

Meeting: Housing Committee

Date: 19th November 2018

Wards Affected: All

Report Title: Rough Sleepers and Housing First Update

Is the decision a key decision? No

When does the decision need to be implemented?

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Introduction

This report provides an update on progress with Housing First/Rapid Re Housing, and funding bids around rough sleeping.

Funding bids

Members will be aware that we are in receipt of:

- Rough Sleeper grant funding (2017-2019) which pays for the outreach team, Safe Space provision and volunteer co-ordinator role.
- Rough Sleeper Initiative funding (2018-19) which covers the Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator, women only accommodation, young peoples' accommodation and resettlement workers.
- Rough Sleeper Initiative funding (2019-20) which covers the Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator, resettlement workers and outreach team.

Recent funding opportunities from MHCLG include:

- Move on funding for provision of accommodation for people leaving hostels/the streets – we are working with a housing partner to develop a bid.
- Rapid Re Housing Funding – bid submitted on 31st October for Private Sector Development/Intervention Officer to attract and support landlords, a website and phone app to advertise properties and single rooms available at or near to LHA rate, 2 floating support workers to support people in their homes, and continuation funding for a resettlement worker in local prisons.

Outreach provision – change of provider

Outreach provision is an essential part of the response to rough sleepers, and entails workers regularly going out on the streets to connect with people and support them into accommodation and services. The history of the outreach service is as follows:

Continuation funding for the Safe Space/outreach team post March 2019 was sought as part of the RSI rough sleeper funding from MHCG. This funding has been awarded at a reduced rate for 1 further year, meaning that there is not enough funding for both Safe Space and outreach. The preferred way forward for all partners would be not to fund Safe Space, but to use the reduced funding for outreach provision and follow up work alone (funding would cover 3.5 posts)

As the continuation funding was applied for by the Council alone, and not as an alliance, the funding cannot be given to Westward to continue providing the outreach service. The outreach service will therefore be provided by the Council from March 2019 for one year for the duration of the funding. Following initial advice from HR, TUPE will apply to staff and this process will now begin.

Progress with Housing First/Rapid Re Housing

Background

The Housing First/Rapid Re Housing approach has been adopted by Council. This approach involves system change to the homelessness/rough sleeper system. However, Housing First is a discrete service which can be implemented in advance of further system change. Housing First is a service that works with the most entrenched rough sleepers with complex needs. The service involves supporting the person into a home in the community rather than a hostel/temporary accommodation, and providing non time limited intensive support to them. The principle of no conditionality is also important – people are seen as entitled to housing whatever their situation is.

Funding has been allocated to fund Housing First for 2-3 years. Funding will predominately cover the support service, but will also be used to provide enhanced schemes to landlords to encourage them to provide accommodation.

Progress

Housing First support service – this service will be commissioned through the new alliance (Shekinah and the Council) Procurement are currently finalising the alliance contract. Once the contract is finalised and signed, Shekinah can recruit for the Housing First support service to start early 2019 (January/February).

Accommodation for Housing First – this is a significant challenge. We are responding to current funding opportunities from MHCLG:

- Move on funding

To provide accommodation for people leaving hostels/the streets. This funding needs to be applied for by an RP and Homes England Investment partner – we are in

discussion with BCHA (Bournemouth Churches Housing Association) who currently provide accommodation for rough sleepers in Plymouth regarding a possible bid

- Access to Private Rented Sector funding – this funding opportunity is not specific to rough sleeping, but to the general homeless population and will fund schemes to increase access to the private rented sector. A bid will be prepared (deadline 21st Nov)
- Rapid Re Housing Early Adopter funding

MHCLG have invited expressions of interest for Local Authorities and their partners to be early adopters of Rapid Re Housing. This comes with an opportunity to apply for funding for one or more of the following – assessment beds, lettings agency, floating support, rough sleeper navigators. We meet all criteria to become early adopters, and have registered our interest.

In addition, we will also be approaching lettings agencies/landlords to access accommodation with enhanced deposits to encourage landlords to house people with complex needs, and talking to local RP's about accessing accommodation.

We are also organising a Community Housing Day in January 2019, facilitated by an arts practitioner, to bring together members of the community, faith groups and small charities, to look at what part they can play in sourcing housing for people who are homeless.

Cultural change – significant cultural change will be needed around the Housing First service to enable it to succeed. We are:

- Producing a 2 minute video for distribution to all staff in services such as DWP, treatment services, Police etc. to explain what Housing First is, the differences to a traditional service and what they can do to help
- Agreeing a protocol with Police around Housing First
- Meeting and talking to partners about flexibility for, or communication around people in Housing First (e.g. DWP, treatment services, probation etc.)

Conclusion

Significant progress is being made towards not only the introduction of the Housing First service, but also to acquiring accommodation and making the necessary cultural change.

Temporary Accommodation

Committee previously agreed the principle of funding purchase and renovation of accommodation for use as temporary accommodation from the Affordable Housing budget. The temporary accommodation is for households assessed as homeless or under investigation as homeless by the Council. The proposal is for flexibly designed accommodation that can be reconfigured easily to meet the range of household sizes and needs that arise for this type of temporary accommodation.

Progress has been delayed due to staff absence but we are now in process of commencing procurement of specialist consultants to undertake design, site search and feasibility work. This will be funded from the Councils Affordable housing capital funds.