
STRATEGIC REVIEW OF HOMELESS SERVICES

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Members as to the outcome of the strategic review of homeless services undertaken by Development & Commissioning.

Summary

2. Development & Commissioning spend £1.2 million on commissioned services for people who were homeless or were at risk of homelessness. The commissioned services provide 'Housing Related Support' which builds an individual's independent living skills (budgeting, being a good neighbour, addressing additional support needs such as mental health or substance misuse, assistance to access education, training and employment).
3. In commissioning a review of these services it was believed that improvements made in the quality of some of the support and services could result in savings of up to £300K without any significant impact on clients.
4. A comprehensive review was undertaken to look at existing commissioned services, and also took into account, how Darlington Borough Council, could identify and prevent people from becoming homeless when they were already known to us, e.g. Youth Offending service, Family Intervention Team etc.
5. A tender exercise was undertaken for 4 service areas and contracts were awarded to commence on the 1st January 2015. We have also 'invested to save' (from the £300k initial savings target) in a number of areas and are continuing with work to improve how we work internally to support vulnerable people.
6. It is predicted that savings of £205k will be met by 2015/2016.

Background

7. The main outcomes from reviewing the commissioned services, and consultation with providers, clients and stakeholders were:-
 - (a) Lack of move on options
 - (b) Lack of accommodation options for young people
 - (c) Limited meaningful daytime activities
 - (d) An increase in the needs of clients and the risks they pose
 - (e) Lack of multi-agency working

- (f) Availability of support i.e. Evenings/weekends
 - (g) Limited prevention work for young people
 - (h) Too much moving between services.
8. When we reviewed how we worked internally we highlighted areas for improvement around:-
- (a) How we support 16 and 17 year olds who present as homeless
 - (b) Supporting people with mental health needs
 - (c) Accessing initiatives undertaken by other departments e.g. leisure services
 - (d) Multi-agency support.
9. An additional contract, which was included in the review, was the provision of two members of staff based within Housing Options and First Stop Darlington. These agencies operate and manage the Key Point of Access (KPA), which utilises a Capita software system to assess the needs of clients who present as being either homeless or at risk of homelessness. The assessment enables the client to be referred into the most appropriate service to meet their needs.
10. It was determined that by investing in the software, streamlining the assessment process, giving Contractors more control and utilising the software more effectively we would be able to reduce the overall running costs of the KPA. The changes will be rolled out throughout December and a review of the impact of the changes will commence in June 2015.

Outcome of Consultation

11. An Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out and clients could not stress enough how much the Service had done to help them. We were therefore conscious that as much service provision as possible must be retained whilst achieving the saving.

Procurement

12. Four services were commissioned:

- Lot 1 - Accommodation & floating support for homeless families
- Lot 2 - Accommodation based service for single homeless people (hostel)
- Lot 3 - Outreach service for people at risk of homelessness
- Lot 4 - Positive Support Pathway for young people.

13. To encourage innovative services and value for money, the service specifications were written in an outcome focused way which left the design of the services with the Contractors.

New service delivery

14. All four services have embraced the need to reverse the culture of dependency and clients will have to engage within support if they want to receive a service. There are closer links to education, training and employment, with an emphasis on

utilising peer mentors and volunteering pathways. We have created an 'activities' Hub with Leisure Services and having already piloted this, all new Contractors are committed to ensuring as many clients as possible engage on a weekly basis with the sporting activities which are to be delivered.

15. Lots 1, 3 and 4 have incorporated a triage approach, utilising drop in's and group work to maximise the number of clients who they can support.
16. The Positive Support Pathway for young people (Lot 4) provides a Hub for young people to access which will offer advice and assistance and allow for other agencies to work out of. It offers a wider range of accommodation and support options for young people and has incorporated units for Young People Leaving Care, which should result in a cost saving for Children's Services. The Contractor will work closely with the FIT team to offer early intervention to young people who are identified as being at risk of homelessness. The Contractor will also build on a piece of time limited work which First Stop were commissioned to carry out around delivering preventative work/awareness raising in secondary schools. A referral panel will also be established to ensure that those young people who present with the highest need receive multi agency support.
17. Lot 3 provides support on an outreach basis to clients with varying needs of support, thereby reducing the need for clients to move between providers. There is also a designated worker to manage the move on from the hostel which will reduce the number of clients who go without support during this transitional phase. Support will be delivered more flexibly and will be available on a weekend and an evening.
18. A temporary housing options worker post has been funded for one year to work in the MASH to focus on 16 and 17 year olds who present as being homeless. This role is arranging multi-agency meetings for young people and is responsible for working alongside Children's Services to ensure we are fulfilling our statutory responsibility. This role is also increasing the partnership between Housing and Children's Services.

Recommendation

19. It is recommended that Members :-
 - (a) Note the contents of this report.
 - (b) Agree to receive a progress update in 6 months

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