

Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel

Agenda
Item:

A.3

Meeting Date: 4 October 2018
Portfolio: Economy, Enterprise and Housing
Key Decision: No
Within Policy and Budget Framework YES
Public / Private Public

Title: THE IMPACT OF THE HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT
Report of: Tammie Rhodes
Report Number: GD.74/18

Purpose / Summary:

This report, requested by the Panel, gives an update on the impact on Carlisle City Council Homeless, Prevention and Accommodation Services following six months operational delivery of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Recommendations:

Members are asked to note the impacts and experiences to date.

Tracking

Executive:	
Scrutiny:	
Council:	

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRAct) significantly reformed England's homelessness legislation by placing duties on local authorities (LAs) to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas (regardless of priority need status, intentionality and local connection); and to provide homelessness services to all affected, irrespective of their priority need status, and for as long as they are eligible for assistance.
- 1.2** The HRAct amends Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (Homelessness Act 2002) rather than replacing it. There are 13 clauses that add new duties and substantially amend many of the existing duties.
- 1.3** The new duties were enacted on 3rd April 2018; and the Public Duty to Refer implemented on 1st October 2018.
- 1.4** A report was heard by panel members on 11th January 2018, outlining the key legislative changes and potential impacts / risks based on the key findings of the early adopter trailblazer authorities in England.
- 1.5** This report requested by the panel, outlines the operational impact and experiences after six months, on Carlisle City Councils Homeless Prevention and Accommodation services (in advance of the implementation of the Public Duty to Refer).

2. IMPACT / EXPERIENCES TO DATE

- 2.1** At the time of this meeting, the HRAct has been in place for six months and our experience to date is largely positive.
 - Homeless and Housing presentations to the emergency drop in service are slightly lower, this was expected as the online referral route increases as the first point of contact outside of emergencies;
 - Time spent per customer at the initial interview has increased marginally due to the new duties and requirements;
 - There is an increase in officer caseloads and administration as the statutory triggers and timeframes have changed, meaning officers often work with clients over a much longer period, where legislative notices and evidence based recording is required at every stage in the process;

- Client expectation is greater as a result of the duties and the length of time in temporary accommodation, however the housing options remain the same, and for some households these are very limited;
- The IT system is in place and is working well; this is being modified to enable documents to be migrated to a shared integrated case management across the whole service area;
- Officers feel that in some cases the new legislative timescales do not always work to the benefit of the households needs;
- There have not been any legal challenges or customer review requests;
- Clients are remaining in temporary accommodation for longer in line with the legislative aspects.

3. SUMMARY

- 3.1** Carlisle City Council has always pro-actively assisted customers in order to prevent homelessness; prioritising and promoting this approach with key partners within the Interagency Homelessness Strategy priorities for Carlisle 2015-20.

As a result of this, the impact on service delivery to date has been minimal, as the team have been addressing issues and supporting households at the early intervention stage for many years now. The preventative approaches now need to be carried out in a formal manner in line with the legislation, which at times can stifle previously flexible and creative responses.

- 3.2** The HRAct has increased access to services for single people experiencing homelessness; whereas local access to the social housing sector for families with special requirements places them at a disadvantage, and in temporary accommodation for much longer.

Temporary accommodation provision may need to be reviewed in the future, with a view to providing longer term placements for people who the council have an ongoing duty to accommodate who have limited housing options / specialist housing needs.

- 3.3** It is expected that the Public Duty to Refer will increase demand and pressure on Homeless services and temporary accommodation units. It may also increase out of area referrals for more complex challenging cases.

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