

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

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| TO: | POLICY COMMITTEE | | |
| DATE: | 17 JULY 2017 | AGENDA ITEM: | 12 |
| TITLE: | PROPOSED SAVING TO HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT SERVICES: RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION AND PROPOSALS TO RECONFIGURE SERVICES | | |
| LEAD COUNCILLOR: | COUNCILLOR JOHN ENNIS | PORTFOLIO: | HOUSING |
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council currently commissions a range of homelessness support services - these include Homelessness Pathway accommodation to meet the needs of vulnerable single homeless residents and to support the reduction of rough sleeping numbers in the borough; an outreach service for rough sleeping in Reading and a floating support service to prevent homelessness. These are referred to collectively as 'homelessness support services' and are delivered through contracts to the value of £1.49m.
- 1.2 In light of Reading Borough Council's (RBC) current financial situation and as part of the identification of revenue savings Council-wide, the budget for the procurement of homelessness support services was reviewed and the option of remodelling and commissioning these services within a reduced budget has been considered. A consultation commenced in February this year on a new service model reflecting delivering a reduction in budget of £245,000 which is approximately 17% of total currently commissioned homelessness support service contract values.
- 1.3 The consultation proposed, in line with national best practice, a shift in focus and funding towards a more flexible model that provides immediate and emergency responses to those who are homeless or rough sleeping; a more tailored and personalised support service for single homeless people; a stronger multi-agency approach to meeting complex needs and services that pre-empt and prevent homelessness. This reconfiguration will mean a reduction in the overall number of commissioned supported accommodation bed spaces. Currently there are 217 and this is likely to reduce by approximately 40 bed spaces. The new model will feature:
- A hub that brings together services for those who are homeless or rough sleeping, including emergency assessment beds, 24/7 supported hostel accommodation and support services.
 - An outreach team focussed on supporting rough sleepers into accommodation and reconnecting those without a local connection to their area of origin.
 - A 'No Second Night Out' (NSNO) model to ensure a rapid response for anyone who is sleeping rough for the first time to prevent them sleeping out for a second night.
 - Emergency bed spaces for rough sleepers, regardless of their immigration or local connection status, during severe weather.

- Shared supported accommodation for those presently unable to manage independent living and wrap-around support to ensure that if an individual's needs increase moving them is a last resort.
- Some accommodation under 'Housing First' principles where an unconditional offer of independent housing is made alongside intensive support for people with multiple and complex needs where shared supported housing offers have been unsuccessful.
- Cross-tenure floating support service to help people sustain their tenancy.
- No First Night Out (NFNO) preventative approach with those at risk of rough sleeping.

1.4 The report summarises the key findings from the consultation with further detail appended. Following consultation, it is proposed that homelessness support services are reconfigured and that a budget saving of £245,000 is made, reducing the total budget for these services from £1.49m to £1.25m. A full competitive tender exercise will be undertaken with the implementation of new contracts anticipated from 1 September 2018.

1.5 **Appendix 1 - Equality Impact Assessment for options outlined in this report**
Appendix 2 - Consultation Summary Report

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

2.1 That Policy Committee note the summary of the consultation responses.

2.2 That Policy Committee agree to the proposal to reconfigure homelessness support services in Reading based on the principles as set out in Section 4(b) of this report, thus delivering an overall saving of £245,000 per annum.

2.3 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing, the Head of Finance and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be delegated to award the contracts for the provision of an outreach service for rough sleeping in Reading; supported accommodation to meet the needs of vulnerable single homeless residents and to support the reduction of rough sleeping numbers in the borough and a floating support service to prevent homelessness in lots to be determined; each for a period of three years, with the option to extend up to a maximum of three years, to the successful tenderers in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

2.4 That the Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing, be authorised to extend interim contracts for all Homelessness Pathway Supported Living Non-Registered Services for a period of five months from 1 April until up to 31 August 2018, with current providers who are Bournemouth Churches Housing Association, Launchpad Reading, Riverside and The Salvation Army.

2.5 That the Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing, be authorised to enter into an interim contract for the Outreach Service for Rough Sleeping for a period of five months from 1 April until up to 31 August 2018 with the current provider, St. Mungo's.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Council is committed to reducing homelessness and rough sleeping numbers in Reading as far as possible. The three-stage Homelessness Pathway, for supporting homeless single people through supported accommodation and into independent accommodation, was approved by Cabinet on 28 November 2011 (Minute 110 refers). The Homelessness Pathway approach has been successful in increasing supported accommodation available and in integrating and coordinating services to provide improved outcomes for homeless people whilst achieving efficiency savings.
- 3.2 A review of commissioned services and national/local best practice models has been recently undertaken to ensure that supported accommodation, outreach services for rough sleepers and floating support services meet the needs of single homeless individuals in the most effective and cost efficient way.
- 3.3 At the meeting of Policy Committee on 5 December 2016 it was outlined that further savings needed to be identified to cover the then estimated £18.4m budget gap over the next three years for 2017-20. Continued reduction in Government revenue support grant to Local Authorities coupled with rising demand has placed severe pressure on the Council's budgets. This presents a very significant challenge to the Authority and means that it is facing unpalatable decisions and unprecedented cuts to services. As part of a package of savings across Council departments, savings were identified from homelessness support services of £245,000, approximately 17% of total contract values, provided such saving was consistent with the Council's legal duties.

National Policy Context

- 3.4 Homeless Link's recently published *annual review of support for single homeless people in England 2016* outlines some national issues and trends. The annual review is from a survey of 394 supported accommodation projects across England. Its findings are reflected in the consultation feedback and are consistent with the recommended future provisions of homelessness support services in Reading.
- ***Reduced funding for services supporting and housing single homeless individuals***
2015/16 saw 47% of accommodation projects experience a decrease in funding. The average decrease was 19% with just 8% seeing their funding increase.
 - ***Difficulty moving clients on from supported accommodation***
A third of people were ready to move on from supported accommodation but had not yet moved and, of this group, 27% had been waiting for six months or longer. A third of projects reported that the main barrier to moving individuals on is a lack of affordable housing. Other reasons included narrowed move on options/assistance due to previous behaviours; being on housing benefit and landlords not accepting this; lack of housing available at the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate and lack of accommodation available at the LHA shared accommodation rate.
 - ***Reduction in the size and capacity of supported accommodation projects***
Trends show that accommodation projects have been decreasing in size in recognition that smaller projects can offer a more personalised approach with more than half of projects having 20 bed spaces or fewer.
 - ***Innovation and changes to homelessness services***
39% of accommodation projects reviewed are using or exploring Housing First; 81% were using or exploring homelessness prevention services; 87% were using or

exploring floating support and 70% were using or exploring shared accommodation schemes.

4. THE PROPOSAL

(a) Current Position

4.1 The Council currently commissions homelessness support services to a total value of £1,489,149. Their current remit and contract values are as follows:

- **Homelessness Pathway accommodation with support**

Comprising 217 bed spaces for individuals and couples who are homeless, made up of 73 Stage 1 bed spaces; 7 Stage 1A bed spaces; 71 Stage 2 bed spaces; 61 Stage 3 bed spaces and 5 complex and multiple needs bed spaces. At Stage 1, individuals are provided with intensive support within a 24-hour staffed environment and at Stages 2 and 3 individuals are supported with the development of basic independent living skills to move on from the Pathway.

Contract value: £901,000

- **Rough sleeper outreach services**

Consistently work with up to 50 found and known rough sleepers by supporting them to access supported accommodation or reconnect to their area of origin.

Contract value: £192,000

- **Cross-tenure floating support**

Deliver 480+ support hours per week to support individuals, couples and families with tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention.

Contract value: £396,000

4.2 A review of homelessness support services has been undertaken and a full competitive tender exercise will follow with the proposal that new contracts are implemented from 1 September 2018. Homelessness support services will be reconfigured under proposed new principles to offer a more flexible model.

(b) Options Proposed

4.3 A public consultation has been undertaken on a proposed budget reduction from £1.49m to £1.25m and a new service model for homelessness support services underpinned by the following key principles:

4.4 Principle 1

Immediate and emergency responses to those who are homeless or rough sleeping

Key features of this would be a:

- A hub that centralises accommodation and support services available to those who are homeless or rough sleeping, including emergency assessment beds and hostel accommodation for those that need 24/7 on-site staffing support.
- Rough sleeper outreach team focussed on supporting rough sleepers into accommodation and reconnecting those without a local connection to their area of origin.
- No Second Night Out (NSNO) model to ensure that anyone who is sleeping rough for the first time receives a rapid response offer to prevent them sleeping out for a second night.
- Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) to provide emergency bed spaces for rough sleepers, regardless of their immigration or local connection status, during short periods of high risk weather.

4.5 Principle 2

Housing and support offers to address the differing needs of single homeless people

Key features of this would be:

- Shared supported accommodation that provides a high level of support where staff are not on site but available when required 24/7, as well as shared accommodation for people who do not require a high level of support, but are presently unable to manage independent living.
- Some accommodation under Housing First principles where an unconditional offer of stable, independent housing is made alongside intensive support for people with multiple and complex needs where more conventional supported accommodation offers have been unsuccessful.
- A Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) approach across services for complex individuals that have ineffective contact with statutory and support services where cross-sector partners find shared, flexible solutions and develop a coordinated approach.
- Psychologically and trauma informed practice and principles within all services to take into account the psychological make-up, experiences and needs of its users. This is effective for those who have experienced complex trauma in child or adulthood.
- The delivery of gender informed homelessness support services that understand that women experience homelessness and interact with support in ways that are unique to their gender.
- Wrap-around support to ensure that if an individual's needs increase, a move into alternative accommodation is a last resort.

4.6 Principle 3

Services that pre-empt and prevent homelessness

Key features of this principle would be a:

- Cross-tenure floating support service that offers support to those who are at risk of homelessness, require support sustaining their accommodation or with accessing alternative accommodation.
- No First Night Out (NFNO) approach to explore why individuals are sleeping rough for the first time and create locally tailored pre-emptive measures to identify 'pre-rough sleepers' at a phase of their housing crisis which precedes rough sleeping.

Summary of Consultation Feedback

4.7 There was overall support for the proposed remodelling and the underpinning principles. The main concerns regarding reducing the budget for services that support single homeless individuals and households at risk of homelessness were the potential for:

- Increases in rough sleeper numbers and homelessness generally
- Increases in crime, anti-social behaviour and street based activities such as begging
- Poorer health outcomes/increases in health inequalities
- Increased demand on already overstretched services in homelessness and other sectors
- A reduction in the quality of services

4.8 Some, primarily online, respondents stated that a reduction in homelessness support services would be negative, regardless of how services are remodelled. Their view was that there would be wider impacts on demand for health services and that budgets should be reduced elsewhere before considering reducing the budget for these frontline services. The Council's aim is to reduce these risks as far as possible by remodelling services to meet needs in the more effective and efficient way.

- 4.9 Existing service users welcomed No Second Night Out to prevent entrenched rough sleeping, a one stop central hub, a Housing First approach and flexible support that has a less linear approach. Unanimously service users were keen for there to be increases in support at key times in their support journey, led by the client. Some feedback suggested that service users wanted to be able to represent themselves at professional meetings to influence and be involved with their own housing journey. All agreed that a permanent night shelter in Reading would be beneficial for all. They felt that the faith sector provision (Bed for the Night) B4N has been effective in the months that it had been operating. There was suggestion for there to be several dedicated move-on workers to assist with move-on and create stronger links with the private rented sector. There were concerns that rent levels in supported housing were high and a disincentive to working.
- 4.10 Those currently working in the sector advised that the Access Panel, a weekly partnership meeting with partners where new clients referred are discussed, works very well and provides a collaborative problem solving environment; relationships and communication between commissioned providers is excellent, all of which benefits homeless clients in Reading. Proposed remodelling was received well by provider and sector focus groups including endorsement of an approach which recognises progression and recovery are not linear, including flexible delivery of support and a move away from larger hostel environments. There was a clear message that engagement with reconnection should be part of the offer to rough sleepers. Providers felt that move-on readiness is achievable within shorter timeframes, but finding accommodation to move on into is challenging. There were a number of suggestions explored in the focus groups to expedite move on. There was a call for harmonised, tailored and consistent KPIs across all homelessness support services which support whole system delivery. It was suggested that longer contract periods would encourage providers to invest more into buildings/services and provide greater stability.
- 4.11 It is clear that move-on has been highlighted as a problem for all consultees and that RBC needs to think creatively about how move-on features within KPIs, monitoring and local authority support for services when they are recommissioned to maximise move-on through and from supported accommodation. RBC will also need to think creatively about how to ensure that service users are encouraged and enabled to enter into employment whilst accessing supported accommodation.

(c) Other Options Considered

- 4.12 Committee could determine not to remodel homelessness support services and not to make the saving. However, given current Council financial pressures and the need to make savings, this is an opportunity to model and recommission in a planned way that ensures that a budget reduction has the least possible impact where demands on single homelessness services are increasing.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The proposal will contribute to the service priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2015 - 18:
- Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable
 - Providing homes for those in most need
 - Remaining financially sustainable in order to deliver core services

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 Consultation relating to the principles of remodelling homelessness support services and reducing the overall budget for these services to £1.25m ran between 27 February

and 31 March 2017. The consultation included an online public consultation exercise; focus groups with service users and focus groups with current providers and non-commissioned services. Appendix 1 summarises how the consultation was undertaken, the profile of those who responded and a more detailed analysis of the responses.

- 6.2 Forty online consultation responses were received together with written responses from Berkshire West CCG, Salvation Army Housing Association and Launchpad Reading. Five focus groups were held with staff of all current providers of homelessness support services and a further focus group was held with some key members of the faith and voluntary sector in Reading to seek their views on the proposed changes. 11 service users also attended focus group meetings.
- 6.2 A Homelessness Forum has been established as part of the Council's approach to implementing its Homelessness Strategy. This shares information, targets resources and ensures multiagency oversight of and engagement with the strategy.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2 The decision to reduce funding will not have a disproportionate effect on any specific group with protected characteristics. However, any reduction in resourcing to homelessness services should be considered in the context of several complex risks to the general characteristics of this client group. Investment in homelessness services is universally recognised to support outcomes for health - most significantly mental health and substance misuse, community safety, social care and offending services. A full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is attached at Appendix 1 and has been informed by the consultation outcomes collated.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Homelessness Legislation

- 8.1 Under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended, local authorities have a statutory responsibility to secure accommodation for homeless households in priority need who are unintentionally homeless and to whom a homelessness duty has been accepted i.e. a 'main homelessness duty'. This main homelessness duty continues until a settled housing solution is found for the homeless household or until the duty otherwise ends. Local authorities must ensure that advice and assistance is available free of charge to households which are either homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- 8.2 Where the main homelessness duty is not owed the local authority is required to make an assessment of housing needs and to provide advice and assistance to the homeless household only.
- 8.3 Under sections 1 and 3 of the Homelessness Act 2002, local authorities must have in place a strategy for preventing homelessness in their district. Such strategy applies to all at risk of homelessness, and not only to those to whom the main homelessness duty is owed. Local authorities are encouraged by the Department for Communities and

Local Government (DCLG) to offer prevention assistance to those at risk of homelessness, including single person households and those not deemed to be in priority need. In July 2016 Policy Committee approved the publication of the Council's final Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 and a Delivery Plan, following public consultation.

Consultation

8.4 The consultation undertaken in respect of this proposal was non-statutory. However, once embarked upon, in order to be fair a consultation must: be undertaken while proposals are at a formative stage; let those with a potential interest in the subject matter clearly know what the proposal of the Council is; explain why the proposal is under positive consideration; give sufficient reason to elicit an informed response; and allow sufficient time for an informed response to be made. In addition, the outcome of the consultation must be conscientiously considered by the decision-maker.

Procurement

8.5 The procurement for new homelessness support services will be completed in line with Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contract Regulations 2015.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications arising from the proposed budget saving and remodelling of homelessness support services are set out below:

9.1 Revenue Implications

The proposed savings amount of £245,000 is shown in the following table. This takes into account the current timescales for procurement and implementation. The commissioning budget of £1.49m per annum in 2017/18 will reduce to a full year £1.245m per annum - with the contracts assumed to be let and the new model implemented from September 2018. The saving is therefore profiled over two financial years.

| | 2016/17 £000 | 2017/18 £000 | 2019/20 £000 | Total |
|--------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|
| Saving | £0 | £143k | £102k | £245k |

9.2 The decision to remodel homelessness support services as proposed - which will include the Homelessness Pathway, the provision of outreach services for rough sleeping in Reading and the floating support service to prevent homelessness - gives the opportunity to deliver these services in the most efficient and cost effective way. The re-procurement exercise itself will ensure Value for Money.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Committee Report "Proposed saving to Homelessness Pathway Services", 13 February 2017.

Appendix 1

Equality Impact Assessment for Options Outlined in this Report

Proposed saving to Homelessness Support Services

Directorate: Directorate of Environment and Neighbourhood Services

Service: Housing Needs

Name and job title of person doing the assessment

Name: Verena Hutcheson

Job Title: Homelessness and Housing Pathways Manager

Date of assessment: 14 June 2017

Scope of proposal

What is the aim of your policy or new service/what changes are you proposing?

Reading Borough Council (RBC) currently commissions Homelessness Support Services under seven separate contracts to the amount of £1.49m and includes:

- Homelessness Pathway accommodation with support providing 217 bed spaces for individuals/couples who are homeless, made up of 73 Stage 1 bed spaces; 7 Stage 1A bed spaces; 71 Stage 2 bed spaces; 61 Stage 3 bed spaces and 5 complex and multiple needs bed spaces. At Stage 1, individuals are provided with intensive support within a 24-hour staffed environment and at Stages 2 and 3 individuals are supported with the development of basic independent living skills to move on from the Pathway. The current total contract value is £900,873 per annum.
- Rough sleeper outreach services which supports rough sleepers to access supported accommodation or reconnect to their area of origin. The current contract value is £192,000 per annum.
- Cross-tenure floating support which supports individuals, couples and families with tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention. The current contract value is £396,276 per annum.

New contract arrangements are due to be implemented in September 2018 where a single procurement exercise will be completed for all homelessness support services contracts. In light of the current financial position of the Council the proposal is to reduce the budget for this by £245,000 (17%) to £1.25m. The specific amounts spent on different services will be finalised via the procurement process.

The proposal suggests that homelessness support services are remodelled to reflect national guidance and best practice from other local authority area models to explore new ways to tackle homelessness. In reshaping and redeveloping these services we are proposing that there will be a central hub that will include emergency assessment beds and hostel accommodation with 24/7 on-site staffing support; a rough sleeper outreach team and emergency provision during severe weather regardless of their immigration and local connection status. There will be shared supported accommodation that provides a high level of support outside of a hostel environment, but that will be linked to the 24/7 support provided by the hub; lower level support for those working towards independence; provision for a Housing First approach to be delivered and a cross-tenure floating support service.

Implications for homelessness support services

RBC currently commissions 217 bed spaces within the Homelessness Pathway. A reduction in budget for homelessness support services will likely result in a reduction of bed spaces and support hours across services. The new model aims to mitigate this for clients by focussing upon more effective and efficient services and directing support hours towards client need.

Who will benefit from this proposal and how?

The reduction in budget will provide savings to the Council and the remodelling of homelessness support services within remaining funding (£1.25m) will provide services that can provide immediate and emergency responses to those who are homeless or rough sleeping; housing and support offers to address the differing needs of single homeless people and services that pre-empt and prevent homelessness.

Some funding will be re-directed specifically towards enabling Housing First; emergency bed spaces/sit-up provision and a dispersed model of support for those that do not benefit from a 24/7 hostel environment, but still require an intensive level of support.

The new model will allow us to be more flexible with support hours which will benefit clients and provide a new range interventions to help those who homeless or threatened with homelessness.

What outcomes does the change aim to achieve and for whom?

The reduction in budget for homelessness support services is required in order to support the Council to deliver services within a significantly reduced budget whilst delivering broadly the same outcomes. The remodelling of services is intended to refocus funding towards targeting rough sleeping, providing housing and support offers that address the differing needs of single homeless people and ensuring that services pre-empt and prevent homelessness for households. The aim is to re-draft and update contracts and KPIs for all homelessness support services to enable more effective and efficient services to be delivered for service users.

Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?

The main stakeholders are: service users; potential service users; professionals/statutory and voluntary agencies working with those who are single/couples and rough sleeping or precariously housed and individuals and households who are at risk of homelessness.

The consultation completed in March 2017 indicates overall support for the proposed remodelling, underpinning principles and maintaining the Access Panel and quality of professional relationships amongst commissioned services.

There were concerns amongst some respondents regarding the negative effects of reducing the budget for homelessness support services. A third of on-line respondents were concerned that a reduced budget would result in increases in rough sleepers and homelessness generally with 18% of on-line respondents concerned about increases in crime, anti-social behaviour and street-based activities such as begging. An eighth of those that responded on line stated that there would be human costs and increased demand upon already overstretched services in homelessness and other sectors.

However, focus groups with existing providers and service users provided constructive feedback regarding how remaining resources should be used to create more effective and efficient services to most benefit clients.

Assess whether an EqIA is Relevant

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; promoting equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others? (Think about your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc.)

Those that use rough sleeping outreach services and the current Homelessness Pathway are predominantly male and aged between 18 and 35. A quarter of those accessing supported accommodation are female and of the same age range.

A reduction in homelessness support services that includes a reduction in bed spaces in supported accommodation could have a disproportionate effect on single, homeless men aged 18 - 35 who are not owed a homelessness duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 and who are affected by LHA rates under welfare reform.

Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Think about your complaints, consultation, and feedback.

There is public concern generally about rough sleeping and homelessness. Rough sleeping and begging behaviours are very visible in the borough and there have been increases in reports and enquiries from members of the public, Council Members and statutory sector colleagues in the last 12 - 24 months, particularly during autumn and winter periods.

Official rough sleeping numbers of 22 individuals sleeping rough in the borough on a typical night were submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in November 2016.

Assess the Impact of the Proposal

Consultation

The consultation relating to the principles of remodelling homelessness support services and reducing the overall budget for these services to £1.25m ran between 27 February and 31 March 2017.

Views were obtained via:

- Online questionnaire promotion directly to the public and professionals
- Consultation sessions with service users; with staff and managers of current homelessness support services and with faith and voluntary sector services operating in the Reading area

40 online responses were received; five focus groups were held with staff of all current providers of homelessness support services - a total of 21 staff were consulted with and service user focus groups were held with a total of 11 current service users attending. A focus group was held with some key members of the faith and voluntary sector in Reading to seek their views on the proposed changes and also internal Housing Need partners. Official written responses to the consultation, outside of focus groups and the on-line questionnaire, were received from Berkshire West CCG, Salvation Army Housing Association and Launchpad Reading.

How have you consulted with or do you plan to consult with relevant groups and experts?

| Relevant groups/experts | How were/will the views of these groups be obtained | Date when contacted |
|-------------------------|---|---------------------|
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| Users of Reading's Homelessness Support Services | Online consultation outline and questionnaire promoted directly to professionals. | Focus groups held on 2 and 3 March 2017 |
| Current providers of Homelessness Support Services in Reading | Local press release and details broadcast on screen in reception for duration. | Various focus group sessions between 28 February - 31 March 2017 |
| Paid staff and volunteers working in single homelessness and homelessness prevention across sectors | Leaflets distributed to RBC breakout areas; commissioned services; The Avenue Centre. | |
| Internal RBC partners, for example, Adult Social Care, Housing Benefits, Anti-Social Behaviour Team | Use of internal RBC communications e.g. Message of the Day, Inside Reading and Yammer to publicise. | For the period 27 February - 31 March 2017 |
| External partners, for example, Police, faith and voluntary sector services | Two consultation sessions with service users. Five sessions with staff and managers of current Homelessness Support Services. | Focus group held on 29 March 2017 |
| National homelessness organisations | One session with faith and voluntary sector organisations | For the period 27 February - 31 March 2017 |

Respondents supported the introduction of a more flexible model with more varied supported accommodation options to meet the differing needs of this client group.

Concern about reducing the budget for services mostly came from on-line responses and stated the potential for:

- Increases in rough sleeper numbers and homelessness generally
- Increases in crime, anti-social behaviour and street based activities such as begging
- Poorer health outcomes/increases in health inequalities
- Increased demand on already overstretched services in homelessness and other sectors
- Wider impacts on demands for health and other statutory services

The primary concerns highlighted from focus groups were:

- A reduction in the quality of services
- Less bed spaces affecting move on through and from supported accommodation resulting in fewer opportunities for people to supported accommodation within an already difficult local housing market

Collect and Assess your Data

Due to the complex nature of homelessness it is hard to predict the impact that reduced resources in any area of support services will have on this client group.

Any reduction in resourcing to homelessness support services comes with a complex array of risks due to the general characteristics of this client group. Investment in homelessness services is universally recognised to support outcomes for health (most significantly mental health and substance abuse), community safety, social care and offending services.

Describe how this proposal could impact on racial groups

Currently homelessness support services are predominantly accessed by White British individuals which is reflective of the referrals made to services and census data for the Reading area.

Commissioned homelessness support services will be available to all racial groups and a reduction in the availability of these services will not disproportionately affect any specific racial groups.

Is there a negative impact? No

Describe how this proposal could impact on gender/transgender (cover pregnancy and maternity, marriage)

A quarter of those accessing supported accommodation are female. A report from St. Mungo's in 2014 called *Rebuilding Shattered Lives: The Final Report* highlights three themes that specifically affect women who have a history of homelessness: trauma and abuse; relationships with children (often custody of children being removed) and stigma/shame. There is potential for a positive impact for women within the remodelling of homelessness support services. New contracts will have gender informed approaches and staff training around these approaches embedded within them to ensure that women are adequately supported with female specific support needs relating to domestic abuse and loss of custody of children.

Accommodation services within homelessness support services are for single people and couples only where pregnancy meets priority need criteria under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 and thus statutory duty thresholds under homelessness legislation. Any commissioned floating support service will continue to work with all types of households. There will be continued commissioning of bed spaces for those who are an established couple or married/in a civil partnership.

The overall reduction in supported accommodation bed spaces could have a disproportionate effect on single, homeless men aged 18 - 35 years old who are not owed a homelessness duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as this is the group that predominantly use rough sleeping outreach services and the Homelessness Pathway.

However whilst there may be a reduction in bed spaces, it is the intention that newly modelled homelessness support services will be more efficient and effective with improved throughput.

Commissioned homelessness support services will continue to be available to those with a local connection to Reading, regardless of gender. Therefore no disproportionate negative impact is anticipated.

Is there a negative impact? No

Describe how this proposal could impact on disability

Some bed spaces will be made available for people who have support needs and mobility issues. Contract specifications will be developed to encompass the needs of those with disabilities or mobility problems. Recent data suggests that around two individuals per annum are referred to the Homelessness Pathway requiring ground floor accommodation where they have mobility issues. New contracts will specify a requirement for a larger number of wheelchair accessible and/or adapted properties ensuring that there is more accommodation available to those that have physical disabilities.

Commissioned homelessness support services will continue to be available to those with a local connection to Reading who have disabilities or mobility problems. No disproportionate impact is anticipated for those with learning or physical disabilities are anticipated.

Is there a negative impact? No

Describe how this proposal could impact on sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)

Commissioned homelessness support services will continue to be available to those with a local connection to Reading, regardless of sexual orientation. No disproportionate impact is anticipated.

There will be continued commissioning of bed spaces for those who are an established couple or in a civil partnership.

Is there a negative impact? No

Describe how this proposal could impact on age

The overall reduction in supported accommodation bed spaces could have a disproportionate effect on single, homeless men aged 18 - 35 years old who are not owed a homelessness duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as this is the group that predominantly use rough sleeping outreach services and the Homelessness Pathway. A quarter of those accessing supported accommodation are female and of the same age range.

However whilst there may be a reduction in bed spaces, it is the intention that newly modelled homelessness support services will be more efficient and effective with improved throughput.

Commissioned homelessness support services will continue to be available to those with a local connection to Reading, regardless of their age. Therefore no disproportionate impact is anticipated.

Is there a negative impact? No

Describe how this proposal could impact on religious belief?

Commissioned homelessness support services will continue to be available to those with a local connection to Reading, regardless of their religious beliefs. No disproportionate impact is anticipated.

Is there a negative impact? No

Make a Decision

If the impact is negative then you must consider whether you can legally justify it. If not you must set out how you will reduce or eliminate the impact. If you are not sure what the impact will be you MUST assume that there could be a negative impact. You may have to do further consultation or test out your proposal and monitor the impact before full implementation.

Negative impact uncertain

What action will you take to eliminate or reduce the impact?

As shown above, the reduction in funding for homelessness support services will have an impact upon the overall number of bed spaces available for single homeless individuals; however, it will not have a disproportionate effect on any specific groups with protected characteristics.

A reduction in the investment of homelessness services has the potential to have a negative impact upon outcomes for health (most significantly mental health and substance misuse), community safety, social care and offending services. Where males aged 18 - 35 who are not owed a duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 are the primary users of rough sleeper outreach services and the Homelessness Pathway, any reduction in bed spaces or outreach capacity could negatively affect this group if intended improved effectiveness is not achieved.

However, the remodelling of services aims to ensure that remaining resources are targeted at emergency and more immediate responses for those who are sleeping rough and that accommodation responses are more varied and flexible to meet the needs of this client group with more sustainable longer term outcomes.

How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?

- Annual standardised monitoring for homelessness support services
- Annual rough sleeper headcount data and weekly Street Duty Diary sheet information from street outreach services
- New KPIs and contracts will be monitored quarterly and any management concerns that arise will be addressed in accordance with contract remedies.
- Increased focus on throughput for all groups with protected characteristics.

Signed (completing officer)
Verena Hutcheson

Date
14 June 2017

Signed (Lead Officer)
Sarah Gee

Date
22 June 2017

Appendix 2

Consultation Summary Report: Homelessness Commissioned Services - Future model and budget reduction

Methodology: How we consulted

The consultation relating to the principles of remodelling homelessness support services and reducing the overall budget for these services to £1.25m ran between 27 February and 31 March 2017.

It was an open public consultation, with respondents encouraged to respond online but with opportunities afforded for group discussion including sessions run specifically for service users. The consultation questionnaire, including a description of the proposal, was available on the Council's website and in paper copy upon request.

The following relevant groups and stakeholders were consulted with:

- Users of Reading's homelessness support services
- Current providers of homelessness support services in Reading
- Paid staff and volunteers working in single homelessness and homelessness prevention across sectors
- Internal RBC partners, for example, Adult Social Care, Housing Benefits, Anti-Social Behaviour Team
- External partners, for example, Police, faith and voluntary sector services
- National homelessness organisations

The views of these groups were obtained via:

- Online consultation outline and questionnaire promotion directly to professionals
- Consultation sessions with service users; with staff and managers of current homelessness support services and with faith and voluntary sector services operating in the Reading area

The on-line consultation was publicised via the following means:

- Local press release at the start of consultation which was picked up by Get Reading
- Details of the consultation were broadcast on screen in RBC's reception for the duration
- Leaflets were distributed to RBC breakout areas; commissioned services; The Avenue Centre and all commissioned homelessness support service providers
- Use of internal RBC communications e.g. Message of the Day and Yammer to publicise
- All current providers committed to bringing the consultation to the attention of their service users and staff and the consultation was promoted at all possible cross-sector and multi-agency meetings by colleagues
- Promotional emails were sent to Homelessness Forum attendees and contacts
- All Housing Needs staff were asked to put the details of the consultation at the end of their email address signatures

The table below summarises the consultation sessions organised with stakeholders, partners and service users.

| Consultation session |
|---|
| Staff and providers of existing homelessness support services between 28 February - 31 March 2017 |
| Service users on 2 - 3 March 2017 |
| Faith and voluntary sector partners on 29 March 2017 |
| Housing Needs partners between 27 - 31 March 2017 |

Who responded?

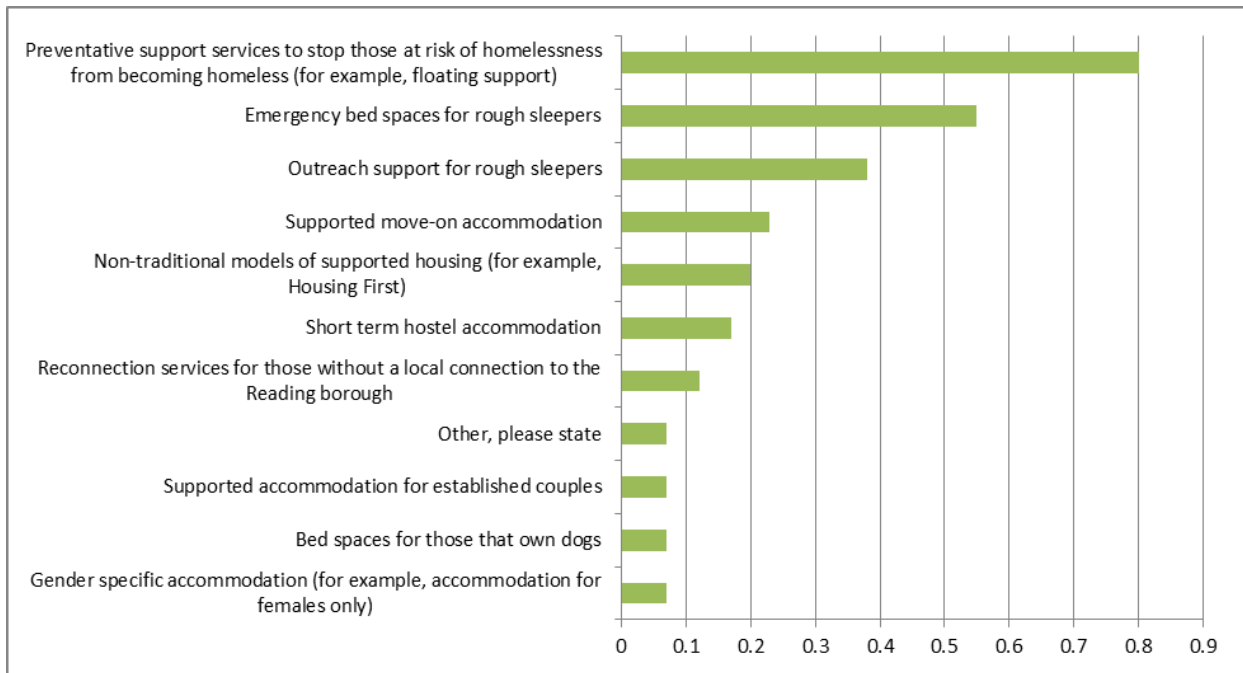
- 40 online responses were received
- Five focus groups were held with staff of all current providers of homelessness support services - a total of 21 staff were consulted with
- Service user focus groups were held with a total of 11 current service users attending
- A focus group was held with some key members of the faith and voluntary sector in Reading to seek their views on the proposed changes and also internal Housing Need partners
- Official written responses to the consultation, outside of focus groups and the on-line questionnaire, were received in from Berkshire West CCG, Salvation Army Housing Association and Launchpad Reading

Online, respondents could choose which parts of the online consultation they responded to. Most people commented within each section online, but there were fewer responses to specific questions about the impact of the proposed remodelling; groups that may be affected by the remodelling/impacts and fewer responses to alternative options/suggestions to the proposed model. However, the focus groups held with those currently working within homelessness support services, other related sectors and with service users concentrated upon these elements to give a rounded overview of opinions.

Detailed demographic analysis is only available from those who responded to the consultation by returning a questionnaire and completing the 'about you' questions, which were optional.

People were invited to identify as a resident, employee of RBC, voluntary organisation, commissioned service provider, family or friend of a service user, business or other.

Of those responding online 38% identified as a local resident or former local resident, 35% identified as an employee of RBC, an RBC commissioned service, other public sector employee or business within Reading, 19% identified as working for or volunteering within a voluntary sector organisation and 8% identified as being a service user or a friend/family member of a service user.



Gender

Of those contributing to the consultation that identified their gender, 50% were female and 33% were male and 18% preferred not to say.

Age

The age of online questionnaire respondents is profiled below:

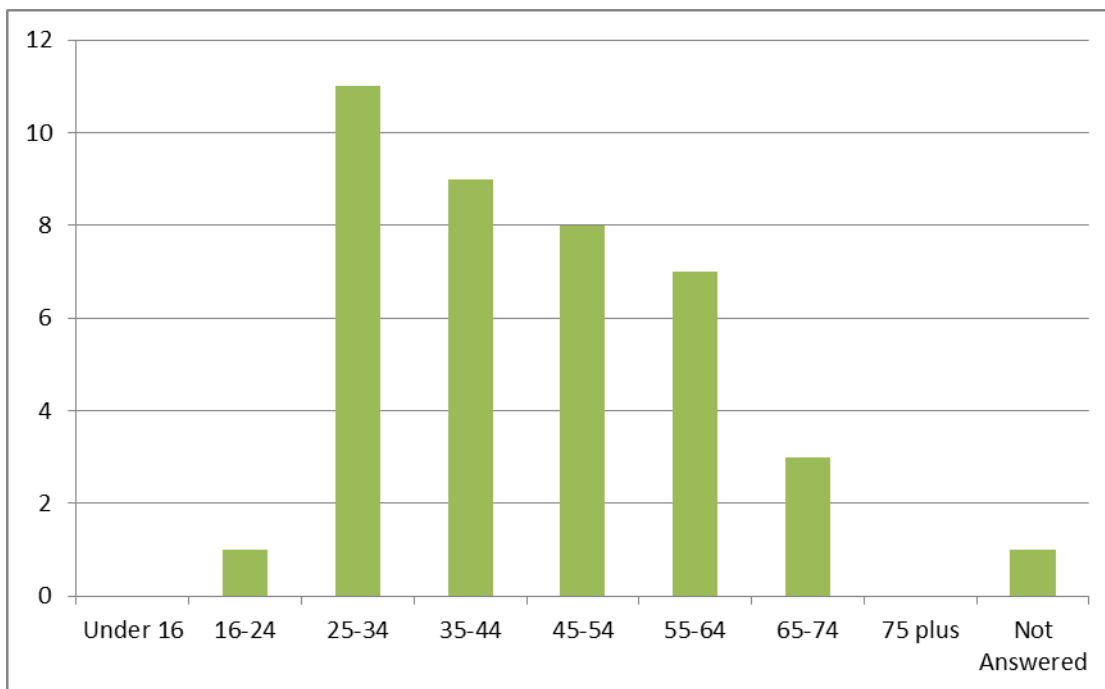


Figure 1: Responses from people online by age.

Most of those who responded were in the 25 - 34 age range, followed by the 35 - 44 age range; however, there were responses across all age ranges from 16 - 74 years old.

Disability and long-term illness

Across all returned online surveys, 13% of people identified as having a disability or long-term illness.

Ethnicity

83% of respondents defined themselves as White British, 2% defined as being from another White background, only 3% defined themselves as within a Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) group and 10% preferring not to say.

Religion or belief

37% of those who responded identified as being Christian, 35% as having no religion or belief and 28% preferred not to say or did not answer.

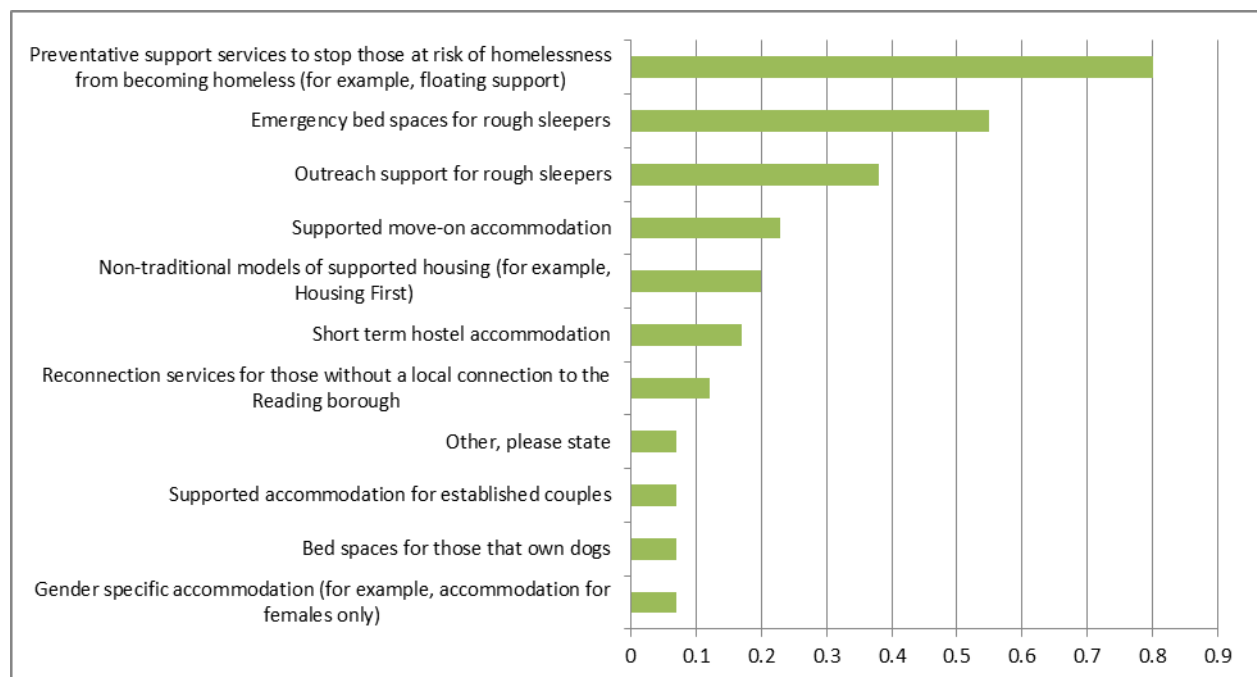
Sexuality

Across all returned online surveys, 65% identified their sexuality as heterosexual or straight whilst 15% identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual and 20% preferred not to say or did not answer.

Key Findings: Summary of all on-line consultation responses

There was overall support for the proposal on how homelessness support services could be remodelled in light of the Council's financial position. Housing First, MEAM, gender informed and personalised approaches in services were positively received. A clear majority of people supported the proposal for a more flexible model of support within supported accommodation, including support for personalisation and choice and a focus upon prevention for at risk households. Respondents clearly stated that street outreach services and floating support services (particularly financial advice, budgeting support and early intervention) were most beneficial to single homeless individuals and families and households at risk of homelessness, respectively. However, the most stated need was affordable and feasible housing and move-on options for both groups.

The following areas were seen as a priority for individuals responding online about homelessness support services:



These priorities are clearly reflected in the proposal for the remodelling of homelessness support services.

The main concerns regarding reducing the budget for services that support single homeless individuals and households at risk of homelessness were the potential for:

- Increases in rough sleeper numbers and homelessness generally
- Increases in crime, anti-social behaviour and street based activities such as begging
- Human costs detailed as deaths on the street and poor health/increases in health inequalities
- Increased demand on already overstretched services in homelessness and other sectors
- A reduction in the quality of services

Some respondents stated that a reduction in homelessness support services would be negative, regardless of how services are remodelled. Their view was that there would be wider impacts upon demand for health services and that budgets should be reduced elsewhere before considering reducing the budget for these frontline services.

Key Findings: Focus group consultation with service users

The following principles under the proposed remodelling were received well by existing service users:

- **No Second Night Out** to prevent entrenched rough sleeping - one group was aware of this operating in other areas (Oxford and Cambridge) and they felt that it works well
- A **central hub** where services can support in one place where communications could be improved and street outreach were easily accessible.
- **Housing First**
- **Flexible support and a less linear approach** - for example, more support when they first move in and targeted support for move-on. Unanimously service users were keen for there to be increases at key times in their support journey, led by the client. Some feedback suggested that service users wanted to be able to represent themselves at professional meetings to influence and be involved with their own housing journey.

All agreed that a permanent night shelter in Reading would be beneficial for all. They felt that B4N has been effective in the months that it had been operating.

Service users all agreed that there are currently very short timeframes for accessing hostel accommodation and once they have moved in, there is lots of support available to them. Groups were split between feeling that there are plenty of bed spaces and blockages within the Pathway due to lack of move-on. All service users referred to feeling 'stuck' in supported accommodation due to a lack of move-on and slow move-on timeframes. Most feedback showed that groups felt that priority should be given to all people moving on from the Pathway into RGS and social rented properties. There was suggestion for there to be two dedicated move-on workers to assist with move-on and create stronger links with the private rented sector.

All service users agreed that whilst living in supported accommodation there is no incentive to work where rents are high for those in employment. There were suggestions to give those employed a 'grace period' on rent for 2 - 3 months to enable them to save for a deposit and quicker move on.

Key Findings: Focus groups with current Homelessness Service Providers and non-commissioned services

Those currently working in the sector advised that the Access Panel, a weekly meeting with partners where new clients referred for accommodation and floating support services are discussed with the opportunity to troubleshoot provider concerns, works very well. The view is that the Panel provides a consistent multiagency forum, an effective referral route and a collaborative problem solving environment and relationships and communication between commissioned providers is excellent, all of which benefits homeless clients in Reading.

Proposed remodelling was received well by provider and sector focus groups including positive responses and endorsement of the following:

- **Flexible delivery of support** using a **wrap-around support model** where recovery and progression are not linear and supported accommodation should mirror this.
 - **A move away from larger hostel environments**, where chaotic clients are grouped together, in favour of dispersed and more varied and flexible options for clients.
 - Underpinning principles of **Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE) and Trauma Informed Care (TIC)** in support delivery and staff training.
 - **The Hub** as a central point to bring services together and breakdown barriers.
 - The introduction of **Housing First**.
 - Principles of early intervention and **No First Night Out**.
 - **Sit-up beds** where this model has worked well in other local authority areas.
- However, there was a clear message that this should be bounded for those without a local connection to the Reading borough, where engagement with reconnection should be part of this offer; access should be on a night shelter model basis to avoid dependency and manage expectations and the management of anti-social behaviour.
- Positive overall for those sleeping rough where there would be **more responsive services and bed spaces at the front end of support provision**.

There were mixed opinions on:

- **A reduction in timeframes in services** prior to moving on.
Some organisations felt that this enabled management of client expectations and avoids dependency; others had concerns that this would contradict the overall proposed model which leans towards increasing the quality of service and longer-term sustainable outcomes for clients. Views were that move-on readiness is achievable within shorter timeframes, but finding accommodation to move on into, is not. Suggestions were that any shortening of move-on timeframes would need to be managed well and supported by the local authority.

All focus groups felt that move-on within the Homelessness Pathway and into independent living was a barrier to the success of homelessness support services. There was an appreciation that this is due to wider issues such as the availability of affordable accommodation in Reading, but suggestions that:

- **Move-on within the Homelessness Pathway** needs to be discussed and planned as early as possible in a client's supported accommodation journey.
- There should be **less use of Assured Shorthold tenancies** within supported accommodation and more opportunity to use licences for flexibility and to enable more positive risk taking.
- The **gap in support hours provided at Stage 1 (8 - 9 hours per week) and Stage 2 (variable, but predominantly about 1 hour per week)** should be tightened to ensure that levels of need are catered for across supported accommodation provision.
- Creation of **attractive relocation packages** to encourage moves out of area including the use of Homefinder UK.
- **Converting and/or using unused and empty properties/office buildings** in Reading as temporary move-on accommodation.

Existing providers felt that Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) across homelessness support services were contradictory and that this can be to the detriment of clients. The view is that where different services have different end goals, these can conflict. Harmonised, tailored and consistent KPIs across all homelessness support services were seen as preferable.

The following suggestions were made for consideration to improve services and processes:

- **Longer contract periods**, for example, an initial period of five years for supported accommodation services. This would encourage providers to invest more into services, buildings and staff, providing added value. Shorter contracts can result in loss of local knowledge due to TUPE/restructure and delays in contract implementation and increased financial investment risk due to the short-termism of contracts.
- Consider specific groups such as **offenders, those being discharged from hospital and those with dual diagnosis** and how they might fit into the proposed new model.
- **Review of referral and Access Panel processes** to include strength based and 'follow-me' referral, assessment and support plan processes; streamlining and reviewing the Access Panel with involved partners and the potential for clients to represent themselves at Access Panel for referrals and move-on.
- **A Single Service Offer and Single Move-on Offer** approach so that clients are clear about their end independent living goal and what steps they will take to achieve their goal. This would need to be a consistent message across all services and sectors.
- **A consistent training programme**, for example one Training Needs Analysis and Training Plan, for all homelessness support services and faith and voluntary sector partners.
- Introduction of an **Exceptions Panel** to enable RBC to monitor move-on timeframes; allow for creative thinking; troubleshoot barriers to move-on and ensure service accountability to the local authority.
- **Twinning commissioned services** with places of worship in the local area to provide a sense of community and resources to expand a client's social capital. This would be community level support and not just a service offer and could include peer mentors, mentors and befrienders.
- **Promote and launch any new model** and ways of working to all statutory, non-statutory services and sectors and the general public.

In summary, concerns have been raised by those consulted with on line regarding increases in homelessness with any reduction in the budget for homeless households. However, the aim is to reduce these risks as far as possible by providing remodelled services that meet the needs of this client group in a more effective and efficient way. Existing providers and sector services understood the financial challenges facing the authority and were positive about the principles that will underpin homelessness support services in the future. Service users were positive about more immediate and emergency provisions for those sleeping rough.

It is clear that move-on has been highlighted as a problem for all consultees and that RBC needs to think creatively about how move-on features within KPIs, monitoring and local authority support for services when they are recommissioned to maximise move-on through and from supported accommodation. RBC will also need to think creatively about how to ensure that service users are encouraged and enabled to enter into employment whilst accessing supported accommodation.