

REPORT TO: HOUSING, DUNDEE CONTRACT SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE - 6 DECEMBER 2010

REPORT ON: HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY PROGRESS UPDATE REPORT 2009/10

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO.: 647-2010

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. To inform Committee of the progress of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan and to outline the objectives achieved in order to prevent homelessness in the City of Dundee. A copy of the Action Plan has been passed to each of the Group Leaders, the Lord Provost and the Depute Lord Provost.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee:

- 2.1. Note the contents of this progress report.
- 2.2. Remit the Director of Housing to provide further progress reports on an annual basis to ensure progress is being achieved in the objectives which have been outlined.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

4. MAIN TEXT

- 4.1. Dundee City Council's Homelessness Strategy (2008-2012) presents a comprehensive assessment of the principal issues affecting homeless people in the City.
- 4.2. This Strategy sets out how Dundee City Council and its partners, both in the statutory and voluntary sectors, will work together to prevent homelessness and the services which can be provided if homelessness does occur.
- 4.3. The Homeless Strategy Action Plan outlines the objectives which have been set in Dundee City Council's Homeless Strategy and how they will be achieved.
- 4.4. While the context of the Homeless Strategy Action Plan is from a Dundee perspective to the City's problems with homelessness, it nonetheless works in conjunction with the 4 key objectives that were stated in the Scottish Government's document '*Firm Foundations: The Future of Housing in Scotland - A Discussion Document*' which are:

- An increased supply of housing across all tenures, all of which is delivered on the basis of higher environmental and design.
- More choice of housing than those on low income can afford.
- Housing developments that contribute to the creation of sustainable mix.
- Social housing that provides better value for public expenditure.

4.5. Following on from the Needs Assessment research, Dundee adopted 11 Strategic Objectives which are detailed in the Action Plan.

These objectives were clustered into five themes:

Prevention

This is the key aim of this strategy: to prevent homelessness occurring and reduce homeless presentations.

Actions across the tenures to avoid the loss of existing accommodation by the provision of;

- intensive support
- mediation
- targeting housing management services

along with effective joint working is the focus on achieving these improvements.

Discharge protocols are now in place and a planned exit route from institutions will assist clients to be routed through mainstream services.

Joint working with partner agencies is moving towards shared outcomes and pathways for vulnerable clients.

This approach recognises the growing overlap between those who present as homeless and clients of other services such as Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) and Health and Homeless Outreach Team (HHOT), criminal justice service and specialist substance misuse.

Crisis Response

The key priority in relation to those households who do present as homeless is to improve the assessment of their needs so that this encompasses all of their needs, not simply housing. This is in recognition of the growing evidence that homelessness is often a 'symptom' of much more complex and wide ranging needs; the solution to these needs therefore must address more than just a need for accommodation.

Achieving and Maintaining Permanent Housing Solutions

Assessment of needs for longer term residents in temporary accommodation has now been carried out. Placements into permanent supported housing have now been agreed for many of the long term hostel dwellers.

There is also recognition of the importance of ensuring homeless households have access to educational, recreational, social and employment opportunities which are appropriate to their needs. The emphasis is to assist homeless households to access mainstream services, which meet their particular needs.

Planning Information - Support

Effective monitoring systems are being developed to measure the success of activities. In addition, information sharing and joint working have become a key aspect between various agencies and departments.

Abolition of Priority Need Test

The test of priority need has now been abolished from April 2010. This has allowed staff resources to be focused on the various assessment issues to ensure sustainable outcomes for clients.

This final objective is to ensure that Dundee delivers all the new obligations set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003 by 2012.

- 4.6. The Homelessness Strategy Action Plan highlights that there is a clear shared understanding between Dundee City Council and its partners of the issues of homelessness and the complex needs of homeless people.

4.7. **Key Achievements**

Some of the key achievements of the Homeless Strategy Action Plan for April 2009, to March 2010, were as undernoted:

Housing Options Approach

- The restructure of the Homeless Services Unit has established a Prevention of Homelessness Team. At first contact all applicants are interviewed by this team to consider their housing options. This approach enables a variety of choices; with homelessness being the last resort.

The trend in Homelessness Presentations is now beginning to show a decrease.

2009-10	2280
2008-09	2576
2007-08	2398

Homeless Assessment Team

- The restructure has also allowed the Homeless Assessment Team to focus on cases which are complex. They no longer have the remit to source temporary accommodation and can focus on a "case management" approach. Better contact and liaison with clients allows more appropriate referrals to be made to specialist agencies who work with the team not only to deal with the homeless issue; but to tackle the problems which led to homelessness occurring.

Case Management

- This case management approach by the Homeless Assessment Team also lead to a reduction in the time to assess homeless cases. Where clients are 'Threatened with Homelessness' a preventative approach is also taken to enable clients to either remain in their current accommodation or to move directly to appropriate alternative accommodation without the need to become homeless.

Abolition of Priority Need - Interim Target

- Dundee has achieved the interim target as detailed in the Ministerial Statement 2005. The local Policy which was introduced in April 2009 has reduced the number of clients who are assessed as non priority.

Supervised Family Accommodation

- A new family unit opened in February 2010 at Reid Square. This is supervised accommodation for 10 families in 8 x 3-apt. and 2 x 4-apt. flats. There is 24 hours supervision on the premises at all times.

Care Leavers Policy

- The Care Leavers Policy ensures a co-ordinated response to the needs of young people who are in the 'looked after system'. No young person now has to register as homeless in order to access accommodation on leaving care.

This joint policy between Housing and Social Work enables an effective assessment and planning process for these young people to be processed by either Dundee City Council or our partners in the Registered Social Landlord Sector.

4.8. Main Challenges

- Increasing demands being put on homeless service. Many of the clients have challenging behaviour, chaotic lifestyles and complex needs. Finding the most sustainable solution can be difficult.

The Supporting Strategy and the Homeless Strategy require to address this issue as, often a mainstream tenancy is not an appropriate solution.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management.

There are no major issues.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1. The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Director of Finance, Assistant Chief Executive and all other Chief Officers have been consulted in the preparation of this report. No concerns were expressed.

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Homeless Strategy 2008-12.
- Homeless Strategy 2008-12 Action Plan.
- Committee Report 90-2009 - Restructure of Homeless Services Unit.
- Committee Report 276-2009 - Care Leavers Policy.
- Committee Report 24-2010 - Abolition of Priority Needs Test - Approach to 2010.

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