

**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 8 February 2023  
**Report of:** Executive Director (Communities and People)  
**Title of Report:** Allocation of Preventing Homelessness Grant 2023/24

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To approve the grant allocations for 23/24
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Thriving Communities
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2018-21 (extended)
<b>Recommendations: That Cabinet resolves to:</b>	
1.	<b>Approve</b> the allocation of Preventing Homelessness funds to commission homelessness services in 2023/24 as outlined in paragraphs 18 to 20 and in Appendix 2 of the report;
2.	<b>Approve</b> the requested carry forward of the underspend in the 22/23 budget of £41,164; and
3.	<b>Delegate</b> to the Executive Director (Communities and People), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, the discretion to revise the intended programme within the overall budget if required.

<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1	Review of allocated homelessness funds 2022/23
Appendix 2	Proposed allocation of homelessness funds 2023/24
Appendix 3	Risk Register
Appendix 4	Allocation of Rough Sleeping Initiative Funding 2022-25

## **Introduction and background**

1. The Preventing Homelessness Grants (PHG) budget provides funding to help alleviate and manage rough sleeping. It is the main way we seek to achieve the rough sleeping related objectives in the current Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-2021 (extended) as well as the Council's future ambitions in this area. Primarily this is to minimise the time people spend rough sleeping by ensuring access to accommodation from the street, to provide longer term supported accommodation for those who need it, and to fund preventative services to both prevent homelessness in the first place as well as supporting recovery from rough sleeping.

2. This report presents an overview of how the funding allocated in 2022/23 has been spent and makes recommendations for the allocation of funding in 2023/24 to provide services for rough sleepers and single homeless people in Oxford. The report also provides an update on developments this year. Organisations which we fund, as well as those we do not fund, have continued to work tirelessly and in partnership to reduce rough sleeping and support people to return to independent living.

### **Context and key developments 2022/23**

3. The Oxfordshire Homeless Alliance launched in April 2022, bringing together the majority of commissioned homelessness services in the county. This includes outreach services for rough sleepers, accommodation services and prevention services. The service are jointly commissioned by all Oxfordshire councils and the Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Integrated Care Service (replacing the Clinical Commissioning Groups for these areas). The alliance of providers comprises St Mungo's, Homeless Oxfordshire, Connection Support, A2 Dominion, Elmore Community Services and Aspire.
4. The Alliance aims to transform the delivery of homelessness services minimising the time people have to spend rough sleeping, and prioritising the rapid rehousing of people into mainstream accommodation, with the right support, as quickly as possible. Support will be delivered in a psychologically and trauma informed manner, with service development being client led. An Alliance Leadership Team has been set up to oversee the development of the Alliance and the service transformation. This comprises leads from the six providers as well as commissioning representations from the City and County councils.
5. At the time of writing the Alliance is working on its Year Two budget. Like most organisations it is having to deal with significant costs pressures, made more challenging by the provision of a flat budget for the contract.
6. Unfortunately we have seen an increase in the number of rough sleepers during the year from the low 20's at the start of spring, peaking at 53 during the summer. By December this had reduced to the low 30's. At any given time, approximately a third of people sleeping out either have no recourse to public funds (which severely limits their accommodation options) or have accommodation available to them. This shows that a lack of suitable, affordable accommodation is not the only challenge in reducing rough sleeping numbers. The increase in rough sleepers is partly due to the closing of Everyone In accommodation, with Oxford YHA closing in February 2022. However it has also been driven by high volumes of people becoming street homeless during Spring and Summer.

In March 2022 we commenced the delivery of our Housing First project. This has provided social tenancies to long term rough sleepers and those with the most complex needs, with bespoke support provided to make these tenancies a success. At the time of writing 13 units had been occupied. Its early days for the project but so far all the tenancies have been maintained successfully, and we have taken all long term rough sleepers off the street.

### **Floyds Row**

7. A little over three years ago the council opened the Engagement and Assessment Centre at Floyds Row which was intended to support our aim to end the need to rough sleep in Oxford, by providing up to 40 spaces of accommodation for people who would otherwise need to rough sleep. Unfortunately the pandemic resulted in the capacity

being reduced from 40 bed spaces to a maximum of 18. Floyds Row receives significant funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and at the start of the year officers were advised that DLUHC were unwilling to fund a return to the pre-pandemic model of 40 spaces as this model utilised communal sleeping arrangements.

8. During the year officers have been engaged with DLUHC advisers to explore alternative options for Floyds Row. This has resulted in DLUHC agreeing to a temporary increase of 10-12 bed spaces at Floyds Row, utilising communal sleeping arrangements, meaning a maximum of 28-30 bed spaces will be available. This is only until 31 March 2024. By the end of June 2023, officers need to submit a plan to DLUHC to show how services will be provided from 2024, in line with the requirement to reduce the capacity at Floyds Row back to 18.
9. There is a shortfall in funding for Floyds Row of £80,000 for 2023/24. This relates to the expected income from the lease for the building of £180,000. Income from Housing Benefit will contribute to these costs. Officers are seeking ways to mitigate the remaining shortfall of £80,000 and have requested contributions from the other local authorities in Oxfordshire as well as the Integrated Care Service (ICS) (formerly Clinical Commissioning Group). These partners have previously contributed funding due to the countywide nature of the services delivered from Floyds Row. The situation is currently being progressed by Officers and likely to change prior to publication of this report.

#### **Ensuring sufficient provision to meet Oxford City's needs**

10. Under the new countywide service all 236 beds are available to anyone from Oxfordshire. In addition, the City Council still directly commission 105 beds for use by city residents:
  - Settled Oxfordshire: 47 units, including 17 self-contained one bed accommodation units and 10 three-four bed HMO's dispersed across Oxford (the properties in this scheme are funded by a social investment of £6million with £2 million contributed by each of the City Council, DLUHC and social investors)
  - Housing First: 40 units split into two lots of 20 units, the service providers for each are A2 Dominion and St Mungo's.
  - Becket Street: 18 beds made up of one 12 bed mixed property and one 6 bed female only property.

This means that city residents can potentially access 341 beds in total.

11. Demand for supported accommodation remains high, particularly since the exit from "Everyone In" accommodation in 21/22 and the rise in rough sleeper numbers in recent months. Weekly meetings are held with accommodation providers to agree how to allocate void spaces. This process has been expanded since the launch of the Alliance in order to work on a countywide basis.

#### **Further funding opportunities**

12. The City Council has made several successful bids for DLUHC funding in 22/23. The Council led a countywide bid into the Rough Sleeping Initiative. This resulted in an award of £5,195,889 across a 3 year period from 2022-2025. Appendix 4 provides a breakdown of the funding award.
13. The Council were successful in a bid for £155,083 of Additional Pressures funding from DLUHC to be spent in 22-23. Table 1 below outlines the allocations of this funding.

Table 1. Allocation of Additional Pressures funding

Provider	Award	Service
Oxford City Council	£70,000	Hotel placements to avoid rough sleeping
All Oxfordshire District Councils	£43,750	As above but for people with a connection to a different Oxfordshire district.
St Mungo's	£7,833	A co-ordinator to manage the above placements
Aspire	£35,200	To refurbish and manage three properties in Aspire's social lettings project.
Total	£155,083	

14. In December DLUHC notified us that a bid into the Accommodation for Ex-Offenders programme had been successful. This will provide £168,800 from 2023 to 2025 (£84,400 each year) to provide 15 units of accommodation in the private rented sector, with floating support, to people who have recently been in prison.

15. Bids for SHAP (Single Homeless Accommodation Programme) funding will also be possible from January 2023 onwards. This funding will provide capital and revenue funding and will prioritise target areas for funding in respect of two target groups: long term rough sleepers (or those with the most complex needs) and young people who are rough sleeping or at risk of homelessness.

#### **Use of Preventing Homelessness Grant in 2022/23**

16. Last year's report by the Head of Housing Services on the allocation of homelessness prevention funds indicated that a total of £1,941,310 of PHG funding had been allocated for the delivery of services and support for rough sleepers and single homeless people in 2022/23. This comprised of the following:

- Core Preventing Homelessness Grant - £1,095,533
- Community Services Voluntary Grants - £442,279
- Homelessness Prevention Grant - £86,630
- Next Steps Accommodation programme - £316,868

17. The Next Steps Accommodation programme funding was used to ensure the safe exit from "Everyone In" accommodation, and ensured that reductions in core funding did not lead to a reduction in services at this critical time. The contribution from the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) has been used to fund prevention activities and these are shown in Table 3 below. Any developments that have affected actual spending and resource allocation in 2022/23 are summarised below.

#### *Day Services*

Previous day service provision at O'Hanlon House was brought to a planned end at the end of 2019/20. Oxford Winter Night Shelters (OWNS) day services project, The Living Room (which opened in 21/22) alongside established day service provision from The Porch and The Gatehouse along with the development of the Woman's Hub has been sufficient to continue to meet client need. An allocation was retained in this area to ensure there was provision to meet additional need if required, however this has not been the case. As such there is an underspend of £41,164 for this service and Cabinet

are requested to approve carry forward of this amount to support service delivery in 2023/24.

*Acacia*

This project is now delivered by the Alliance, and funding for Acacia is included within our contribution to their budget.

**Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Funds 2023/24**

18. The Council's budget for 2023/24 allocates £1,670,994 for spend in 2023/24. This is a reduction in comparison with last year's funding which included additional funding from the Next Step's Accommodation programme. This year's funding comprises the following:

- Core Preventing Homelessness Grant - £1,100,921
- Community Services Voluntary Grants - £442,279
- Homelessness Prevention Grant - £86,630
- Carry forward from 2022/23 - £41,164

19. In recent years £142,000 has been taken from the PHG budget reducing the overall funding envelope. The savings were taken from the following areas:

- Mayday Supported Housing - £20,000
- Welfare Reform team staffing - £81,000
- Day Services Provision - £40,000

Due to underspends and significant additional Covid related funding such as the Next Steps Accommodation programme, this has not needed to result in any reductions in service provision as a result of the reduction in the PHG budget. Without the additional contribution that we were able to make for 22/23 from the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (see paragraph 17 above) there is now a need to reduce some services entirely or in part, as outlined below. A planned £47,000 saving which was due to be taken in 2023-24 as part of the original Medium Term Financial Plan has been withdrawn in order to minimise the service reductions required.

20. The proposed allocations for 2023/24 are shown in Table 3 below, with more details on the areas of commissioning at Appendix 2. In summary, it is proposed to prioritise the Council's contribution to the Alliance, and other accommodation services supported by this budget. There is a partnership agreement in place with the co-commissioners of the Alliance committing the Council to provide funding for the duration of the contract. The changes to funding of other services are summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Changes to PHG allocations for 2023/24

Service	Funding Change	Impact/Mitigation
Acacia	Moved into Alliance	Service will continue to be delivered
Elmore	Reduction of £17,815	Elmore manage an ongoing caseload of 12 people so this change will reduce that support to 6 people.
Tenant Ready Scheme	Reduction of £16,000 which means the service will not be delivered	In Q2 of 2022/23 5 people accessed the course costing £800 per client so this does not offer good value.

Thames Valley Police	Reduction of £30,000 which means the service will not be delivered	The police have struggled to staff this role in the last two years. Despite this reduction in funding they are committed to close partnership working.
City Centre Ambassadors	Reduction of £17,500	This will reduce the funding for this internal service and was part of the planned reduction in funding for next year.
Day Services	Reduction of £41,164 which means service will not be delivered	See paragraph 17 above
Greater Change	Reduction of £25,000 which means service will not be delivered	Funding has been provided in the last two years primarily to support with the move on from Everyone In which has now ended.
OxThink* (rough sleeping database)	Increase of £2,000	The development of this database to support the Alliance will require a increase in licence costs.
Severe Weather emergency protocol	Reduction of £15,000	Additional DLUHC funding is made available in winter which can be used to support this provision.
Aspire education, training and employment service	Reduction of £24,525	Funding has been reduced by £24,525 to meet the reduced funding envelope

Table 3. – Expenditure on Homelessness Prevention 2022-23 and 2023-24

Service	Current Provider/Supplier	Cabinet Report Allocation 22/23	Allocation spend 22/23	Proposed Allocation 23/24
Matilda House	A2Dominion	£266,000	£266,000	£266,000
Acacia	Response	£95,700	£95,700	£0 (in Oxfordshire Homeless Alliance)
Additional complex beds	Connection Support	£19,500	£19,500	£19,500
OCC Contribution to pooled budget (including Floyds Row)	JMG/County	£968,580	£968,580	£968,580
Severe Weather Beds	Various providers	£30,000	£30,000	£15,000

Rough Sleeping & Street activity service	Thames Valley Police	£30,000	£30,000	£0
City Centre Ambassadors	Oxford City Council	£17,500	£17,500	£0
Day Services	None currently	£41,164	£0	£0
Gatehouse Café	Gatehouse	£5,580	£5,580	£5,580
The Porch Day Centre	The Porch	£55,000	£55,000	£55,000
ETE Workers	Aspire Oxford (part HPG funded 23/24)	£77,623	£77,623	£53,098
Tenancy Sustainment	Elmore Community Services	£35,630	£35,630	£17,815
OxTHINK	Real Systems	£0	£0	£7,000
Women's Hub	Aspire/Gatehouse (HPG funded 23/24)	£7,500	£7,500	£7,500
Target Hardening Scheme	OCC (HPG funded 23/24)	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000
Access to leisure services	OCC	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000
Greater Change	Greater Change	£25,000	£25,000	£0
Tenant Ready Scheme	Connection Support	£16,000	£16,000	£0
Rough Sleeping Team	Oxford City Council	£215,533	£215,533	£220,921
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>£1,941,310</b>	<b>£1,900,146</b>	<b>£1,670,994</b>

21. It is requested that Cabinet delegates to the Executive Director for Communities and People, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, the discretion to revise the intended programme within the overall budget.

#### **Financial implications**

22. The council will spend £1,629,830 on managing the impact of, and preventing rough sleeping in 2023-24 which is shown in table 3 above. Overall the council continues to be successful in grant applications to DLUHC for homelessness spend, including the three years of funding from the new Rough Sleeping Initiative programme from DLUHC as outlined in paragraph 12.

23. Unspent budget allocations in one year's budget are normally considered for carry forward at year end once the out turn for the financial year has been ascertained. Whilst Cabinet can agree to earmark underspends prior to the year end it should be understood that this constitutes a forward commitment and if the Councils budget is overspent overall then it will need to be drawn from reserves to fund.

#### **Performance monitoring**

24. In distributing this budget, the Council will ensure that there are clear outcomes and targets in each organisation's service specification which are reported on quarterly. Officers will schedule quarterly, 6-monthly or annual performance monitoring meetings with all services to ensure that outcomes and targets are achieved and issues are addressed in a timely and professional manner.

**Legal issues**

25. All services funded from Preventing Homelessness Grant should have legal agreements in place setting out the service provider's obligations for services as well as consequences for not fulfilling these obligations.
26. The procurement, commissioning and award of contracts for the provision of services should be undertaken in compliance with the Council's contract rules contained in part 19 of its Constitution.

**Level of risk**

27. The Risk Register is attached as Appendix 3.

**Equalities impact**

28. All services in receipt of funding are subject to monitoring which includes equality and diversity.

<b>Report author</b>	Francesca Barr
Job title	Senior Rough Sleeping Officer
Service area or department	Housing Needs
Telephone	01865 252582
e-mail	<a href="mailto:fbarr@oxford.gov.uk">fbarr@oxford.gov.uk</a>

**Background Papers:** None