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**SUPPORTING PEOPLE EVALUATION OF THE KEY POINT OF ACCESS**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Bill Dixon  
Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio**

**Responsible Director – Cliff Brown  
Director of Community Service**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval from Council to waive contract procedure rules to allow First Stop Darlington to continue working in partnership with Darlington Borough Council's Housing Options Team to provide the service known as the Key Point of Access.

**Summary**

2. The Key Point of Access (KPA) was introduced following a recommendation from the Supporting People's review of services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Due to the diverse nature of this client group, it was determined that the service should be established as a partnership between Darlington Borough Council's Housing Options Team and First Stop, Darlington.
3. The KPA was set up as a pilot and its objectives were to:-
  - (a) Streamline the application process for clients in need of hostel accommodation.
  - (b) Enable comprehensive client data to be compiled, to inform commissioning decisions in the future.
  - (c) Refer clients to the most appropriate hostel to meet their needs.
  - (d) Allow early referrals into specialist services through triage assessments.
  - (e) Work with the Local Connection Policy, to ensure clients are supported in the area which will best enable them to work their way out of homelessness.
  - (f) Enable efficiencies to be made in the costs associated with hostel accommodation, as we were removing the initial interview and assessment function.
4. The KPA has undergone a comprehensive review (see **Appendix 1**), with valuable contributions made by both Darlington Borough Council Housing Options Team and First Stop Darlington, together with stakeholders and clients, to ensure that it is delivering the

objectives that were set for it to achieve.

5. Overwhelmingly all the feedback obtained through this evaluation has been positive. The homeless sector as a whole in Darlington appears to have embraced the pilot, and have worked hard to ensure its success, despite initial referral issues.
6. Even over the short term of the pilot, the KPA is already achieving outcomes. These are:-
  - (a) Reducing the length of time clients are waiting for hostel accommodation.
  - (b) Increasing the level of preventative work carried out.
  - (c) Working in a positive partnership with the Voluntary Sector.
  - (d) Increasing awareness on local connection and its implications.
7. From April 2010, the role of the Key Point of Access will increase, as it will become the only referral agent into all housing related support services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The estimated costs of the KPA over the lifetime of the contract is £482,400 of which £224,062 is the estimated costs for First Stop Darlington. All additional costs for expanding the service will be met through Supporting People and have been budgeted for. The quality of service cannot be achieved by another method of procurement. The Supporting People Team will be responsible for monitoring the outcomes of the service and the monitoring requirements will address a number of cross cutting strategic priorities for the authority.

### **Recommendation**

8. It is recommended that :-
  - (a) The findings of the review are accepted and Council agree to waive Contract Procedure Rules to enable the Supporting People Team to contract with First Stop Darlington for the provision of the Key Point of Access.

### **Reasons**

9. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-
  - (a) The review highlighted the positive outcomes the Key Point of Access has already achieved, with particular focus on the two locations allowing clients choice and the capacity to encapsulate a wider range of clients.
  - (b) Partnership working with the Third Sector is pivotal to the success of this project.

**Cliff Brown**  
**Director of Community Services**

### **Background Papers**

The Key Point of Access Review

Anthony Sandys : Extension 2512

S17 Crime and Disorder	The Key Point of Access (KPA) provides a central point for all key agencies to link into. This will improve links with youth offending, probation and community safety and lead to more joined up support.
Health and Well Being	The KPA assessment focuses on people's needs, referring clients into services which best meet those needs. Triage assessments will enable clients to access specialist services earlier.
Sustainability	The provision of housing related support for homeless people/ people at risk of homelessness will contribute to continued and diverse sustainability of local communities by supporting people in their neighbourhood. There are no environmental impacts associated with the commissioning of these services.
Diversity	The needs assessment ensures resources are allocated based on need. An equalities impact assessment and a disability impact assessment has been undertaken.
Wards Affected	Individuals accessing the KPA could be from all wards.
Groups Affected	Homeless people/People at risk of homelessness.
Budget and Policy Framework	The issues contained within this report do not represent change to the Council's budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This is a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is an urgent decision. There are newly procured housing related support services for people who are homeless or at risk of homeless due to commence on the 1 April and we would like all referrals into these services to come from the KPA. Enabling us to have a 'pathway out of homelessness' in Darlington.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Providing housing related support for Homeless People/Risk of Homelessness will help to deliver a number of objectives within One Darlington: Perfectly Placed. The Third Sector organisations are equally focused on these issues and have a major role to play within the One Darlington priority.
Efficiency	Having one generic needs assessment carried out by the KPA reduces the length of time clients are waiting for a service. We have already achieved efficiencies from this approach through the current tender for homeless services.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

10. The report seeks approval from Council to waive Contract Procedure Rules to allow First Stop Darlington to continue working in partnership with Darlington Borough Council's Housing Options Team to provide the service known as the Key Point of Access.
11. The Key Point of Access (KPA) was introduced following a recommendation from the Supporting People's review of services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Due to the diverse nature of this client group, it was determined that the service should be established as a partnership between Darlington Borough Council's Housing Options Team and First Stop, Darlington.
12. First Stop were identified at any early stage as being a key agency in the delivery of homeless services in Darlington. There is a history of good partnership working between Darlington Borough Council and First Stop and all members of the strategic review group thought this was an excellent opportunity for the statutory and voluntary sectors to work together to achieve outcomes for clients and further cement this partnership. Many people affected by homelessness go to First Stop and they are experienced in acting as a gateway to services for chaotic homeless clients. Further, they are a voluntary sector specialist in homelessness that is also not a provider of accommodation for the homeless.
13. The KPA was set up as a pilot and its objectives were to:-
  - (a) Streamline the application process for clients in need of hostel accommodation.
  - (b) Enable comprehensive client data to be compiled, to inform commissioning decisions in the future.
  - (c) Refer clients to the most appropriate hostel to meet their needs.
  - (d) Allow early referrals into specialist services through triage assessments.
  - (e) Work with the Local Connection Policy, to ensure clients are supported in the area which will best enable them to work their way out of homelessness.
  - (f) Enable efficiencies to be made in the costs associated with hostel accommodation, as we were removing the initial interview and assessment function.
14. The KPA has undergone a comprehensive review (see **Appendix 1**), with valuable contributions made by both Darlington Borough Council Housing Options Team and First Stop Darlington, together with stakeholders and clients, to ensure that it is delivering the objectives that were set for it to achieve.
15. Overwhelmingly all the feedback obtained through this evaluation has been positive. This is particularly reassuring, as there were some real concerns from providers and stakeholders over the feasibility of the pilot, and change in culture that the service would bring.

16. The homeless sector as a whole in Darlington appears to have embraced the pilot, and have worked hard to ensure its success, despite initial referral issues.
17. Even over the short term of the pilot the KPA is already achieving outcomes. These are:-
  - (a) Reducing the length of time clients are waiting for hostel accommodation.
  - (b) Reducing the number of people from out of area accessing services inappropriately.
  - (c) Increasing the level of preventative work carried out.
  - (d) Working in a positive partnership with the Voluntary Sector.
18. The full report as **Appendix 1**, highlights a number of recommendations which will be used to improve and expand the Key Point of Access from April 2010. These are:-
  - (a) To continue the KPA.
  - (b) To develop the service to incorporate the new homeless services coming on line from April 2010.
  - (c) To continue working out of two locations.
  - (d) To increase staff by at least 1 FTE in each location.
  - (e) To procure a bespoke IT system.
  - (f) To promote the KPA, its services, the partnership between Darlington Borough Council and First Stop, and also the partnership between the KPA and providers.
  - (g) To widen the stakeholders for the KPA.
  - (h) To create a working group to enable the successful expansion of the service and its procedures to ensure flexibility and co-operation.
19. From April 2010, the role of the Key Point of Access will increase, as it will become the only referral agent into all housing related support services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. All additional costs for expanding the service will be met through Supporting People and have been budgeted for. The Supporting People Team will be responsible for monitoring the outcomes of the service and the monitoring requirements will address a number of cross cutting strategic priorities for the authority.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

20. A range of stakeholders and clients were consulted as part of the review of the Key Point of Access. These included:-
  - (a) Providers of hostel accommodation in Darlington.
  - (b) Clients who had been referred into services by the Key Point of Access.
  - (c) Clients who had experience of the Key Point of Access and the previous referral mechanisms.
  - (d) Voluntary organisations that were identified as key stakeholders.
  - (e) Statutory agencies such as Housing and DAAT.
  - (f) Managers of the two organisations providing the Key Point of Access.
  - (g) Key staff members from the two organisations providing the Key Point of Access.