
OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC PROTECTION PORTFOLIO

Purpose of Report

1. The following were the main areas of work under my Community and Public Protection Portfolio:

Drug and Alcohol Service

2. The new housing related support service for people with drug and alcohol problems, commissioned by the Supporting People Team in March, is now operational. The successful contractor, DISC (Developing Initiatives Supporting Communities) have recruited staff for the new service and commenced floating support for up to 10 people with substance misuse problems. This enables these vulnerable people to receive support in their own home to help them maintain their tenancies. This service has been recognised as crucial in helping people maintain their independence in the community and supports wider initiatives to regenerate neighbourhoods, deal with anti-social behaviour and support the provision of effective treatment outcomes for individual drug users. The Supporting People Team are working closely with DISC to ensure the best quality of service for service users and measure how effective the service is in helping people maintain their tenancies.
3. DISC are currently in negotiations with local landlords to secure properties for the accommodation based elements of the service, which is due to be operational later in the year. This will enable a further 8 people to be supported at any one time, where housing is also an issue in addition to the provision of support.

New Services for Young People Leaving Care and People Suffering Risk or at Risk From Domestic Abuse

4. The Supporting People Team has recently commissioned two new services for young people leaving care and for people suffering, or at risk from domestic abuse. Both of these services have been identified as high priorities within the Supporting People 5-year Strategy as detailed below:

Young People Leaving Care Scheme

- a) A supported lodgings scheme is currently being developed in partnership with the Care Leaving team to enable up to 6 young people leaving care to receive housing related support. This service will ensure that particularly vulnerable young people are helped in the transition from residential care to independent living. This means that they can receive support to develop the skills to maintain their own tenancies and avoid homelessness and related problems associated with this client group. The service will initially run for two years and the Supporting People Team is currently in the process of identifying a service provider.

Domestic Abuse Scheme

- b) A floating support scheme for people suffering from, or at risk from domestic abuse is also being developed by the Supporting People Team. This service will help people receive housing related support where they have left refuge accommodation and are trying to set up their own tenancy, or for people who want to receive support in their own homes. It has been identified that there is an acute need for this type of service in Darlington and it will help up to 15 people at any one time receive support.
5. The Supporting People Team are currently working in partnership with colleagues to secure funding from the LAA (Local Area Agreement) to develop a 'round the clock' service for people suffering from domestic abuse. It has been agreed that the housing related support element already commissioned will form part of this service to ensure seamless provision of support for vulnerable people. Consultations with current service users identified that this type of service provision was vital in times of crisis and to support longer-term independence. It is hoped that this joined up approach to providing this type of service will form a model for the provision of other Supporting People services in the future.

Private Landlords Forum

6. Interaction with private landlords has significantly improved, particularly as a result of responding to feedback from the Landlord's Forums. The recent meeting of the Forum was attended by over 60 delegates who participated in a full day event on the detail of the new Housing Health and Rating System. At the request of the landlords a further workshop has been planned for September to focus on Housing Benefit issues with speakers from both the Rent Service and the Council's Housing Benefit team. Future topics include Anti-Social Behaviour, Tenant Referencing, Legislation Update, Choice Based lettings and Drug and Alcohol Issues. The first ever Landlords Newsletter has also been published and distributed to over 180 landlords as well as a large number to other interested parties.

Landlord Accreditation

7. Since I launched the Landlord Accreditation Scheme in February 2006, thirteen landlords managing 156 dwellings have received accredited status. A further eleven landlords managing 174 properties are having their applications processed. The scheme has been an enormous success and is gaining momentum with both landlords and tenants.

Housing Options Service

8. To reflect the increasing emphasis on homelessness prevention and the need to provide early advice and assistance, we have recently relaunched and renamed the Homelessness Section to become a Housing Options Service. Housing Options Officers have a toolkit of initiatives which they can use to meet the individual needs of clients including:
 - Links to Welfare Benefit and Money Management Support so we can work with clients to help them sustain their current home.

- Links to Independent Mediation to provide support, particularly to families where different lifestyles can cause conflict. If relationships with boundaries can be established this can help enable individuals to remain at home or prepare them for a planned move to independent living.
- Links with a wide range of statutory and voluntary organisations who can provide complimentary services, for example, First Stop provide shelter and laundry facilities and have volunteers who are able to spend time with people, overcoming any barriers to accessing accommodation. The Supporting People Programme provides support to people to live independently in the community.

Anti Social Behaviour/Warden Service

9. The Anti-Social Behaviour Team set up over 6 months ago has now become established. Work is ongoing to develop an Environmental Enforcement Team within the Unit, which will focus on enforcement of fly-tipping, fly-posting, littering offences, abandoned vehicles and dog fouling and will lead on prosecutions or issuing of fixed penalty fines, where appropriate.
10. To date the Anti-Social Behaviour Officers have dealt with a variety of cases from early stage warnings through to Acceptable Behaviour Agreements and preparation of legal cases. The precise figures on actions to date are as follows:

(a)	Individual Cases	316
(b)	Initial Warning Letters	340
(c)	Second Warning Letters	46
(d)	Third Warning Letters	5
(e)	Council Tenant Warning Letters	12
(f)	Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (ABA)	9
(g)	Breaches of ABA	4
(h)	ASBOs currently being prepared (awaiting court dates)	3

1. Work continues on environmental enforcement cases and currently we have a number of pending court dates for cases concerning fly tipping, dog fouling and waste disposal.

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and Public Protection