



Leicester
City Council

Cabinet

9th April 2001

SCOPING PROPOSALS FOR HOMELESSNESS B.V. REVIEW

Report of Assistant Director (Renewal and Rehousing)

1. OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 The theme of this review is to minimise the number of people who are homeless.

One of the goals of the **Community Plan** is “**to ensure that a decent home is within the reach of every citizen in Leicester**”. The plan uses “**the number of households accepted as (statutory) homeless**” as one of its headline indicators , as a fundamental measure of the state of the City of Leicester. However the Council recognises that homelessness is more complex than statutory figures will reveal.

The Council’s **key strategy document** for implementing this community plan goal is Leicester’s **Housing Strategy 2000-2003**. The Housing Strategy details eight key objectives and related activities that will help towards meeting that goal. This Best Value theme (Homelessness) relates to the following detailed objectives set out in the Housing Strategy:

- To offer advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness.
- Prevent increase in, and re-occurring, homelessness.
- Provide a multi-disciplinary approach to assist and act on the needs of single homeless or vulnerable people who have been rehoused.
- Develop supported housing, tenancy support and resettlement to complement hostel provision.

- Offer housing advice to citizens outlining the full range of options available to meet their housing needs.
- Encourage and enable expansion of the private rented sector.
- To allocate Council housing and nominate to Registered Social Landlords (RSL) lettings on the basis of housing need, matching the applicant to the most suitable available home.

1.2 Services provided under the Housing Strategy are influenced by, and contribute to, **other key Council Strategies**. There are strong links to the:

Children Service Plan
 Community Care Plan
 Crime and Disorder Strategy
 Education Development Plan
 Environment Policy and Statement
 Health Improvement Plan

1.3 This Best Value theme also relates to the following **Performance Plan indicators** -

BVPI67 Proportion of homelessness applications on which the authority makes a decision and issues written notification to the applicant within 33 working days.

Local P.I. To reduce the number of rough sleepers on the street to 7 by April 2002.

1.4 Equalities and EMAS will be an integral part of the assessment of the Services.

2. PROVIDERS WHO COULD FALL WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE REVIEW :

2.1 Services to meet the detailed aims of the Housing Strategy are focused within thirty cost centres in the Housing Department, managed by two Service Managers.

2.2 The services provided are:

- Housing and Rehousing Services

Housing Advice, Options Advocacy, Representation (these services were included in the Year One Best Value Review of Advice Services).

Private Landlord/Tenant issues;
 Statutory assessment of homelessness
 Housing Register
 Adapted House Matching Service

Nominations to Registered Social landlords
Public reception in New Walk Centre and Housing Advice Centre,
Bishop Street.
Grant aided funding to SHARP for advice and advocacy functions.

- Hostels and Community Care

Direct Provision of hostel accommodation
Grant aided provision of hostel accommodation
Commissioning and managing of tenant support services.
Advice and assistance to Community Care Clients with housing needs.
Work with Rough Sleepers
Provision of Supported Housing.

2.3 It is proposed that all the above services are dealt with under the B.V. Review of Homelessness. Although advice services were included in the Advice Services B.V. Review and have been inspected this year, they are operationally linked with all the other services listed. However, in view of the work already done, it is proposed that the focus for the advice element in this Review is on linkages with other services.

2.4 In further support of this proposed scope it should be noted that

- these services are often inter-linked for the client. For example, client contact will initially be with one of the two Housing Advice and Rehousing Service (HARS) Receptions (New Walk Centre or Housing Advice Centre), by direct access to a Hostel, or via referral to the Community Care Team. These staff often sign post or refer to other services within the services listed above. The review will focus on LINKAGES between services.
- these services have protocols, written or informal working arrangements with Housing Management Branch, Social Services Department, Probation Services, Health Authority, Education Department, Rent Offices, Private Sector Housing Team in Environment and Development, Money Advice, Housing Benefits. For this Review these service providers will be viewed as **stakeholders**.
- these services are all non-landlord functions within the Housing Department (i.e. resourced from the General Fund not Housing Revenue Account).
- these services are managed by two Service Managers, and represent all the services they manage or commission. Both Services Managers will shortly have carried out a full scale European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) assessment of their services during the past year.
- The Chartered Institute of Housing advises that for the

purposes of a Housing Inspectorate Review the following would be scoped in: Housing Advice, prevention of homelessness, work with single non-priority homeless, work with rough sleepers, statutory assessment of homelessness, temporary accommodation, routes for the homeless into permanent accommodation.

3. KEY STAKEHOLDERS

It is proposed that those marked with * are key stakeholders and will be consulted on the scoping exercise: (The others will be included later in the process).

3.1 Service Providers:

- *Housing Management Branch
- *Social Services (Adult and Children's Services)
- *Probation Service (Accommodation Unit)
- *Health Authority
- *Education Department
- *Private Sector Housing Team, Environment and Development
- *Housing Benefits
- Grant Aided Hostels
- Rent Officer
- Other Advice Agencies – (13 significant agencies identified in Survey of Housing Advice Services).
- Benefit Agency
- Police
- Drug Action Team
- Primary Care Groups and Trusts.

3.2 Clients:

It is not proposed to consult with clients on the Scoping exercise.

4. DIRECTORS BOARD AND MEMBER EXPECTATIONS FOR INCLUSION IN THE THEME:

The Business Units identified by Cabinet for this theme are:

- Community Care Unit
- Voluntary Service (Need)
- Hostels
- Homelessness and Rehousing

The 2000/2001 budget was £2.755m

5. BROAD CONTEXT

- 5.1 Supporting People will have a major effect on funding and the provision of services within the Hostels and Community Care Cost Centre.
- 5.2 An EFQM Improvement Plan is in place for the Housing Advice and Rehousing Service (HARS).
- 5.3 An EFQM Improvement Plan is being developed for the Hostels and Community Care service areas.
- 5.4 A new staffing structure is being implemented in HARS. Recruitment to key posts is underway. The introduction of generic working is underway by creating customer focused "Housing Options Officers" : Staff training will begin when these key posts are filled. (April/May 2001).
- 5.5 Budget Strategy: the 2001/2002 budget provided additional resources in both cost centres in recognition of the growing client base.
- 5.6 Homes Bill: this is currently being debated, which impacts on this theme. The provisions of the Bill are already largely followed in Leicester , but some work is to be done.
- 5.7 Leicester has been designated by the Government as a cluster area for Asylum Dispersal. While housing services for Asylum Seekers are dealt with under separate arrangements, some service reconfiguration will be needed for subsequent refugees.
- 5.8 These services are covered by the Audit Commission's Housing Inspectorate. No inspection date has been notified or requested.

6. STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

1. What our clients experience of the services we provide to meet our aim of preventing homelessness.
2. The need to respond to the Government's "Supporting People" proposal.
3. The need to ensure effective joint working between Housing, Social Services, Probation and Health to meet all the Government's Social inclusion initiatives (SRB, NRF, New Deal, etc., etc.) Have we got the linkages right?
4. The need to prepare for a potential inspection by the Housing Inspectorate.

5. The need to implement improvement plans prepared under the EFQM exercises.

6. KEY ISSUES RAISED BY STAKEHOLDERS

The consultation period on the Scoping Report is 5th March to 16th March. Issues raised by Stakeholders will be fed into the process as they are received. Those consulted have been provided with this report and asked the question “What are the issues that you consider a Best Value review of these services should address? “

7. AREAS PROPOSED TO BE EXCLUDED

As already detailed at 2.3 of this report, advice services were included in the cross - cutting Advice Services B.V. review and have therefore already been inspected this year. However they are operationally linked with all the other services listed . Therefore it is proposed that the focus for the advice element in this Review is on *linkages* with other services.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that;

1. The scope of the Best Value review of Homelessness includes the service areas set out in paragraph 2 and the issues listed at paragraphs 5 & 6. A major focus of the Review will be on linkages between services that aim to minimise homelessness.
2. That Stakeholders’ views on the scope received after this meeting will be considered by the Scrutiny Director.

9. OFFICERS TO CONTACT:

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