



# **COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## ***Committee Report***

**Public**

**Date of Meeting: 23rd November 2006**

**Title: HOMELESSNESS AND HOSTELS ACTION PLAN UPDATE**

**Report of: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

**Report reference: DS.100/06**

**Summary:** This report has been prepared as an update for members following the Overview and Scrutiny members' workshop on 21 September 2006. The report includes the updated plan and summary of outcomes from the workshop. It also identifies ongoing activities linked to Phase 2 of the action plan including potential future developments.

**Recommendations:** Members are requested to consider the work done to date, and future developments in service provision.

**Contact Officer:** Rob Stephenson

**Ext:** 7217

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None  
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## **1 Background**

- 1.1 At the workshop on 21 September 2006 members received an update on progress in implementing the first phase of the action plan over the previous 18 months, with 31 of the 33 actions having been completed or substantially completed. The remaining actions, incomplete and those not yet started, were identified and incorporated within a redrafted Phase 2 of the action plan. The amended plan with new target completion dates is attached as Appendix 1. The aim is to implement the plan by April 2008.
- 1.2 During the workshop groups of members and officers worked together to discuss how to take the plan forward and identified three key aims on which implementation of the plan should be based. These were:
- Bringing accommodation and support together
  - Preventing homelessness and social exclusion
  - Consulting with customers in developing and improving services they need.
- The detailed aims are set out in Appendix 2 attached.
- 1.3 The action plan sits alongside the Housing Strategy and Capital programme. To help make it clearer how these aspects are linked, particularly the capital programme, officers are rewriting the Housing Strategy in a new format. This will make progress more transparent, and the links clearer between strategy, the capital programme and specific action plans.
- 1.4 As members will know there is £400,000 capital allocated to help implement the plan and it was previously agreed that each individual project proposal to utilise this capital funding would be reported to members for consideration.

## **2 Progress and implementation**

Since the workshop officers have been looking, both internally, and with various external agencies and potential partners, at aspects of the plan within the three theme areas. I have set out an update on where we are with some of these, for members' information.

## **2.1 Aim – to bring accommodation and support together**

2.1.1 **Carlisle Foyer** – this project to provide accommodation, support, training and social facilities for 16 –25 year olds is being facilitated by the Council as part of our housing enabling role. It would be developed by the YMCA in their building on Fisher Street. The Council has funded a feasibility study to establish whether such a scheme could be developed and could obtain capital and revenue funding so it was sustainable. If the YMCA decides this is the case then the next stage would be to set up a project group, in which we would be involved with agencies such as Connexions, Children's Services and the YMCA itself. The key funders of such a project are likely to be the Housing Corporation and Supporting People.

## **2.2 Aim – to prevent homelessness and reduce social exclusion**

2.2.1 We are meeting with National Children's Homes –NCH - to explore the possibilities of developing a **Family Intervention Project** or Family Support Project as they are also known. Local authorities across the country have been running such schemes for several years and a recent Government report highlights their potential for changing the outlook for families with multiple problems, including anti social behaviour, poor money management, lack of parenting and living skills and inability to maintain themselves successfully in the community. The result of their failures is often homelessness, social exclusion, costly interventions and a downward spiral for them and their children. These projects use a carrot and stick approach to support, persuade/coerce and enable families to change significantly the way they live. The successful outcomes can include preventing homelessness and stopping repeat homelessness, improved behaviour for adults and children and a better quality of life for them, their neighbours and the rest of the community. If we were to help develop such a project then it would involve a number of agencies, including a voluntary sector provider such as NCH, Children's Services, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and perhaps community organisations and local charities.

2.2.2 **Young Peoples Housing Panel** - this multi agency panel which our officers co ordinate, deals with 16-21 year old vulnerable young people. It aims to ensure that all such young people in Carlisle are housed in appropriate accommodation with support. Many of the young people we deal with are homeless, vulnerable and often have few if any of the skills needed to live successfully in the community, especially in their own accommodation. This panel promotes joined up working between

agencies and aims to prevent homelessness and develop independent living for vulnerable young people.

## **2.3 Aim – to consult with customers to develop and improve services**

2.3.1 **Involving residents** – there is already some resident involvement for instance through house meetings in the hostels. However as we look at how services might develop in the future including potential remodelling of hostel services, it is important to consult with service users. We are talking to **Groundswell**, a national organisation which promotes effective involvement of homeless service users, to look both at training staff and involving service users themselves, in how services might change in the future. We are also meeting with **Homeless Link**, another national organisation, funded by the government to implement their “**Places of Change**” programme. The aim of the programme is to make hostels “places of change” by providing activities themselves, or linking residents to other agencies who provide activities to help people move on in their lives and ensure more positive outcomes from being in a hostel.

## **3 Next steps**

We will continue to develop options and report back to committee on progress bringing forward reports on any specific capital projects for consideration.

## Appendix 1

### Homelessness and hostels improvement action plan

Area for improvement	What do we need to do?	How long will it take?	Next steps?
<b>KLOE indicator</b>			
Provision of and need for temporary housing may be out of balance	Map what we have against what is available now and likely for the future in terms of homelessness numbers	<b>By end of March 2007</b>	Talk to other housing agencies re their current and potential provision eg - young people emergency housing
Amount of supported housing available is insufficient – gaps for key groups such as young people , excluded individuals, offenders Partnership approach	Map what we have against what is available now and likely to be provided for the future  Ongoing discussions with housing and support agencies Agree a linked strategy for supported housing in Carlisle	<b>By end March 2007</b>  <b>Ongoing</b>	Talk to supported housing providers, Housing Corporation and Supporting People re current and potential provision. Involve other non housing agencies in service development

Area for improvement	What do we need to do?	How long will it take?	Next step?
<b>KLOE – Housing advice, prevention of homelessness and housing options</b>			
Significant repeat homelessness – people with anti social, drug and alcohol dependency and previous track record of exclusion	<p>Work with agencies to prevent homelessness. Early intervention and specialised support and management.</p> <p>Look at successful schemes elsewhere. Carrot and stick approach</p>	<b>Ongoing through to April 2008</b> – difficult and complex issue to resolve- pilot approaches and risk taking by agencies will have to be tested/worked through	2 key groups to tackle - 1. families with poor tenancy track record of anti social behaviour, damage and rent arrears, and 2. young people excluded through behaviour problems
Preventing homelessness	Review our practice against DCLG checklist and best practice elsewhere	Already ongoing with many preventative practices up and running- likely to develop further <b>by end June 2007</b>	Check current Council practice against DCLG checklist and prioritise actions
Linked high quality advice services to CLS standards	Needs service level agreements with agencies	<b>By end of March 2008</b>	Negotiate SLA s with agencies and identify timetable/costs for accreditation

Area for improvement	What do we need to do?	When - how long will it take?	Next step?
<b>KLOE – access, customer care, diversity and user focus</b>			
Get more feedback from homeless customers and hostel residents to develop or improve services	Involve residents in how we should improve services through surveys, house meetings, suggestions and working groups with staff	Already started and to be increased over next 6 months <b>End of March 2007</b>	Talk to hostel residents about what they want from review of hostels and incorporate in recommending way forward
Improve written information for customers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure we provide for language and other diversity in leaflets and other communications</li> <li>• Ensure we communicate in plain language</li> </ul>	Amend leaflets and website	<b>Complete by end May 2007</b>	Complete review of all letters we use for plain English - rewrite .  Amend information leaflets with added languages
Out of hours service- quality and consistency	Test through feedback from those experiencing the service by management and possibly through mystery shopping	<b>By end March 2007</b>  Also linked to corporate review of out of hours services- <b>end March 2007?</b>	Set up internal feedback and assessment by service managers
Review homelessness section of Council website	Update and then maintain up to date website	<b>By end May 2007</b>	Look at incorporating appeals/complaints/legal

			updates
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Area for improvement	What do we need to do?	When - how long will it take?	Next step?
<b>KLOE – homelessness services</b>			
Need for more and better protocols between agencies	Agree protocols with Adult Social Services, Children's Services, probation, mental health etc	First Housing/Children's Services protocol for 16-17 year olds at final draft stage <b>December 2006</b> Other protocols to be developed by <b>April 2008</b>	Final approval from all agencies and implementation after training for relevant staff.
Temporary homeless accommodation in hostels to be reviewed in context of using more dispersed accommodation. Issue of standards and quality of buildings, support service and staffing arrangements. Look at different procurement options.	Look at supply of alternatives. Look at costs of service and agree standards to be achieved. Establish balanced budgets to reflect costs of service and maximise income through HB to cover costs	<b>By end June 2007</b>	Review standards of accommodation, health and safety aspects and staffing arrangements. Build new budget for 2007/8.

## Appendix 2

### Key aims to consider in partnership working

#### **1** *Aim to bring accommodation and support together*

- **Components**
  - agency working
  - physical accommodation
  - operational working

#### **2** *Aim of preventing homelessness and reducing social exclusion*

- **Components**
  - service planning
  - focused working with other agencies
  - staff skills and roles

#### **3** *Aim of consulting with customers to develop and improve services they need*

- **Components**
  - working with customers and engaging them
  - working with other agencies to meet needs