

City Executive Board 13 February 2013 – Appendix C Homelessness Strategy Consultation outcomes

There was a low responses rate with only 7 responses. This may reflect the fact that there was consultation with partners and stakeholders prior to the draft consultation document being developed. Nonetheless, of those that responded, there was overwhelming support for the aims of the Homelessness Strategy. Responses were as follows:

Do you agree with our analysis of housing and homelessness in Oxford?

89% agreed with the analysis of housing and homelessness in Oxford. The remaining respondent (11%) ticked the Don't Know option.

The comments received were very positive;

- A very good insight and research for facts
- Oxford CAB supports the clear evidence based analysis of the existing and increasing pressures on accommodation in Oxford. We would endorse the identification of debt as a serious risk to a security of accommodation.
- Complex information very clearly written and presented - thank you. I now know a lot more about housing and homelessness in Oxford.
- I think most of the major points are covered, though I am not entirely clear on what is meant by "lack of direct access and self contained accommodation for mental health needs"? There isn't ANY direct access accommodation for homeless people any more, now that No Second Night Out has come in to being, since all newcomers are referred and prioritised by Oxford City Outreach team. So, though true that there is a lack of direct access accomm for people with mental health problems, this is the case for the general homeless population. This also applies to lack of self contained – it is the case for ALL homeless people.
- Also, would it be possible to add that the restrictions to Housing Benefit for single people under 35 mean that the pressure on finding shared accommodation is now greater than ever and will only go upwards. There simply aren't enough shared houses. The stock is reducing, if anything, as some landlords are keen to avoid HMO Licensing, and are converting properties to family use.

Do you agree with our analysis of future challenges for housing and homelessness in Oxford?

88% agreed with this statement and 1 person ticked the Don't Know option.

The following issues were raised;

- It will get worse and needs to be strictly controlled. i.e. young single mums, youths. More young girls are having babies as a short cut to benefits and housing.
- High numbers of servicemen who will be returning to Oxfordshire over the next few years prior to leaving the service, and some estimate could be made of additional pressures this could place on homelessness services in Oxford.
- We note the reference to the importance of keeping rent arrears in relation to Oxford City Council stock low and would comment that a build up of rent arrears could be used to trigger referral to a dedicated money advice and financial capability resource.
- In terms of young people, I would suggest that the emphasis of welfare reform on living in shared accommodation rather than self contained units will pose an additional challenge to vulnerable young people who often find it difficult to live in these environments, as well as posing profound questions about delivery models of services and accommodation provided to prepare them.
Access to private rented sector has to be increased although I am not sure how this can be achieved.

How can we sustain our progress in preventing homelessness and acting at crisis point given threats and reduced resources in the future?

- Your plans seem robust and exhaustively thought through. One of the difficulties is the need to respond to the plans put in place by a government fundamentally hostile to lower socio-economic groups.
- Lobbying for a government policy on rent controls in the private sector would probably be fruitless, though such a policy would be enormously advantageous to those in rent poverty.
- Communication with housing authorities; residents and universities; big incentives for under occupied homes; more communal accommodation for single people; encourage youths to remain in family homes with support. Use empty properties.
- Sustaining progress is going to be a significant challenge. Oxford CAB welcomes the reference in the strategy to the creation of a financial inclusion strategy, recognising the contribution made by debt, benefits and financial capability advice to early intervention to try and prevent homelessness.
- Learn more from Best Practice in the sector and more close working with partners.'

- Mediation and restorative services and tenancy support services which intervene at an early enough point to be effective. It is critical to engage with other early intervention services and learning/evidence bases including, for example, the Troubled Families (Thriving Families in Oxfordshire) agenda both nationally and locally. Provision of emergency accommodation which does not sit outside the housing pathways ie not B&B or nightly charge accommodation to ensure cultures of support are fostered and that messages to young people and families are about engaging with services and long-term well-being, not simply about a roof over their head. Continuing to consider Education, Employment and Training as of equal priority with accommodation in terms of support from services in order to maximise the stabilising and protective factors of engagement in EET and the positive effect this can have in securing and maintaining accommodation. It is ESSENTIAL however that being NEET does not become a barrier to accessing housing as this will significantly and disproportionately disadvantage the most vulnerable

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the priorities in the draft Homelessness Strategy?

Of those who answered this question 100% strongly agreed (71%) or agreed (29%) with the priorities in the draft Homelessness Strategy.

Detailed breakdown for 'Preventing Homelessness'

Option	Results Count
Strongly Agree	71% (5)
Agree	29% (2)
Neutral	0% (0)
Disagree	0% (0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (0)

Detailed breakdown for 'Improved Knowledge and Information'

Option	Results Count
Strongly Agree	50% (3)
Agree	50% (3)
Neutral	0% (0)
Disagree	0% (0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (0)

Detailed breakdown for 'Partnerships that work'

Option	Results Count
Strongly Agree	71% (5)
Agree	29% (2)
Neutral	0% (0)
Disagree	0% (0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (0)

Detailed breakdown for 'Customer focused services'

Option	Results Count
Strongly Agree	50% (3)
Agree	50% (3)
Neutral	0% (0)
Disagree	0% (0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (0)

Detailed breakdown for 'Transition to settled homes'

Option	Results Count
Strongly Agree	67% (4)
Agree	33% (2)
Neutral	0% (0)
Disagree	0% (0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (0)

Detailed breakdown for 'Increased access to housing'

Option	Results Count
Strongly Agree	71% (5)
Agree	29% (2)
Neutral	0% (0)
Disagree	0% (0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (0)

Detailed breakdown for 'Excellent homelessness services'

Option	Results Count
Strongly Agree	71% (5)
Agree	29% (2)
Neutral	0% (0)
Disagree	0% (0)
Strongly Disagree	0% (0)

Further comments

Respondents were broadly supportive of the draft strategy however would like to see

- more partnership working on a district level.
- Use of /reference to Best Practice models

Though nothing on Affordable Housing?

But I would like to see something about sofa surfers – Under prevention of Homelessness.

But would like to see something on partnerships with other districts– Partnerships that work.

Though supportive of the strategic approach not sure how this will be resourced. It would be good to see targets and action plan