



Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee

Report of: Executive Director, Communities

Subject: Homelessness Performance Update

Author of Report: Zoe Young Service Manager Housing Options and Advice

Summary:

This report provides an update on homelessness key performance issues. The information contained in this report has been requested by the committee as an update to the report discussed on 8th November 2012 to enable it to have an up to date picture of what's happening in the city and to enable it to scrutinise performance.

Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	√
Other	

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

The committee is asked to consider the report and provide views, comments and recommendations.

Background Papers:

Category of Report: OPEN

1. Introduction/Context

- 1.1 Becoming homeless has a huge impact on people which can include damaging their mental health and physical health, chances of finding work or attending training or education and disrupt their family life. For many people they are able to find suitable alternative accommodation and move on to a more settled life quickly for others homelessness can go on for some time or recur and they may need more help and support to find a settled home.
- 1.2 In 2010 SCC agreed a 3 year Homeless Strategy at a time when homelessness was decreasing. The Strategy is now due to be updated. EMT has agreed that a revised Homeless Strategy should be produced. The strategy will focus on improving prevention work and ensuring sufficient access to housing. It will address youth homelessness, rough sleeping and the quality of accommodation.
- 1.3 Sheffield historically has had a relatively high level of homeless presentations and acceptances compared to other cities. This is linked to encouraging people to register for housing when the city had more stock than demand. There has been a relatively generous approach to undertaking investigations and accepting duties.
- 1.4 Targets for the use of Temporary Accommodation were set in 2004 by Government. The targets were set to half the use over a 5 year period up to 2010. The Target for Sheffield was 121. Sheffield did not meet this target and for the first 4 years increased use rather than decreased it. Current use should be understood in the context of previous performance. In 2008/09 at the height of use 400 households in Temporary Accommodation and 150 of these were in Bed and Breakfast. We have now met this target for the first time.
- 1.10 Homelessness has a disproportionate impact on young people (half of our applicants are under 25) – they are generally more financially vulnerable and are less likely to have secure accommodation available to them.
- 1.12 Accepting someone as homeless and having a duty to rehouse them is only a route that benefits families or vulnerable homeless people. Other homeless people (e.g. single people without a priority) are not owed a duty and only benefit from prevention and advice.
- 1.13 The main reasons for homelessness have continued to be being asked to leave by parents, friends and family and relationship breakdown. This can mask underlying reasons such as economic factors that can make it more difficult for people to sustain existing living arrangements.

- 1.16 The budget for Housing Solutions was reduced in the past 2 years but we have achieved this by reducing B+B costs and reducing management posts. Proposals are currently being considered about how further savings can be made in 2014/15
- 1.17 The government published “Making Every contact Count, a joint approach to preventing homelessness in August 2012. This report sets out a number of challenges to local authorities and partners. This includes a commitment to prevent homelessness, working in partnership with the voluntary and faith sector and other local partners and offering a Housing Options Prevention Service.
- 1.18 The Government also asks that Local Authorities adopt a no second night out model or an effective local alternative

2 Homelessness Key Performance Issues

2.2 Current Performance Update against Key Targets

Scrutiny has asked to receive an update on current homelessness performance. This information will also inform what the priorities should be in a new homeless strategy.

	Yearly Target	2012/2013 Actual	2013/14 Quarter 1	2013/14 Quarter 2	Rag Rating
Homeless Acceptances	1106	1218	283	247	G
Homeless Acceptances per 1000	4.57	5.0	1.17	1.02	G
Households in Temporary Accommodation	121	160	134	101	G
Number in Bed and Breakfast	5	23	6	4	G
Homeless Preventions per 1000	6	3.9	0.9	0.96	R
Number of 16/17 year olds accepted as Homeless	40	60	10	18	
Number of Section 20 Children Act duties as homeless 16/17 olds	-	1	0	0	
Number of 16/17 year olds and families in B&B year end	0	0	0	0	G
customers rehoused in 12 weeks	75%	65%	57%	65%	R

- The target for reductions in homeless acceptances to 6 per 1000 households was exceeded in 2012/13. A revised target of 4.57 acceptances per 1000 has been set for this year. In the second quarter

a further reduction to 1.02 per thousand was achieved which means we are on track to achieve the target .

- The target for B+B has been reviewed and revised upward from zero to 5 because until the Supported Accommodation Pathway is introduced and 24 hour access emergency housing is commissioned, there is little alternative to Bed and Breakfast out of hours. From December, 2 units will be available out of hours within Temporary Accommodation provided by Council Housing Services out of hours which will further reduce use of B+B.
- There is also a lack of suitable accommodation for single people with complex needs who have been refused or lost supported or social housing and in these cases B+B accommodation is still used. At the end of the Quarter 2 there were 4 customers in B+B which was an improvement on the previous quarter and there have been many occasions in the last two months when this figure has been at zero.
- A significant reduction in usage of TA was achieved in Quarter 2 from 134 to 101 by minimising the number of placements and efficient casework and increasing access to assessment beds in supported housing. There is some seasonal element to usage that has also contributed to this. This is the first time that the TA target of 121 has been reached.
- The percentage rehoused of homeless customers rehoused within 12 weeks declined to 65% in 2012/13. In the 1st Quarter of 2013/14 this further decreased to 57% and in the 2nd Quarter increased to 65% as there are fewer available properties that match the size and type required by homeless households. The Council Housing Service and Housing Solutions Service are working together to identify what the specific issues are for individual customers, and actions that can be taken for example offering private rented accommodation.
- In 2012/13 performance worsened on recorded homeless preventions and the rate recorded was 3.9 per 1000, down from 6 in the previous year. Quarter 1 performance was 0.9 preventions per 1000 and in Quarter 2 0.96 which is similar to last year. This performance measure captures actions that lead to homelessness being prevented for more than 6 months. The government definition specifically excludes some of the most significant activity the Council invests in including Supporting People funded tenancy support. However, the securing of Supported Housing for a customer is included.
- Reported prevention performance does not reflect the reduction in the number of homelessness acceptances or the actual prevention work that

is being undertaken . There has been an under-reporting of preventions and as the case work system does not capture all prevention activity there is reliance on supplementary spread sheets. This is being addressed within the service to make sure prevention activity is being consistently recorded.

- As well as local data issues, there are inconsistencies in recording of preventions across all local authorities so the benchmarking data is not wholly reliable. Nationally, the rate of homeless preventions was 9.2 per 1000, and the Core Cities Average was 14.7 per 1000 in 2011/12. It appears other authorities report activity which we do not interpret as falling within the guidance provided by DCLG such as one off advice.
- However, we do need to improve the total number of preventions achieved in securing current accommodation or alternatives to further reduce acceptances and move towards the core city average and targets have been set for this.
- Since the joint protocol with CYPF was introduced and assessment beds made available in Supported Housing in 2010/11, acceptances from 16/17 year olds have reduced from 129 in 2009/10 to 60 in 2013. The number of 16/17 year olds in TA has reduced from 34 to zero. We are confident there has been a genuine reduction in homelessness as the majority of young people now return home with support and there has been no increase in acceptances of a duty to provide accommodation under the Children Act. It remains a priority to achieve more in this area, particularly for customers with complex needs and work is being undertaken with colleagues in CYPF, Public Health and the Housing Independence Service . We will also gather benchmarking data from other authorities as other Councils have reported a reduction in homeless acceptances but an increase in Children Act duties for this customer group.

3.2 Comparison of Homeless Acceptances with Core Cities

The table shows the year end position on Homeless Acceptances with core cities.

City	Number of Homeless Acceptances per 1000 2011/12	Number of Homeless Acceptances per 1000 2012/13
Birmingham	9.7	9.7
Bristol	1.6	1.6
Leeds	2.1	2.3
Liverpool	1.4	1.0
Manchester	2.9	2.5

Newcastle	1.7	1.7
Nottingham	4.8	3.8
Sheffield	6.0	5.0

There remains a risk that homelessness will increase due to welfare reforms that have not yet been implemented fully – mitigating actions have been put in place and will need to be embedded in a new strategy.

3.3 Key customer Information

Key customer profile information will be used to develop future strategies and inform where resources need to be targeted. Some of the key customer profile information for 2012/13 is set out below:

- 35% of customers accepted as homeless are young families headed by a female lone parent, and 44% are single vulnerable people
- BME groups are disproportionately affected with 30% of all homelessness presentations coming from these communities
- 40% of applicants are aged 24 or under
- 23% of applicants have children
- 49% of customers accepted as homeless have dependent children
- 51% of Sheffield acceptances are from people without children compared to the national average of 28%.
- 40% of applicants were either living with friends or family
- Relatively few are the tenants of social housing, however many have a previous council tenancy and are in arrears to the Council or have been living with a Council tenant
- 46 families with children were found to be intentionally homeless
- 407 families were placed in temporary accommodation representing 39% of the total number of families who presented.
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4. Update on Key Actions

The key actions to address homelessness have previously been reported to the Scrutiny Committee in November 2012. This section of the report provides a brief update these.

- **Homeless Strategy** is being reviewed because the national landscape has changed with increase in homelessness, economic environment and welfare reforms. A steering group is being convened made up of internal and external partners to oversee the development of the Strategy and will be considered by Cabinet in 2014.

- **Prevention of Homelessness** – remains a key priority and will continue to be the focus of our local approach. Guidance has recently been reissued to staff on recording preventions which should increase the numbers recorded and the quality of recording will be monitored as part of casework supervision in future. A prevention action plan has been written which outlines key measures to ensure that preventions are increased. The key action points are shown in appendix 1
- **Supported Accommodation Pathway** This is a major initiative that has been agreed to reduce the use of B&B and temporary accommodation. Funding for this has now been agreed and work on the project is on track to start operating a revised pathway from July 2014 . The pathway will ensure that available supported housing is used as a city wide resource and best match customer need to available resource and we are working closely with housing providers to develop a common assessment and process that will maximise positive outcomes for customers and reduce duplication.
- **Welfare Reforms** As stated earlier in the report there has been a decrease in homelessness locally but there does remain a risk that this will increase for people affected by Welfare Reforms. The most recent change introduced has been the benefit cap in August 2013. Across the region in the region of 300 households have been affected by this and the majority of these households will be families with children. Housing Solutions is offering targeted homeless prevention advice to these households in private rented accommodation as well as working closely with the credit union and money advice agencies to try and mitigate against these families becoming homeless. Council Housing Services are supporting tenants affected by the changes as are other Social Landlords. The majority of customers affected by the 'bedroom tax' in council housing are without children. Due to this there may be an increase in demand for services if vulnerable customers require further support due to housing difficulties. Housing Solutions and Council Housing Services Income management team are working on a joint protocol to enable advice and assistance to be given to those households at risk of eviction due to rent arrears.

5. What does this mean for the people of Sheffield?

- Increasing prevention activity will mean that more people across tenure in Sheffield will be able to remain in their home and gain support to do so.
- The Supported Accommodation Pathway will mean that vulnerable people in Sheffield will be matched to the most appropriate supported accommodation according to their needs.
- Due to the implementation of the pathway resources will be targeted at those who need it most.
- Welfare reforms will impact on the people of Sheffield, giving good early prevention advice and referral routes to money advice services alongside a protocol with council housing services to offer prevention services to those threatened with eviction and work with those across tenure will aim to mitigate against this.

6. Recommendation

The Committee is being asked to consider the report and provide views and comments.

Prevention Action Plan Key Points

Key Action	Timescale
Offer training to all Housing Options staff to improve consistency of casework and Prevention work. Including internal sessions to discuss prevention cases and lessons learnt.	March 2014
Carry out home visits where needed	Sept 2013
Link in with mediation services to try and support people to return home.	March 2014
Triage customers in First Point to establish if a Homeless Case needs opening and if intensive prevention work can be undertaken first ensure prevention work starts at the earliest possible date.	September 2013
Customers who telephone service to speak to Housing Options/Aid worker and not business support to offer advice and assistance on prevention straight away rather than waiting for an appointment.	November 2013
Review interview form and personal plan to include a more focused approach based on prevention.	November 2013

Develop and Implement the Supported Accommodation Pathway	July 2014
Develop PRS service	Sept 2013
All Households to sign up for PRS tenancy to be referred to Shelter Floating Support	Sept 2013
Individual Cabinet Member decision to use PRS to discharge homeless duty	October 2013
Start using PRS to discharge Homeless Duty	October 2013
Create shared PRS tenancies	October 2013
Manage Customer Expectations and make lettings information readily available to customers.	September 2013
Work with partners to improve prevention options	
Create links with Building Successful Families, MAST and social care to ensure families are supported and homelessness prevented.	October 2013
Develop and agree a protocol with Adult Social care	December 2013
Revise and review protocol with CYPF	December 2013

Set up referral routes with money advice and credit union	November
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	2013
Establish an agreed protocol with Council Housing Services for customers at risk of losing their home to offer prevention advice and early intervention	January 2014
Define prevention and relief to all staff. Agree a constant approach to recording prevention activity and give staff individual prevention Targets	October 2013
Quality check prevention work.	November 2013
Celebrate success. Share successful innovative preventions and share good practice	October 2013