through the outreach team, who connect with people on the streets with a view to accommodating them. They may be initially housed within Safe Space, a separate unit in the Leonard Stocks building, which immediately accommodates the most vulnerable rough sleepers whilst a housing solution is found.

The current position is that whilst the system works for a majority of people, a large proportion of the most entrenched individuals are not maintaining accommodation, and are repeat users of the system (for data, see section 2 below). This is not only difficult for them as individuals, but it also impacts on the community, and wider services.

In addition, concentrating services for people who are street homeless in one location in the town centre in Torquay is proving problematic in terms of Anti Social Behaviour and re development of the town centre.

Proposal

There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that a model known as 'Housing First' can be successful for repeat users of services. The traditional approach (which we use in Torbay) is to house people in a hostel until they are 'ready' to move into their own accommodation. People are expected to start addressing their drug and alcohol use, debts, mental and physical health needs, legal issues etc to prove that they are 'ready' to move on.

Housing First takes a different approach; the model sees stable housing as the key to people being able to address issues such as drug and alcohol use, legal issues and mental and physical health needs. In this model, people who have patterns of repeated failure in the current system are instead placed straight into stable housing with support.

This model originates in the US, but is also used across Europe. It is becoming increasingly popular in England with 34% of providers now using Housing First.

A switch to using Housing First for repeat users of services in Torbay would clearly need a complete review of how we provide services for people who are homeless. Within this review, we could also look at how to disperse services to avoid the current concentration in one area.

To this end, an application has been made by Shekinah, Westward Housing and Torbay Council to the Nationwide Foundation, to fund a piece of work to look how we can best make the change. The outcome of this bid will be known in early December 2017. If successful, Crisis would carry out the work early in 2018, and produce a report detailing how we can move from using the Leonard Stocks Hostel, to a new system involving Housing First for repeat users of the service, with emergency accommodation for others.

Crisis have recently published a well regarded evaluation of the system in Liverpool (web link in Appendix 1) and are keen to further this work by working with us in Torbay.

The intended outcome of this change would be to find a system that would:

- ✓ Improve outcomes for the individual in terms of tenancy sustainment
- ✓ Improve value for money from in house and commissioned services around homelessness
- ✓ Improve the Castle Circus area for the community as accommodation would not be focused exclusively in that area

2. Reason for Proposal

2.1 In the year 2016/17, 96 people were accommodated in the Leonard Stocks centre. 83% of these people were rough sleeping prior to this. Around half of the people accommodated stayed in Leonard Stocks for up to 3 months, about a quarter between 3 and 6 months, and around a quarter stayed over 6 months. 65% of people who entered Leonard Stocks successfully moved into settled accommodation after their stay. The vast majority of people moved into private rented accommodation with no further support. One third of the people who came

into Leonard Stocks within the year 2016/17 were people who had used the service before. This figure rose to over 50% in the first quarter of 2017/18.

From this data, we can see that:

- ✓ There is a large demand for the service at Leonard Stocks with around 100 people using the service in 2016/17
- ✓ In 2016/17 and 2017/18 to date, between 33% and 50% of this demand came from repeat users of the service, despite high rates of people moving successfully into settled accommodation after their stay.
- ✓ Most people move into private rented accommodation with no support after Leonard Stocks. Repeat usage figures suggest that this move is unsuccessful for a significant proportion of people.
- ✓ Around a quarter of people stayed for longer than 6 months in 2016/17 due to difficulties in accessing move on accommodation (anecdotally this is usually due to landlords being unwilling to accept people with the most complex needs, and people with dogs)

2.2 In addition to the issues outlined above, the concentration of services for people who are street homeless in Factory Row is proving problematic, and a review of the system would also offer an opportunity to address this issue.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

3.1 That the report be noted.

Appendices

Appendix 1:

For the Crisis report on system change in Liverpool

https://www.eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/119040/1/housing_first_feasibility_study_2017.pdf

Background Documents

For background on Housing First in England:

<http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Housing%20First%20or%20Housing%20Led.pdf>

Section 1: Background Information

1. What is the proposal / issue?

To investigate changing the current homelessness system to a system incorporating a housing first approach and looking at the location of current homelessness provision.

2. What is the current situation?

The current system around adults who are homeless in Torbay involves the Council's Housing Options team, and commissioned/grant funded services.

At present, people who present to the Council's Housing Options team may be placed in temporary/emergency accommodation whilst a decision around statutory duty is made. People/families to whom the Council has a duty will receive assistance with housing. Single homeless people with complex needs, or who are not owed a duty by the Council, are placed in the Leonard Stocks hostel.

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The current position is that whilst the system works for a majority of people, a large proportion of the most entrenched individuals are not maintaining accommodation, and are repeat users of the system. This is not only difficult for them as individuals, but it also impacts on the community, and wider services.

In addition, concentrating services for people who are street homeless in one location in the town centre in Torquay is proving problematic in terms of Anti Social Behaviour and re development of the town centre.

3. What options have been considered?

Other options are to keep the system as it is, which involves the issues outlined above.

This proposal does not commit the Council to a course of action, merely to an evaluation of the possibility of system change.

<p>4.</p>	<p>How does this proposal support the ambitions, principles and delivery of the Corporate Plan?</p> <p>This proposal supports all the principles of the Corporate Plan as it is looking at an innovative solution to an identified problem, which would aim to reduce demand on homelessness services.</p> <p>Reducing homelessness would support a prosperous and healthy Torbay.</p> <p>Targeted actions - this proposal would support protecting and supporting vulnerable adults.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>How does this proposal contribute towards the Council's responsibilities as corporate parents?</p> <p>Nationally around 60% of adults who use homelessness services are parents and due to their complex lives may be in contact with Children's Services. The improvement of services for adults with complex lives will enable them to maintain family relationships.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>How does this proposal tackle deprivation?</p> <p>This proposal would seek to tackle deprivation by reducing entrenched homelessness</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Who will be affected by this proposal and who do you need to consult with?</p> <p>People who use homelessness services Rough sleepers GP service provided by Chilcote surgery The Police Adult Social Care Drug and Alcohol Services DPT</p> <p>We would seek to consult after the evaluation has been done, as this is the stage at which we would make a decision about possible service changes.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>How will you propose to consult?</p> <p>Focus groups with users of services</p> <p>Conversations with partners in services</p>

Section 2: Implications and Impact Assessment

9.	What are the financial and legal implications? No implications at present as proposal is only to evaluate options of a new system.
10.	What are the risks? N/A at present as proposal is only to evaluate options of a new system.
11.	Public Services Value (Social Value) Act 2012 Not applicable at present as the proposal is only to evaluate options of a new system.
12.	What evidence / data / research have you gathered in relation to this proposal? Not applicable at present as the proposal is only to evaluate options of a new system.
13.	What are key findings from the consultation you have carried out? Not applicable at present as the proposal is only to evaluate options of a new system.
14.	Amendments to Proposal / Mitigating Actions Not applicable at present as the proposal is only to evaluate options of a new system.