

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Homelessness and housing related support services consultation



Cheshire West
and Chester

Foreword

Having a stable and affordable home is fundamental to someone's quality of life. Whilst this is something that many of us take for granted, there are still too many individuals and families, who, for a variety of reasons, experience housing difficulties.

We work closely with our partners to provide a range of services to support those who find themselves homeless or who need housing related support. Whilst excellent work is being done, homelessness is increasing, with more residents being placed in temporary accommodation. We have an opportunity to review our approach and how we can better link together vital services that support those most vulnerable.

This document sets out our vision for a new, holistic service for homelessness and housing related support services across the Borough and we welcome your views on the options for the future provision of the service.



Councillor Angela Claydon
Cabinet Member for Housing
Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council

Introduction

We currently provide a range of services, which we commission (or 'buy in') from a number of different organisations. These services aim to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place or support them to find secure accommodation if they do. **In essence, services provide:**

- Advice and information to prevent homelessness
- Support and accommodation for young people aged 16 and 17 and for adults aged over 18
- Accommodation for those who would otherwise be sleeping rough.

These services are provided by four different organisations, under different contracts, which are due to end in April 2018. This gives us an opportunity to consult on the options for the future of the service. The Council's aim is to achieve a more co-ordinated, consistent and efficient approach

Our priorities for homelessness and housing related support

In Cheshire West and Chester's Corporate Plan 2016-2020 known as "Helping the Borough to Thrive" we outlined our commitment to provide a range of support services that enable those in housing need to access affordable and sustainable accommodation while ensuring that homelessness is prevented and the root causes of homelessness are tackled. We also outlined our commitment to reduce the need for temporary accommodation (such as bed and breakfast provision) through an increased focus on preventing homelessness.

This would involve better links with local housing providers and the greater joining up of services that support individuals with multiple needs particularly in relation to debt, addiction, mental health and offending.

To deliver these pledges we are working towards three strategic priorities which are to:

- Reduce levels of homelessness and prioritise prevention;
- End the use of bed and breakfast and improve temporary accommodation; and
- Improve access to permanent accommodation and support

Current provision

The current homelessness and housing related support services are made up of the following:

- **Housing related floating support** to prevent homelessness and assist in resettlement. This is a visiting support service, which aims to prevent a person losing their home in the first instance and helping people to resettle when moving on to independent living. The current service provider also operates hubs in key locations, which enable people to access advice and information.
- **Housing related support for people aged 16-25 years.** This is a supported housing service, which provides a flexible approach to delivering support to younger people. Support can be deployed to any property enabling preventative work to take place, such as mediation with family members, as well as supporting a tenancy.
- **Housing related support for those over 25 years** is a supported housing service which provides a flexible approach to delivering support to adults over 25 years. Support can be delivered to any property and also move with someone as they progress to independent living
- **Homelessness service for single people and couples.** This service is for those who are homeless and require a place to stay, including people who would otherwise be sleeping rough. The service has a proactive approach to outreach and works with other agencies, sharing intelligence to locate individuals.

PROPOSED MODEL

Our vision for a new service

Our view is that the existence of four separate contracts causes unnecessary confusion and fragmentation. It would be a simpler service to access and to understand if it was one contract to provide support to the homeless or those at risk of being homeless.

By creating a holistic new service under one contract we want to create a single service, with an increased focus on prevention. This will mean a seamless approach for our service users and efficiencies in shared resources which would enable the current levels of service delivery and support to continue but still deliver some financial savings for the local taxpayer.

The proposed new single service would incorporate the following:

- Increased focus on homelessness prevention
- Greater integration with West Cheshire Homes (the Council's Housing Team)
- Increased range of smaller-sized housing units for those requiring accommodation
- Specified and increased Temporary Accommodation provision
- More specialist services for 16 and 17 year olds
- Increased access to emergency beds for people who would otherwise sleep rough

The other benefits of the new service are identified as:

- a holistic and seamless service joining up accommodation and support, including daytime activities, to prevent or alleviate homelessness and create more stable and sustainable lifestyles;
- a greater range of accommodation located across the borough catering for the varying needs of individuals in their local areas;
- the opportunity to design a high performing service, based on successful outcomes;
- a service that is able to respond to changes in legislation and welfare reform.

This new approach would include some changes to the current provision. Specifically these are:

✓ Proposed change 1 - smaller units of supported accommodation

Smaller units of supported accommodation at various locations across Cheshire West and Chester. Currently the main hub for homelessness services has been in Chester (based at Richmond Court, Boughton), however, it is recognised from previous consultation that a number of smaller properties would be preferable for service users and local communities. It is also recognised that there needs to be greater variety of services in a number of areas that have a high level of homelessness. Evidence suggests that people want to remain in their locality where possible.

✓ Proposed change 2 – direct access at separate locations

Direct Access emergency bed for rough sleepers to be more flexible and at more locations, including Chester and Northwich. This service is currently only available in Chester but there is an increasing demand for provision in Northwich. We want to increase the total provision available from 10 beds to 18 beds every day of the year.

✓ Proposed change 3 – provision of daytime activities

We wish to provide daytime services for homeless people, especially those who have no permanent accommodation. This enables services to engage with some of the "harder to reach" individuals through working in a less formal approach. Currently the Council does not commission any daytime activities, which often leaves homeless individuals without meaningful activities or support during the daytime.

✓ Proposed change 4 - dedicated service for 16 and 17 year olds

The current service provides supported accommodation for young people aged 16 – 25 years. A 16 or 17 year old that is homeless is classed as 'A Child in Need'. The council has a statutory responsibility to provide a suitable place for them to live, should they become homeless. This responsibility ends when a young person reaches the age of 18 years.

The Council is proposing that the new service will have three key elements:

Preventative services - this will include mediation, advice and information services to enable people to seek assistance at the earliest possible stage in order to prevent homelessness.

Intervention services - this will provide support to people in their home, whether this be social housing, privately rented or supported accommodation. The aim is to enable people to sustain their tenancy and live independently thus reducing the overall level of homelessness across the Borough. "Floating Support" is a service that can be delivered to anyone in their home, this service will provide guidance and support with tasks that may otherwise put a person's tenancy at risk. The interventions will also include on-going accommodation and direct support to many of our most vulnerable residents with complex and diverse needs – known as "Complex Needs bed-based service"

Emergency accommodation - this is for people with nowhere else to go. This is likely to be accommodation provided via the Council's West Cheshire Homes team and includes the provision of an emergency bed in a homeless hostel or temporary accommodation.

The new provision will include an "Outreach" service; this approach will identify and engage with people who are sleeping rough to bring them into supported accommodation. When a person is taken into an emergency bed this is known as "Direct Access", as they don't need to go via a waiting list.

Homelessness pathway



We would like to hear your views on this approach of a single, holistic service and in particular the suggestion of smaller-sized accommodation provision in locations across the Borough. Properties would need to be in Chester and Northwich especially (as this is where the local homelessness population exists), and provide space for 10-15 people in each.

There is a requirement for this service to provide an emergency offer for people found sleeping rough in the Borough, this service is known as Direct Access or is sometimes referred to as a 'safe seat'. This is to be available in both Chester and Northwich and will support up to eight people in two locations (sixteen in total).

This would usually be based within the accommodation service so staff are available to provide support and assistance 24/7.

The cost of the service

The range of homelessness and housing related support services provided across the Borough currently costs the Council £2.6 million every year. In the recent consultation on our Corporate Plan and our four year budget for 2016-2020, (known as "Let's Talk"), it was proposed to reduce our annual spend by £500,000 to £2.1 million through the efficiencies, such as reduced management overheads by moving to a single contract.

We still believe that there will be financial savings if we move from four separate contracts to one contract, but we also want to invest in the new daytime activities and increase the provision of Direct Access emergency accommodation, which will come at an additional cost. Therefore, the Council is now proposing a saving of £250,000 rather than £500,000 – but we would like to hear your views on this.

What are the alternative options?

The proposal detailed in this consultation is one option however there are two others:

1. The Council could continue to commission services under four separate contracts. However, this may mean that the efficiencies would not be achieved. It may also mean we lose the opportunity to modernise the service into one that is more holistic, coordinated and flexible.
2. We could extend the current services for a further two years, as accommodated for in the current contracts. However, as with the above option, this may not deliver efficiencies or the opportunity to modernise the service.

Please tell us your views

We want to know what you think about our proposals and ambitions for a holistic service. Our consultation runs from **15 December 2016 to 7 March 2017**.

You can share your views by:

- Completing our online questionnaire at www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/hrsconsultation
- Complete a printed copy of the questionnaire and sending it to: The Research Team, Cheshire West and Chester Council, 4 Civic Way, Ellesmere Port, CH65 0BE.
- Complete our 'easy read' version of the questionnaire, which is available online or in hardcopy on request
- Emailing your views to, commissioningandcontracts@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

We will also be attending meetings with local partners and services users throughout the consultation period to listen to their views first hand. A list of stakeholder events is attached.

The results of this consultation will be considered by the Council's Cabinet before a decision on the future of the service is taken. It is envisaged that this will be around May 2017. If a procurement is then commenced the Council is committed to ensuring that once the process is complete, a further extensive period of public engagement on the new services including potential service locations, takes place. Your views are also sought on this engagement.

Further information

Council information is also available in audio, braille, large print or other formats. If you would like a copy in a different format, in another language or require a British sign language (BSL) interpreter:

- Email: equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
- Telephone: **0300 123 8123**
- Textphone: **18001 01606 867670**

All the information you provide will be in the strictest confidence. If there are any questions you do not wish to answer, please feel free to leave them blank.

Homelessness and housing related support consultation

Preferred approach to providing homelessness and housing related support services

Q1a. **Generally speaking, do you agree or disagree with our vision to create a holistic service under one contract?** (Please tick one box only)

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Q1b. **Do you have any comments on our vision to create a holistic service under one contract?**

If you disagree with combining services under a single contract, please comment on what alternative approaches you would prefer.

Q2a. **Generally speaking, do you agree or disagree with 'proposed change 1' - to have smaller sized units of supported accommodation at various locations?** (Please tick one box only)

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Q2b. **Do you have any comments on this proposed change?**

Q3a. Generally speaking, do you agree or disagree with 'proposed change 2' - Direct Access at separate locations? (Please tick one box only)

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Q3b. Do you have any comments on this proposed change?

Q4a. Generally speaking, do you agree or disagree with 'proposed change 3' – provision of daytime activities? (Please tick one box only)

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Q4b. Do you have any comments on this proposed change?

Q5a. Generally speaking, do you agree or disagree with 'proposed change 4' - Dedicated service for 16 and 17 year olds? (Please tick one box only)

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Q5b. Do you have any comments on this proposed change?

Q6. If you are aware of any potential property in the Chester or Northwich areas that could be used for Homelessness Services, or if you own property and would like to work with Cheshire West and Chester Council to provide accommodation for homeless people we would like to hear from you at: commissioningandcontracts@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk.

Or please provide details in the box below.

Costs of homelessness and housing related support services

Homelessness and housing related support currently costs the Council £2.6 million every year. Due to budget pressures, the Council recently proposed to reduce annual spending on this by £500,000 and consulted widely on this in a recent consultation about the Council's budget (called 'Let's Talk'). However, the Council would like to invest in new daytime services and increase the number of emergency beds. Therefore, the Council is proposing to reduce spending on these services by £250,000, rather than £500,000 per year. The Council is still anticipating efficiencies if the separate contracts are brought together.

Q7. **Do you have any comments about the Council's proposal to reduce spending on these services by £250,000, rather than £500,000, per year?** (Please see the paragraph above for more information)

Q8. **If the Council is not able to afford all elements of the proposed service, which aspects are the most important to provide?** Please rank the following services in order of priority, by giving the service you feel is most important a '1', the service you feel is second a '2' and the service you feel is the third most important a '3'.
(Please place 1, 2 and 3 in the boxes, in order of priority)

More smaller units rather than larger units of accommodation

Additional emergency bed provision (from 10 to 18 beds)

Daytime services

Further engagement

As set out in the engagement document, the Council is proposing to commission (buy-in) a new homelessness and housing related support service. As these services are developed, we would like to undertake further engagement, particularly about the location of future services.

Q9. Do you think the Council should...? (Please tick one box only)

Undertake a Borough-wide public engagement on the details of the new service

Engage specifically with those communities likely to be affected

Both

Q10. Have you, or someone close to you, used any of the following services in the last 2 years? (Please tick all that apply)

Chester Aid to the Homeless – day centre

Chester Aid to the Homeless - supported accommodation

FENW – safe seat

FENW – supported accommodation

Forum Housing – supported accommodation

P3 - Floating support service

Stonham Homegroup – supported accommodation

West Cheshire Homes (Council's housing team)

Other, please state

Q11. Are you responding as...? (Please tick all that apply)

A local resident

A local business

An employee of Cheshire West and Chester Council

An elected member of Cheshire West and Chester Council

An elected town or parish Councillor in Cheshire West and Chester

A member of a voluntary or community organisation

An organisation that provides homelessness/housing support

Other, please state

Q12. **If you are responding on behalf of a group, organisation or club please state the name and postcode in the box below.** (You do not need to complete the rest of the About You section)

Q13. **Please tell us your postcode.** (This is to help us understand where responses are coming from across the Borough and not to identify individuals)

Q14. **Are you...?**

Male

Female

Q15. **Is this the gender that you were born into?**

Yes

No

Q16. **Please tell us which age group you belong.**

Under 16

Please provide signature of parent/guardian

16-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65-74

75 and over

Q17. **Do you have a long-term illness, health issue or disability that limits your daily activities or the work you can do?**

Yes

No

Q18. **If you answered 'Yes' please indicate which of the following applies to you...**

Physical impairment that causes mobility issues

Visual Impairment

Mental Health issue

Mental Health issue

Hearing impairment

Learning disability or difficulty

Long standing issue or health condition

Other

Q19. What is your ethnic group?

White:

English

Irish

Any other white background

Asian or Asian British:

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Chinese

Any other Asian background

Other ethnic group:

Arab

Other ethnic group

Black or Black British:

Caribbean

African

Any other black background

Mixed:

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian

Any other mixed background

Travelling Community:

Gypsy/Roma

Traveller of Irish descent

Other member of the travelling community

Q20. Which of these best describes your religious belief/faith?

Buddhist Christian Hindu Jewish Muslim

Sikh None Prefer not to say Other

Q21. Which of these best describes your sexual orientation?

Heterosexual/straight Bisexual Gay/Lesbian Prefer not to say Other

Thank you very much for taking part in this survey. Please return this form to:
The Research Team, Cheshire West and Chester Council, 4 Civic Way, Ellesmere Port, CH65 0BE.

The closing date for this consultation is Tuesday, 7 March 2017.

Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services.

Council information is also available in Audio, Braille, Large Print or other formats.
If you would like a copy in a different format, in another language or require a BSL interpreter, please email us at: equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 123 8 123 **Textphone:** 18001 01606 275757

Email: equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Web: www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk