

APPENDIX B

Consultation Report – Haringey’s Homelessness Strategy 2012-14

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides details of the consultation process that was carried out in relation to Haringey’s Draft Homelessness Strategy 2012-2014 during a 3 month period between 1 August 2011 and 31 October 2011.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Homelessness Strategy is to set out the Council’s plan for tackling and preventing homelessness, in partnership with other organisations, over the next three years. It includes 5 key priorities which were developed on the basis of the findings of the review of housing needs and the discussions at the multi agency Homelessness Strategy Steering Group.
- 1.3 The 5 priorities in the Draft Homelessness Strategy were as follows:
 1. Preventing homelessness and sustaining tenancies
 2. Working in partnership
 3. Mitigating the negative impacts of the welfare reforms
 4. Increasing the availability of affordable housing
 5. Improving the life chances of homeless people
- 1.4 The Strategy Consultation Plan was developed with the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group which commented on and contributed to the consultation process. The Integrated Housing Board approved the Strategy Consultation Plan.
- 1.5 Although the activities that took place during the consultation period focused on seeking people’s views on the draft priorities contained within the Homelessness Strategy, feedback was encouraged on all aspects of the Strategy.

2. Who we consulted and how

- 2.1 The public consultation was posted on Haringey’s website, where the Draft Homelessness Strategy and contact details for consultation responses were provided. Two responses were received from community organisations.
- 2.2 HAVCO members and more than 200 colleagues across Housing, Social Care, Health, Education, Benefits and Voluntary and Community sectors (including Councillors), were contacted directly by email to invite them to the half day consultation event and/or to submit their views and comments.

- 2.3 More than 50 delegates attended a half day consultation event, which was held on 13 October 2011. Delegates heard about the progress of the last strategy from the Cabinet Member for Housing. Presentations by the 3 speakers (the Deputy Director for Community Housing Services, a Commissioning Manager in Adult Services, and a Service Manager for Harts for Families) highlighted the key achievements of the last Homelessness Strategy, the challenges that Haringey faced in tackling and preventing homelessness in the future, and how a partnership approach can enable better outcomes for service users. Four focus groups then considered the draft priorities and were asked to indicate which priorities they felt were most important and what resources they would assign to each. We also asked how these priorities can be delivered.
- 2.4 Three consultation sessions were held with a variety of stakeholders, including services users. Discussions were designed to assist our understanding of service users' experiences, to ensure nothing had been left out of the Homelessness Strategy and to capture people's views on the priorities set out in the Strategy. Feedback was also encouraged after the event by contacting the lead officer directly or by using the housing strategy email.
- 2.5 The public consultation was publicised to private rented sector landlords at the Haringey's Landlords forum in September 2011.

3 Feedback

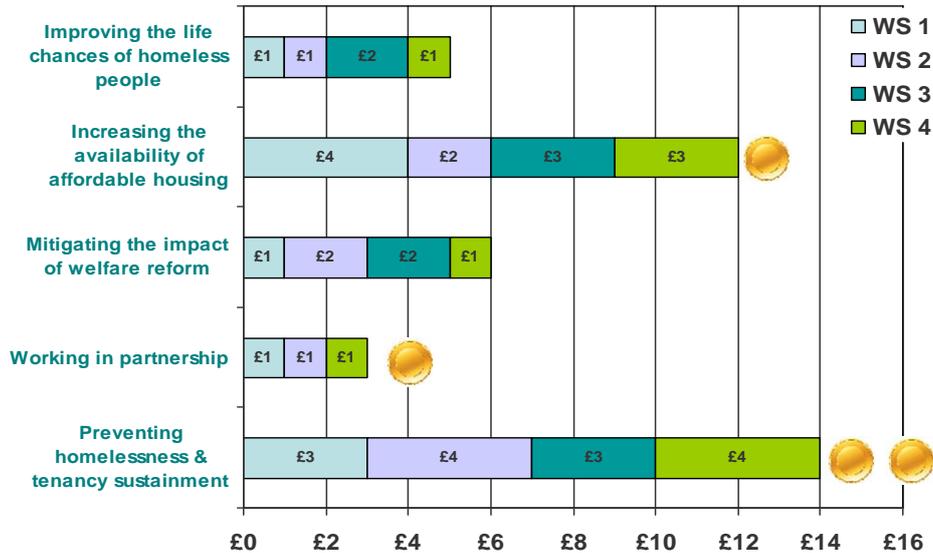
- 3.1 There was overwhelming support for the priorities contained within the Draft Homelessness Strategy. Useful suggestions were made in relation to the wording of the Strategy and the actions that would help Haringey to achieve its priorities.
- 3.2 Service users told us that they wanted to raise awareness of homelessness, raise funds and help with the co-ordination of events and exhibitions. They also told us that they would prefer to access services from one place.

4 Workshops to discuss the priorities

- 4.1 The consultation event included a series of workshops in which groups were asked to look at the priorities and actions contained within the Draft Homelessness Strategy. Each group was provided with 5 model houses (representing the 5 priorities), 10 Haringey pounds and one bonus coin. The groups were asked to consider the draft priorities contained within the Strategy and to use their bonus coin to reflect which priorities was the most important and to use the currency to show how they would resource these. The groups were asked to provide feedback on the reasons for their decisions.
- 4.2 The results of the group discussions and other consultation responses are set out on the next page.

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Workshop feedback



4.3 The focus groups acknowledged the importance of the partnership approach in preventing homelessness, but had differing views on how this should be reflected in the Homelessness Strategy. The consensus was that successful partnership underpinned all of the other priorities. Everyone agreed that this did not need to be resource intensive; instead, processes just needed to be improved. Preventing homelessness through tenancy sustainment and early intervention was seen as the highest priority. The interdependency of the priorities was also highlighted, for example preventing homelessness through the provision of more affordable homes would lead to improved life chances.

4.4 Discussions and other consultation responses highlighted the following issues and suggested actions in relation to the five priorities:

(1) Preventing homelessness and sustaining tenancies

- Unanimous support for the priority with agreement that, without sustainment, early intervention and prevention, other priorities cannot be achieved.
- It was suggested that a piece of work be undertaken to demonstrate the cost effectiveness of homelessness prevention.
- Supporting landlords to prevent homelessness was suggested through the creation of a landlord support service.
- A holistic approach was seen as essential in preventing homelessness for all groups, not just young people, along with examining the flow of support for tenants.
- There was agreement that mediation was considered as an effective tool to prevent homelessness.

- Monitoring of any fixed term tenancies brought in by housing reform, together with the sharing of tenant/occupant information, was considered essential to ensure that tenancies are sustained.
- There was widespread concern about the impacts of the welfare reforms and some aspects of the Localism Bill (now Localism Act 2011) described within the Strategy. Workshop delegates were committed, however, to finding ways of mitigating the negative impacts of these reforms.
- It was suggested that the Homelessness Strategy should seek to help households that were previously unable to access private sector accommodation to pursue this option in the future.
- More specific examples of the options available was requested
- It is important that the Council publicises the Housing Advice & Options Service so that residents understand what help (particularly Options) is available.
- Clear information is needed about how to contact Housing Advice & Options (including dedicated email and phone lines) would provide services users with easier access to the service.
- Up to date clear information was essential, particularly in relation to schemes on offer and the availability of social housing.
- Joined up publicity which encourages tenants to pay their rent on time and flags up the support and early intervention available.
- Consider the links between private rented sector evictions and tenants' complaints about disrepair.
- Monitoring the success of rent level negotiations for private rented sector accommodation.
- More of an emphasis on single person vulnerable households and stronger links with rough sleeping and move on from supported housing was also requested.
- Consider hidden homelessness.

(2) Working in partnership

- Everyone must take responsibility for making partnership work.
- Joint accountability and measurable outcomes are needed to monitor the effectiveness of partnerships.
- A clear mechanism or channels which allow challenge if things are not working should continue and be developed further.

- It was suggested that more information on how partnership working (including joint funding applications) could be implemented which would strengthen this accepted and supported approach in preventing homelessness.
- It was recognised that effective partnership working would not only achieve better outcomes for service users but could also realize savings.
- Working in partnership with schools was seen as way to manage expectations, enlist personal responsibilities and accountability and break the cycle of poor life chances, poverty and homelessness and minimise pupil mobility.
- Working together in relation to families with no recourse to public funds.
- Support for smaller voluntary sector services to help them make the agreed/expected contribution.

(3) Mitigating the negative impacts of the welfare reforms

- Strengthen the approach to houses in multiple occupation to ensure standards and supply for single people affected by the changes to the single room rate.
- Work with other local authorities to find reasonable solutions.
- Ensure the public knows about the changes and what help is available.
- Work with DWP and the Benefits Service to identify those affected and target advice and services.
- Provide support to people (including form filling) and making routes to services clearer.

(4) Increasing the availability of affordable housing

- Consideration of supporting the development of co-operatives by identifying suitable empty properties was requested.
- Clear information about who to complain to about disrepair in temporary accommodation was considered an ongoing issue that needed attention.
- A proactive approach to under occupiers.
- Better use of existing stock and promotion of new builds
- Work closely with private sector landlords and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to improve supply to RSLs and the local authority.
- Addressing illegal conversions to ensure better quality accommodation.
- Include more information about affordable homes development in the borough which clearly shows east and west development.

(5) Improving the life chances of homeless people

- It was felt that this priority would also result from the successful implementation of the other four priorities.
- Discussion included the need for earlier intervention.
- It was suggested that a mini/pre MARAC is introduced for earlier intervention for people who have experienced or are at risk of domestic violence.

5 The Council's response

- 5.1 The consultation feedback has been used to inform the development of the Homelessness Strategy Delivery Plan. The final version of the Homelessness Strategy 2012-14 will be made available on the Council's website.

6 What happens next?

- 6.1 The Homelessness Strategy will be considered by Cabinet on 7 February 2012 and, when approved, it will be monitored by a new multi agency Homelessness Forum.