

Housing Scrutiny Commission Report

Homelessness Strategy Update

Housing Scrutiny Commission: 26th November 2018

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Andy Connelly

Lead director: Chris Burgin

Useful information

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1. Purpose

1.1 To inform Members of the Scrutiny Commission of the progress to date in implementing Leicester's Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023.

2. Summary

2.1 Leicester's fourth Homelessness Strategy was formally agreed May 2018. Since this was formally adopted work has been ongoing to implement the agreed actions / proposals and build on the extensive work already in place.

2.2 Numbers approaching the council for assistance have increased as has the number of people rough sleeping. This is not just a local picture there has been an increase in households becoming homeless nationally.

2.3 In Leicester, in most cases we are able to prevent or relieve homelessness. To maintain these levels is a challenge in itself (as suitable affordable housing becomes more limited) but we are also committed to breaking the cycle of homelessness and ensuring that no person needs to sleep rough.

2.3 It has also been a period of significant change with the largest change to homelessness legislation in decades being implemented in April and further changes in October.

2.4 Leicester is undertaking an ambitious programme of work to tackle homelessness locally. This is not a council endeavour alone, as tackling homelessness requires significant partnership working to address the root causes of homelessness.

3. Progress report

3.1 When agreeing the homelessness strategy 2018-2023, we shared with members a document about what would change following implementation of the strategy. This showed some of the key actions / improvements that were going to be implemented over the next five years.

3.2 Priority actions have been scheduled for implementation in phase 1. These are:

- Work to reduce rough sleeping
- Working with others to develop a homelessness charter for Leicester
- Implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act and improving homelessness prevention

- Introducing the new eligibility criteria for temporary accommodation
- Commissioning accommodation-based housing support services
- Agreeing a programme of work related to improve the council's own temporary accommodation-based services

3.3 Shown below are the key action / improvements identified over the life of the strategy, progress to date and future planned (phase 1) actions by different themes of the strategy.

3.4 Partnership working

Partnership working

- Working with others in the city, including the diocese, to further develop partnership working and a new city charter to tackle homelessness. This aims to coordinate & harness the support of individuals, organisations and businesses in the city
- Review and improve joint working arrangements with primary care and mental health services, including substance misuse services
- Supporting and working with Action Homeless and other partners as part of Leicester's End Street Homelessness campaign

3.4.1 Progress to date

- We have developed and consulted on a draft homelessness charter for Leicester in partnership with the Diocese. A provisional launch event for the Charter has been arranged for late Autumn.
- There has been on-going partnership working with Action Homeless and One Roof Leicester as part of the Rough Sleeping Initiative programme (which is also targeted towards reducing rough sleeping – further details provided in section 3.12).

3.4.2 What next?

- Develop new homelessness partnership working arrangements including a platform where people and organisations can 'pledge' support to the charter in many ways (e.g. offering services, volunteering, donate, participating in working groups to resolve gaps / issues).

3.5 Homelessness Prevention

Homelessness Prevention (Proposal 1)

- Improved customer access to the councils homelessness advice services
- Personalised housing support plans developed with clients who are or are likely to become homeless
- Developed, and will be the first in the country, to launch a homelessness prevention app (in partnership with all of Leicestershire's district councils and Rutland Council) providing advice and guidance to those who may be at risk of losing their home
- New coaching support service to provide additional one-to-one support for individuals who may struggle to take actions to prevent themselves from becoming homeless

3.5.1 Progress to date

- The new Homelessness Reduction Act has been successfully implemented in Leicester. This requires councils to provide early assistance to any households that are homeless or could be homeless within 56 days. In Leicester we have extended this to help any households that might be homeless within 70 days to help early prevention of homelessness. All homeless households now have a personalised housing plan which includes a full needs assessment. This has improved customer engagement & consistency of service. For example, now all singles with a homeless application (previously this priority was only available to homeless families) are given band 2 priority on the housing register. This improves their chance of rehousing to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- Access to housing options services has been improved. All homeless households speak to Homeless Prevention Officer directly on presentation and everybody is offered a face-to-face interview.
- As part of our Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer programme a new coaching support service has been in place since the 1st May providing one-to-one support to individuals who require extra support to prevent them losing their home. In the first quarter of this being in operation over 15 households in Leicester benefited from this service. In Autumn, Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland will be launching a housing advice app which will provide advice to households who want to be able to 'self-serve'.
- There have been changes to Leicester's Discretionary Housing Payments policy to ensure there is explicit protection for vulnerable tenants placed under our homelessness duty to be provided with rent deposits, rent-in-advance and top-up payments where required to sustain tenancies.
- Recruitment of additional Homelessness Prevention Officers. Recruitment to date has meant a net increase of 4 officers.

3.5.2 What next?

- From October the Homelessness Reduction Act 'duty to refer' is introduced. Planning is already underway in readiness for this change. This will lead to improved joint working with agencies such as Job Centres, probation services & the police.
- To help provide timely homelessness assistance the housing options service is recruiting a further 5 Homelessness Prevention Officers.

3.6 Eligibility criteria for temporary accommodation

Eligibility criteria for temporary accommodation (Proposal 2)

- Provide more support to prevent homelessness from occurring and provide genuine alternatives to temporary accommodation, so temporary accommodation is there for those who require additional support
- Review and improve working with Leicester's homeless mental health service to see how those at risk of homelessness or are homeless who are assisted to secure settled accommodation could still access their services
- Prioritising allocation of bed spaces so we can always help those who have high support needs (only in non-statutory cases - in statutory cases everyone is allocated accommodation where this is needed)

3.6.1 Progress to date

- An amended eligibility criteria for temporary accommodation was consulted upon as part of the homelessness strategy & review.

3.6.2 What next?

- Following embedding of the changes arising from the Homelessness Reduction Act the amended eligibility criteria will be introduced.

3.7 Accommodation for families

Accommodation for families (Proposal 3)

- Families who are facing homelessness, we will work to accommodate into independent accommodation and only use temporary accommodation when they require additional support (For example; housing-related support, family support, on-site free creche)
- All temporary accommodation for families commissioned by the council will be self-contained
- Supporting Children's Service to provide suitable accommodation when parenting assessments are required

3.7.1 Progress to date

- Piloting the use of dispersed self-contained temporary accommodation for families.
- On-going joint work between housing and children's services which includes an assessment of supported accommodation requirements.

3.7.2 What next?

- An options appraisal of family temporary accommodation to see how this could become self-contained accommodation.
- The council will explore the possibility of the council developing a social lettings agency and ways to improve schemes currently in place to enable low income households to access the private rented sector and improve awareness of private landlords and homeless families of services available.

3.8 Accommodation for offenders

Accommodation for offenders (Proposal 4)

- Personalised housing support plans developed with those due to leave prison or probation accommodation leading to reduced homelessness / increased tenancy sustainment / reduced recidivism
- Specialist offender accommodation reserved for those with a recent offending history (supported by the Police and Crime Commissioner)

3.8.1 Progress to date

- Personalised housing support plans developed between probation and housing services to provide tailored advice for offenders.

- Housing services working with probation services to commission accommodation-based housing related support services for offenders.

3.8.2 What next?

- Tendering exercise to begin Autumn 2018 for specialist offender accommodation services.

3.9 Accommodation for young people

Accommodation for young people (Proposal 5)

- Joint assessment and commissioning of housing-related support services for young people (aged 16-24) between Children's & Housing Services
- A wider range of types, and providers of housing support services that can better meet the individual needs of young people

3.9.1 Progress to date

- Ongoing work between housing and children's services as part of a wider children's placement sufficiency audit process to assess the current and future need and types of supported accommodation required.

3.9.2 What next?

- Commissioning of supported accommodation for young people (aged 16+ and up to 24 years old) to begin early 2019.

3.10 Accommodation for singles

Accommodation for singles (Proposal 6)

- A greater range of accommodation options for single people including options for individuals rough sleeping who do not want to use the current temporary accommodation with support model
- Establish a Housing Company and use right-to-buy receipts to deliver more affordable housing
- Joint working with Public Health & Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust to deliver Housing First that is integrated with mental health and primary care services. Housing First is a new evidence based approach that aims to provide a stable, independent home and intensive personalised support and case management to homeless people with multiple and complex needs.

3.10.1 Progress to date

- Leicester City Council is currently looking at options to establish a 'safe place to stay' & has bid for funding through the Local Government Advisors programme to look at options for establishing this accommodation in Leicester.
- Partnership working with the Job Centres to establish 'job clubs' at the Dawn Centre & The Bridge.
- A project team led by Public Health has established a Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE) project to look at the meeting the needs of individuals who are homeless but have complex / multiple needs.
- Housing Leicester Ltd has been set up as Leicester's housing company to deliver affordable housing, private rented properties and houses for sale. Phase 1 sites identified to deliver new affordable rent homes.

3.10.2 What next?

- Potential funding secured through the Rough Sleeping Initiative programme for 2019/20 to establish a 'safe place to stay'.
- Be in position to start commissioning accommodation-based housing related support early 2019.
- Leicester's housing company is currently identifying sites for phase 2 and aim to deliver in excess of 300 new houses during 2019/20 and 2020/21.
- Project to explore the viability of a social lettings agency for Leicester and improving access to the private sector. The government have announced they will be launching a competitive bidding process for £20m of private rented access scheme funding. Leicester will view the prospectus and consider bidding.
- Explore potential to bid to the government's Move-On Fund that is providing capital grants contributing towards the costs of developing move-on accommodation for people living in hostels and supported housing and revenue funding for on-going tenancy support costs.
- Working in partnership with East Midlands Housing Association and Action Homeless to develop a pilot Housing First scheme.

3.11 Housing-related support

Housing-related support (Proposal 7)

- Reviewed existing non-accommodation based housing-related support to establish the amount and types of support that are most effective and new services commissioned to meet identified needs
- Support services available and timely referrals are made to prevent homelessness from occurring, help people transition between accommodation and to sustain their existing accommodation

3.11.1 Progress to date / What next?

- This work will start in the later phases of implementation

3.12 Support for rough sleepers & repeat homeless

Support for rough sleepers & repeat homeless (Proposal 8)

- A new transitions service that can support all rough sleepers from the streets to a home
- A range of options available, from Housing First to short-stay accommodation, that meets individual needs to break the cycle of homelessness
- Support for individuals with no recourse to public funds to find a home and employment

3.12.1 Progress to date

- Successful funding secured through the Rough Sleeping Initiative programme for 2018/19 (£265k) and conditional funding for 2019/20 (£350k) to help reduce the numbers of people sleeping rough in Leicester. This means before this winter there will be dedicated staff providing support to people sleeping rough to help them off the streets. The council is also working with Action Homeless, a local homelessness charity, who will provide an additional 20 accommodation spaces for people who have been sleeping rough.
- Reducing numbers on repeat homeless list (31 2016/17 to 19 2017/18).
- Options being developed for a Review of Homelessness Services Management Structure. A new management structure will facilitate the service changes

required to deliver the next homelessness strategy. An organisational review will be required to make changes to the current management structure.

3.12.2 What next?

- Delivery of the Rough Sleeping Initiative programme of work to reduce rough sleeping in Leicester.
- Exploring opportunities to bid for additional funding as part of the government's controlling migration fund to provide support to rough sleepers who are person's from abroad (PFA) and look at potential to develop services for non-UK nationals that sleep rough in Leicester.

3.13 Day centres

Day centres (Proposal 9)

- An analysis of non-accommodation based support services available for homeless people and work with all services providing support in the city to improve coordination and identify what services homeless people value and how they are best delivered
- A new alcohol recovery hub that provides a wider range of activities and services to help people recover from dependence and improve their health and wellbeing

3.13.1 Progress to date

- 'No5' opened in May 2018 commissioned by the council and the police and crime commissioner the Recovery Hub offers a safe space for street drinkers and others in need of additional support. Through collaborative working with other agencies, staff at the Recovery Hub engage service users when they are ready, to help them make positive life choices and to move forward with the necessary help and support, tailored to each individual.

3.13.2 What next?

- An analysis of non-accommodation based support service (i.e. day services available for homeless people to use) will start in the later phases of implementation.