

Housing Scrutiny Commission

10th October 2016

STAR services

Assistant Mayor Housing : Cllr Andy Connelly

Lead Director: Chris Burgin



City Mayor

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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- Report version number: V4

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update and overview of the STAR service (Supporting Tenants and Residents) that is currently provided to tenants within Leicester.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the content of the report and make any observations.

3. Supporting information including options considered:

3. Background

- 3.1 Supporting Tenants and Residents (STAR) Leicester City Council is made up of 4 distinct parts. The 5 community based STAR teams, STAR Family Support service provided from Border House, STAR Amal team responsible for support to Syrian refugees part of the resettlement program and the Revolving Doors team that deal with repeat homelessness cases.

3.2 Community Based STAR

The STAR community based service provides support to vulnerable council tenants who are threatened with homelessness, have a history of homelessness or those threatened with eviction due to rent arrears or behaviour which breaches their tenancy agreement, e.g. hoarding and anti- social behaviour. The aim of the service is to enable some of the most vulnerable and excluded tenants to sustain their tenancy and continue to thrive as part of their local community.

- 3.3 The make-up of the teams under the Service Manager is Team Leaders, Housing Related Support Workers and Administration Support workers.
- 3.4 STAR recognises vulnerable service users by various factors including a history of homelessness, mental ill health, ill health, disability, poverty ; however there can be other contributory factors or barriers to using services which could include age language, literacy, substance use and learning difficulties. Service users predominantly with these issues or, contributory factors are much more likely to lose their tenancy without on- going professional support. The above list of vulnerabilities is not exhaustive, but a mere indication of the most frequent vulnerabilities, service users have when requesting support from STAR. The current indications are that those service users with mental health difficulties and also suffering from the current welfare reform changes are in need of support services to sustain tenancies.

- 3.5 The service provides a non-judgmental, multi-agency, holistic approach to resettlement and tenancy support services. The support is based on a case management basis where each service user has an allocated Housing Related Support Worker. The support workers key role is to enable the service user to sustain their tenancy through various mechanisms; for example by maximising their income and supporting them to navigate the challenging reformed welfare system. The service also provides an advocacy role with other statutory and voluntary agencies. This includes housing, health, mental health and adult and children's services and education. The 5 STAR teams are based in Beaumont Leys, Eyres Monsell, St Matthews, New Parks and Braunstone. The teams are situated in decentralized offices with the highest levels of local authority tenancies and in estates /areas of social deprivation. These teams only deal with customers who have a Council Tenancy. Other service users without a council tenancy will be sign posted to the most appropriate support agency.
- 3.6 Access to the STAR service is based on an Eligibility Criteria (Appendix 1) which prioritises service users who are the most likely to fail in their tenancy, for example customers leaving temporary accommodation and moving into a tenancy (they may not have the appropriate attributes to sustain a tenancy), those that may be in rent arrears, low income and struggling to make ends meet, and finally those that may have breached the tenancy agreement and facing potential eviction. Service users threatened with losing their tenancy will be allocated a worker who will work the customer and have a plan of action to sustain the tenancy. In addition to the eligibility criteria cases are also prioritised by the vulnerability assessment, to ensure that those in the most need are provided with a service in a timely manner (Appendix 2).
- 3.7 The STAR service approximately receives 90% of its referrals from the Income Management Team. These would normally be tenants who are in rent arrears, facing litigation with a view that the City Council will be seeking possession of the dwelling. Other referrals can come from the Hostels and Homeless Section, Housing Management, Health, Adult Social Care and the Police.

3.8 STAR – Family Support Service

The STAR Family Support Service assists homeless families in their transition from Border House Hostel to independent living. Homeless families are amongst of the most vulnerable groups in society. They have often experienced traumatic events which have contributed to their homelessness including: drug use, domestic violence, abuse, poverty and war. Due to the often chaotic and transient nature of the family life, homeless families are often referred to as 'hard to reach' and there is a high risk to children, who may be hidden from professional support, sometimes resulting in neglect and injury.

- 3.9 The STAR Family Support service is made up of one Team Manager, Family Support Workers and Child Support Assistants. The STAR Family Support Service has been developed to ensure homeless families receive a comprehensive child centered package, to ensure their health and wellbeing is prioritized and prevent future homelessness. This services also includes 'family Centre' called the Corner Club next to the Border House Hostel which provides a safe environment for children to thrive and for parents to engage with professionals and learn the foundations of child development, and parenting. The Corner Club is staffed by

qualified Child Support Assistants who provide the service in liaison with the Family Support Workers. The service also provides a variety of play and therapeutic support sessions, a crèche and holiday play schemes for hostel residents and the local community.

3.10 STAR AMAL

The STAR AMAL Team was developed in response to the governments Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR) Programme. This programme is delivering on the government commitment to accept a designated number of the most vulnerable refugees that have been displaced from Syria. The refugees may be vulnerable due to their mental or physical health, torture, exposure to the trauma of conflict and living in refugee camps for a number of years. The team of 3 Arabic and 2 non- Arabic speaking Housing Related Support Workers provide intensive resettlement and cultural orientation for newly arrived Syrian refugees who are part of this programme. The team is currently working with 9 families made up of 8 adults and 27 children.

3.11 .The Revolving Door Team

The Revolving Door (RD) Team is made up of two Team Leaders (one vacant) thirteen Housing Related Support Workers (HRSW) (2 vacancies) and one admin assistant. The Revolving Door Team was developed to provide the support needed to break cycles of repeat homelessness. Their main aims and objectives are to support clients that have experienced multiple stays in accommodation based support and where the individual continues to be homeless or have a chaotic lifestyle.

The team provide support to those in commissioned bed spaces and well as in tenancies regardless of tenure and as well as those in prison and the vulnerably housed, including sofa surfers and rough sleepers. The team also support those that experience long stays in commissioned bed spaces.

3.12 The Housing Revenue Account is currently subject to severe cuts as a result of government requirements that the rent is reduced by 1% per year for the next 4 years (2016 to 2020).The savings needed has been estimated at £11.72m needed over a 4 year period (Housing Revenue Budget Rent Setting Report to the Executive 2016/17). The STAR service will not be exempt from these budget reductions and the service will be reviewed accordingly

- Key Achievements
- STAR provided long term support to 1,056 vulnerable Leicester City Council tenants (662 closed cases and 394) for 2015/16.
- 93% of service users completed a planned programme of support (614 closed cases out of 662 closed cases)
- STAR provided 2,609 short term support interventions to reduce tenancy failure (1st April 2015- 31st March 2016).
- STAR received 146 compliments in 2015/16 and 1 complaint
- Braunstone, St Matthews, Saffron and Eyres Monsell STAR teams are all established in the new Transforming Neighbourhood Hubs. New Parks and Beaumont Leys will be moving in the TNS hubs in January 2017.
- Initiating the development of the multi-agency Hoarding policy with Leicester Fire Service. The procedure aims to support Leicester City Council tenants

who have issues around hoarding which are affecting their tenancy.

- The successful development of the STAR Amal team in December 2016 to meet the requirements of the Vulnerable Persons resettlement programme.

4. Details of Scrutiny

4.1 This is an overview of existing services and for information only

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

5.1.1 This is an overview of existing services and for information only

5.2 Legal implications

5.2.1 Legal services have not be contacted over this report as this is an overview of the current service

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

5.3.1 This is an overview of existing services and for information only

5.4 Equalities Implications

5.4. 1 This is an overview of existing services and for information only

6. Background information and other papers:

None

7. Summary of appendices:

None

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

9. Is this a “key decision”? No

Appendix 1. STAR Eligibility Criteria – LCC

Priority	Band
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Council and Home Come tenants moving from Temporary Accommodation ii. Council tenants at high risk of losing their tenancy (Eviction Threat – Letter Sent) iii. People who have been identified as Group A and referred to STAR in last 2 years. 	A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Council tenants at medium risk of losing their tenancy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Notice served b. Introductory tenants c. First Independent Tenancy d. Young Person under 25 years with less than 12 months in the tenancy. ii. Council Tenants with 2 or more factors from following list <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. History of arrears b. Previous support from STAR c. Known vulnerability e.g. Mental Health, Substance Use, Domestic Violence etc. d. Failure to engage with NHO and IMT e. Current or previous court action 	B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Council or Home Come Tenants who ask for help from STAR, or who the NHO, or other agencies are concerned about. 	C

Appendix 2. Vulnerability Assessment

Critical Needs – 20 points each (Tick all that apply)		
Person from abroad with Benefit Issues	History of Homelessness within 2 years	Physical or Sensory Disability Restricted Mobility/Terminal
Child Protection	Care Leaver	High Level Mental Health issues e.g. Personality Disorder
Domestic Violence./History	Learning Difficulties/ Cognitive impairment	Vulnerable Adult at high risk e.g. Hoarding, self-neglect
Other Support needs (Tick all that apply)		Points
Introductory Tenancy		15
Suicide/Self Harm		15
Age 18-24		10
Age 55+		10
Benefit Cap		10
Benefit Problems/ Sanctions		10
Housing Benefit Problems		10
High Level Priority Debts		10
Rent Arrears		10
Nil Income		10
Non Dependant Charge		10
Substance Use		10
Under Occupying/Bedroom Tax		10
Mental Health		5
Physical Health		5
Sensory Impairment		5
ASB/Harassment		5
Carer for resident vulnerable adult		5
Child Behavioural Issues		5
Children under 18 in household/Pregnant		5
Ex-offender		5
Issues with Utilities		5
Poor Literacy		5
Language		5
No Bank Account		5
Other household members disability		5

Priority Band		A	B	C	Vulnerability points	
Critical Needs?	Yes	No		Complex needs (4 or more other support needs)	Yes	No
Dated assessed from referral form:				Name of Team Leader:		