

## **Environment and Community Panel 6 July 2016**

### **HOMELESSNESS REVIEW Appendix 1**

#### **Positive issues and changes – what has worked well**

- Good working relationship around accessing Emergency Direct Action Beds with Merchants Terrace (Genesis Housing).
- Development of training houses that accommodate and support vulnerable single homeless people. These are a partnership between The Purfleet Trust, Freebridge Community Housing and the Borough Council. There is also a shared house provided and managed by Broadland Housing.
- Use of Homelessness Prevention Fund to prevent homelessness by e.g. assisting with rent deposits / rent in advance, reducing rent arrears, travel to an area of safety or reconnection to an area where accommodation is available.
- IAA (Insecure Accommodation Award) to help people access housing through the housing register before they lose their home and become homeless.
- Tenancy sustainment work - Preventing eviction from housing association properties through partnership working with Stonham Homestay (tenancy support service), Freebridge Community Housing and the Borough Council.
- Joint work with Police and Immigration Service to reduce rough sleeping and any associated criminal activity to people with no recourse to public funds.
- Review of protocols with partners e.g. Youth Homelessness Protocol, Intentional Families Protocol, Tenancy Sustainment Protocol.
- Commissioning of housing, debt and generalist advice services (July 16).
- Work with domestic abuse agencies such as Leeway Domestic Abuse Service including commissioning a drop in service with the Borough Council Offices and a telephone service covering West Norfolk.
- Commissioning intensive support service with the Purfleet Trust.
- Working in partnership with the Purfleet Trusts Pathways Centre which delivers e.g. training, washing, meals.
- Work with Norfolk County Council Children's Services relating to young people and care leavers e.g. Jointly commissioned Housing Officer Post (Norfolk housing authorities and Norfolk County Council) to reduce the number of young people in care and to develop / facilitate appropriate housing pathways, Care Leavers Transition Panel a partnership to facilitate appropriate housing pathways.
- Daily Multi Agency Risk Assessment Panels – working in partnership to plan for high risk people suffering domestic abuse.
- Early Help Hub - A partnership led by Children's Services making sure that vulnerable families receive that the right support is available as soon as someone needs it.

- 180 scheme – A partnership led by the Police to manage priority and prolific offenders.

### **What hasn't worked so well**

- Local housing allowance used for housing benefit increasingly below the actual cost of private renting which has been increasing – causing affordability issues and difficulty for people accessing or retaining private rented homes.
- Former tenant debt including rent arrears, court costs, damage exclude many households accessing the private rented sector (primarily) but also social housing.
- Increasing income limits for private rented homes mean even working families have issues in accessing them.
- Lettings agent fees and set up costs very high – up to £1850 for a 3 bed roomed house to be paid before a key can be turned in the door.
- Pressure of increasing rents and set up costs restricts the ability of homeless people in accessing the private rented sector.
- Issues in relation to clients with mental health issues i) discharge from mental health institution ii) changing provision/ no specialist residential accommodation iii) securing suitable accommodation including on a temporary basis for those with mental health issues iv) practical arrangements for those with limited capacity in assessment, attaining and retaining accommodation v) increase in clients with mental health issues
- Increased in rough sleeping , an increase from 3 to 5 reported to DCLG in the last financial year.
- Reductions in new social housing for rent due to funding changes – capital grants and rent control in housing associations
- Increasing demand on housing options/homelessness service especially single parents and single people.
- Increasing violence and aggression from clients towards staff.
- Increased use of temporary accommodation including bed and breakfast accommodation outside the West Norfolk area.

### **Who are the excluded people with limited access to housing and associated services?**

- Vulnerable groups including those with complex needs, undiagnosed mental health, domestic abuse as well as those recognised mental health needs.
- Single people under 35 with restricted housing benefit.
- Young/single individuals and those with intense support needs.
- People with high rent arrears, debts with previous landlords and general debt.
- People who are ineligible for housing assistance and who are unaware of their entitlements.
- People who are intentionally homeless – this is increasing.

- People with substance misuse issues.
- Offenders including sex offenders.

### **What are the barriers to finding and retaining accommodation?**

- Demand for rented accommodation exceeds supply – especially 2 bedroomed accommodation in Kings Lynn
- Lack of affordable accommodation, increasingly with housing benefit restrictions or those on a low income.
- Landlords not willing to accept tenants on benefits.
- Need for housing solutions (accommodation and support) in the transition from temporary or supported accommodation to a settled home.
- High up front costs in accessing private rented homes - obtaining deposits, rent in advance, agent's fees.
- Household income and debts.
- Lifestyle – chaotic, drug use, domestic abuse, not having the skills to maintain property such as paying bills, managing money. Taking personal responsibility - including understanding ramifications of not adhering to tenancy rules and agreements.
- Gaps in provision of floating support e.g. no specialist young person service.

### **Future threats:**

- Reduction in funding opportunities for charitable/supporting/advice organisations.
- Reductions in commissioned services and public sector financial constraints.
- Reduction in new rented social housing development – shift in priority to lower cost home ownership potential risk to future of Buy to Let market.
- Local housing allowance rates frozen until 2020 but private rents increasing.
- Housing Association allocation policy reviews for under 35 year olds who may have their housing benefit level reduced.
- Changes to supported accommodation including temporary accommodation subsidies for homeless households.
- Extension of benefit cap which could affect up to 163 households in West Norfolk – rolling out Autumn 2016.
- Potential impact of Universal Credit e.g. processing delays, direct payments to claimants, budgeting, arrears
- Further restrictions for young people and housing costs – especially for under 21 year olds housing costs in Universal Credit
- Not having the time/or staff to help all those that require assistance if demand continues to rise.

- Potential changes to definition of homelessness and local authority duties especially changes to priority needs criteria and changes to duty to intervene at earlier date.

### **Potential Opportunities and Solutions:**

- Development of more shared houses with housing associations.
- Housing advice and options online – including promotion of lower cost home ownership.
- Commission money and debt advice services.
- Continue with a multi-agency approach to share information and work in partnership.
- Work within the Council and with partners to monitor the impact and promote initiatives to mitigate welfare benefit changes where possible.
- Develop a Tenancy Fraud initiative to make best use of social housing for those in need.
- Evaluate planned legislative changes within private rented sector to seek opportunities to promote better quality and management of homes.
- Direct or indirect action to increase new suitable housing supply – including affordable such as starter homes, custom build, private rented accommodation.
- Major housing developments e.g. NORA.
- Expand the temporary accommodation offer including directly provided accommodation including consideration of residential caravans.
- Work with housing and housing support providers on new models of delivery.
- Investigate the business case for provision of private sector leasing schemes and/or social lettings agency.
- Acquiring properties for private rented schemes.
- Consider piloting a dual diagnosis property with partners.
- Keep need for step down and move on accommodation under review.
- Continuing to tackle rough sleeping with partners and monitoring need for outreach or other solutions