

Report to the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Newcastle under Lyme draft Homelessness Strategy



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Introduction

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and comment on the priorities and key actions of the draft Homelessness Strategy 2016 – 2021 prior to going out for consultation in January 2016.

Background

The Council has a statutory duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to publish a Homelessness Strategy every five years. Newcastle's last Homelessness Strategy was published in 2010 and covered the period of 2010 to 2015.

Newcastle has had significant success in preventing homelessness over the past 5 years, however is starting to see an increase in the number of homelessness presentations in the Borough.

The draft Homelessness Strategy provides the framework for the delivery of our services designed to prevent homelessness and support those who become homeless over the next five years.

During 2015, the Council's Housing Strategy Team have undertaken a comprehensive review of the current Homelessness Strategy to determine:

- an up-to-date understanding of homelessness and housing need in Newcastle;
- current and likely future levels of homelessness and homelessness trends;
- services currently provided to prevent homelessness, to secure housing for homeless people and to provide them with support;
- the resources available to the Council, other statutory organisations and voluntary organisations to provide services for homeless people; and
- gaps in provision

Stakeholders and Service Users have been consulted on the findings of the review, Homelessness Forum members have been briefed on the contents of the draft strategy and urged to take part in the consultation process post scrutiny.

All partner agencies, community and voluntary groups that attend the quarterly Homelessness Forum are key to the future success and delivery of the new Homelessness Strategy and Multi Agency Action Plan.

A Proactive Preventative Approach

Preventing and reducing homelessness remains a key priority for Newcastle, the proposed future Strategic Priorities within this draft Strategy are:

Priority One – To prevent homelessness

Priority Two – Support Households into sustainable housing solutions

Priority Three – Work in partnership to address homelessness in Newcastle

These priorities support all the Council's corporate priorities to provide a A Clean, Safe and Sustainable Borough, a Borough of Opportunity, a Healthy Active Community and Becoming a Co-operative Council, delivering high quality community driven services.

Preventing homelessness is far more cost effective than dealing with its consequences, however there is growing evidence that the impact of welfare reform and downturn in the economy is putting increased pressure on housing advice and homelessness prevention services in the borough.

- Customers are facing difficulties in managing their income and sustaining affordable accommodation.
- There has also been a noted increase in cases of people presenting to services with complex needs (those with mental health problems, addictions, negative behaviour, poor life skills).
- Year on year there has been a slight increase in the number of people accessing our rough sleepers service.
- Finally there is recognition that the current accommodation options for young homeless people are not suitable and Newcastle no longer has any specific young person supported accommodation schemes operating in the borough.

These findings are evidenced by people approaching Newcastle housing advice and other homeless prevention services that operate in the Borough.

The new Homelessness Strategy builds on the success of the old strategy and proposes to continue to focus on prevention and early intervention, whilst undertaking targeted work on the identified issues above.

The draft Strategy takes into account good practice and Government Guidance to assist the Councils in achieving the 'Gold Standard' in the delivery of homelessness services. The 'Gold Standard' has been developed by the Government and is based on the Government's Strategy for Homelessness 'Making Every Contact Count' 2012.

Further detail on how we will achieve our priorities are in the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan. The action plan will be monitored by the Homelessness Forum who will be responsible for ensuring the actions and outcomes contained in the action plan are implemented. This forum will advise on each review of the homelessness strategy, consider progress made during the year and to look forward to the priorities in the new year.

There is flexibility within the action plan over the next five years, to allow for change dependent on future homelessness trends.

Question: Scrutiny members are invited to provide any comment on the the draft homelessness strategy

Relevant Portfolio Holder

Councillor Bert Proctor – Planning and Housing

Appendices

Draft Homelessness Strategy 2016 -2021

Draft Homelessness Review 2015