

## Appendix 4: Homelessness Strategy 2013-18 Mid-Point Review

### Feedback from the stakeholder group meeting on 8 July 2015.

#### Strategic Objective One: Preventing and responding to homelessness

- Council to effectively respond to changes in legislation/funding, making clear to partner organisations what funding is available, or supporting services affected by funding cuts e.g. it is difficult for service providers to tender for services not knowing what funding is available from Local Authorities, Government, public and charitable sector organisations.
- Work more in partnership - pool funding and other resources where possible. Work better with County Council and other Oxfordshire districts to joint commission and provide services.
- Consider how any proposed DCLG cuts will impact on preventing homelessness and improving the number of customers able to access adult education and training.
- Proactively explore options to understand and deal with the impact of Government budget announcements and policy changes.
- Communication – Oxford City Council to continue and improve communications with internal and external departments and the voluntary sector in relation to delivering objectives to tackle and prevent homelessness.
- Tenancy placements outside the City –Oxford City Council needs to address the supply of additional homes/accommodation in areas where there are networks of support and facilities.
- Could the Council act as a landlord/letting and managing agent for private landlords so as to encourage more private sector landlords to rent at more affordable rents to customers in need of housing?
- Publicise Homechoice to attract more landlords. Continue to maximise the role of Homechoice in preventing and reducing homelessness.
- Oxford City Council should consider acting as guarantor for eligible clients – more private landlords are requiring rent guarantors.
- The Council could make a ‘call for landlords’ to encourage more property owners to rent to customers who may require lower level rents, Housing Benefit and other support - e.g. faith groups and philanthropic landlords.
- Progress against the Housing Strategy Action Plan – milestones completed but update on these required. Terminology needs to be clear and relevant.
- Consultation –customers need to be consulted with more about what help they need individually with finding and sustaining independent accommodation. Also, customers’ expectations need to be managed in relation to their housing circumstances.

- The Council should take a 'caseworker approach' to service provision.
- Explore community bank models –this may help with the implementation of Universal Credit.
- How do individuals get into a position where they can move out of benefits? Promote the 'Living Wage'. How can OCC influence other employers to adopt this?

## **Strategic Objective Two: Preventing and responding to rough sleeping**

- The Council should be mindful of changes in terminology and new pathways that are being developed to deliver homelessness services – the strategy action plan can be updated to include new terminology.
- The Council should continue to work in partnership with other service providers and agencies in relation to pathways for people in need of specialist accommodation e.g. those with complex needs or long-term entrenched rough sleepers.
- The Council should continue to work in partnership to address the impact of Welfare Reform in order to help prevent homelessness and rough sleeping - work in partnership to provide training or workshops and consider impact of loss of income.
- The Council should continue to work in partnership to respond to the increase in rough sleeping - look into other funding sources to continue the support and good work of voluntary and support agencies - increase the number of support workers.
- Volunteering – work in partnership to promote volunteering and support funding for voluntary sector.
- Update and review actions on anti-begging campaigns (e.g. 'Your Kindness Can Kill' campaign) – Communications are needed to help people understand why homelessness occurs, what help is already available and what help people can give 'effectively'. Particularly work with student groups and look at how partnership working can help to increase charitable donations or improve understanding ('myth busting') around costs of and access to shelters.
- Housing First –there is a pilot project for entrenched rough sleepers to help them into self-contained 1-bed properties with very intensive support from Julian Housing. However, consideration needs to be given in relation to the assistance available for people who are ready to move on, where they have very specific needs and requirements.
- There is a need to consider providing a range of accommodation across the City e.g. hostels, shared homes and self-contained homes.
- Complex needs, substance misuse and mental health – Partnership working is really important between the Council and service providers to ensure a link with existing services who can provide specialist and therapeutically involved support to meet a wide range of customer needs.

- Severe weather emergency protocol –The Council will need to ensure that it is able (on-going) to meet the protocol which is implemented when severe cold weather is below 0 degrees Celsius for 3 nights or more.

### **Strategic Objective Three: Developing partnerships and communications**

- Some of the issues raised in Strategic Objectives 2 and 3 above are relevant to developing partnerships and communications.
- The Council and its partners should consult with clients on what help they need to prevent homelessness - agree action plans, support and advice provided, join up with the County Council on communications (Supporting People User Group).
- Partnership working could be improved to access funding collectively and improve access to the services provided by support providers.
- The Council should work in partnership to address the needs of ex-offenders e.g. 'through the gate' services. Link with support workers, County Council, Police and Probation Services and with other district councils. Current partnership work needs to be continued and strengthened, especially if there is a potential for other support or specialist services to be reduced.
- The Council should continue working with private landlords to promote good practice and to prevent homelessness. The Landlords Forum could be a way to communicate Welfare Reform changes and provide help or advice to private sector landlords.
- The County Council, City and district councils across Oxfordshire need to ensure conversations (and consultation) are undertaken with private landlords and Registered Providers, and support obtained from all funding partners, when considering commissioning or de-commissioning of support or accommodation services.

### **Strategic Objective Four: Deliver excellent homelessness services**

- The Council and its partners need to provide specialist accommodation to meet a range of housing and support needs.
- Continued funding for support and accommodation services needs to be secured.
- The Council is in the process of undertaking the Gold Standard Challenge– this will help to identify any gaps or weaknesses in homelessness service delivery and the Peer support can also help with identifying any opportunities to improve.
- The Council should consider and work proactively to address and identify implications of Government budget announcements.
- The points raised in Strategic Objectives 1, 2 and 3 above are also relevant.

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