

Decision under Delegated Powers

Tackling Homelessness Together - Consultation Response

Officer Requesting Decision

Katie Moore, Housing Needs Manager

Officer Making the Decision

Alison Simmons, Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing

Recommendation

1. That the Council responses to the MHCLG consultation on Tackling Homelessness Together as detailed in Appendix A.

Reason

1. To ensure that the Council's views are considered by the MHCLG when developing national policies which may affect the residents of the Borough of Charnwood.

Authority for Decision

Under section 8.2 of the Constitution the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing has delegated authority to respond to consultation documents in relation to those Council functions for which she has responsibility, in consultation with the relevant Lead Member.

Decision and Date



Alison Simmons
Head of Strategic and Private
Sector Housing
24th June 2019

Background

On the 21st February 2019, The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) opened a consultation on Tackling Homelessness Together.

This consultation closes on the 16th May 2019.

The consultation is on structures that support partnership working and accountability in homelessness services and covers the following:

- The effectiveness of existing non-statutory and statutory local accountability and partnership structures in homelessness services
- Whether the Government should introduce Homelessness Reduction Boards and, if so, how this could be done most effectively
- How else we might improve local accountability and partnership working in homelessness services

The consultation does not put forward detailed proposals. Views are being asked of the current partnership structures, what is working well and what could be put in place to make partnerships more effective including the establishment of Homelessness Reduction Boards.

The Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing has consulted with the Lead Member for Housing on the Council's proposed response as detailed in Appendix A.

Risk Management

No risks have been identified with this decision.

Key Decision:

No

Background Papers:

MHCLG consultation document available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/tackling-homelessness-together>

consultation response

TACKLING HOMELESSNESS TOGETHER

This briefing paper considers the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) consultation paper on Tackling Homelessness Together, published on 21st February 2019, closing the 16th May 2019.

Introduction

The Government is consulting on the effectiveness of existing non-statutory and statutory local accountability and partnership structures.

All partners at the local and national level must work together in a joined-up way, commissioning and building services based on evidence of what works, to ensure everyone in society has the dignity and security of a home. Only by working together can homelessness and rough sleeping be effectively tackled. By working together, services can be improved and interventions provided when people are most in need with the aim of delivering better outcomes

Through this consultation, the Government is seeking views on:

- The effectiveness of existing accountability arrangements
- Homelessness Reduction Boards
- Other ways of supporting effective partnership working

Existing Accountability Structures

The Government's view

Local authorities' democratic mandate often makes them uniquely placed in their area to bring leadership and convene a wide range of partners to tackle some of the most complex and intractable problems.

Most local authorities have established some form of non-statutory multi-agency forum, which is either entirely focussed on homelessness (e.g. Homelessness Forum) or which covers homelessness as part of a broader agenda (e.g. a Vulnerable Adults Panel). Across the Country these non-statutory structures vary in terms of what they focus on, who attends them, and the frequency with which they meet, according to local need

The Government is seeking to understand what non-statutory structures are being used locally to address homelessness, what the objectives are and how effectively they are working.

Consultation Question 1

What non-statutory structures are you aware of in your area that cover homelessness as part of their agenda? For each of these please indicate which of the following could be considered one of their objectives:

- a) Developing a strategic vision for tackling homelessness in the area;
- b) Agreeing actions that each delivery partner will take forward to help reduce homelessness;
- c) Co-ordinating use of funding and resources to reduce homelessness;
- d) Evaluating the effectiveness of homelessness services and interventions;
- e) Monitoring progress towards the delivery of the local homelessness strategy;
- f) Holding the local housing authority to account for the outcomes they achieve with people who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless, using key data and evidence;
- g) Holding delivery partners to account for the outcomes they achieve with people who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless, using key data and evidence;
- h) Discussion of how to manage individual cases;
- i) Support for specific vulnerable groups, for example offenders; and
- j) Other, please specify.

Council Response

For Charnwood there are currently 3 groups established to consider homelessness in the Borough.

1. Local - Charnwood Borough Homelessness Steering Group

This group brings together partners, including voluntary and statutory, who have an interest in addressing and supporting homeless people across the Borough and includes representation from advice, support and accommodation providers, Registered Providers, Probation Service, Police, NHS Trust, Leicestershire Adult Learning, The Bridge East Midlands and Charnwood Citizens Advice Bureau.

The following objectives from the list above are considered to be part of the agenda for this group:

- a) Developing a strategic vision for tackling homelessness in the area;
- b) Agreeing actions that each delivery partner will take forward to help reduce homelessness;
- c) Co-ordinating use of funding and resources to reduce homelessness;
- d) Evaluating the effectiveness of homelessness services and interventions;
- e) Monitoring progress towards the delivery of the local homelessness strategy;
- f) Holding the local housing authority to account for the outcomes they achieve with people who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless, using key data and evidence;
- g) Holding delivery partners to account for the outcomes they achieve with people who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless, using key data and evidence.

2. Leicestershire Wide Homelessness Delivery Group

This group brings together representatives from the 7 Local Authority borough and districts Housing Teams across Leicestershire to share good practice and to address cross border issues such as rough sleeping.

The following objectives from the list above are considered to be part of the agenda for this group:

- a) Developing a strategic vision for tackling homelessness in the area;
- b) Agreeing actions that each delivery partner will take forward to help reduce homelessness;
- c) Co-ordinating use of funding and resources to reduce homelessness;
- d) Evaluating the effectiveness of homelessness services and interventions;
- f) Holding the local housing authority to account for the outcomes they achieve with people who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless, using key data and evidence;
- g) Holding delivery partners to account for the outcomes they achieve with people who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless, using key data and evidence.

3. Leicestershire Wide Homelessness Steering Group

This group will bring together the borough, districts, partners, including voluntary and statutory, who have an interest in addressing and supporting homeless people across the Borough and includes representation from advice, support and accommodation providers, Registered Providers, Probation Service, Police, NHS Trust, Leicestershire Adult Learning, The Bridge East Midlands and Charnwood Citizens Advice Bureau.

- a) Developing a strategic vision for tackling homelessness in the area;
- b) Agreeing actions that each delivery partner will take forward to help reduce homelessness;
- c) Co-ordinating use of funding and resources to reduce homelessness;
- d) Evaluating the effectiveness of homelessness services and interventions;
- e) Monitoring progress towards the delivery of the local homelessness strategy;

- f) Holding the local housing authority to account for the outcomes they achieve with people who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless, using key data and evidence;
- g) Holding delivery partners to account for the outcomes they achieve with people who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless, using key data and evidence.

Consultation Question 2

How effective are the non-statutory structures in your area in meeting their stated objectives?

Council Response

1. Local Charnwood Borough Homelessness Steering Group

- a) Developing a strategic vision for tackling homelessness in the area;
very effective
- b) Agreeing actions that each delivery partner will take forward to help reduce homelessness;
effective
- c) Co-ordinating use of funding and resources to reduce homelessness;
effective
- d) Evaluating the effectiveness of homelessness services and interventions;
effective
- f) Holding the local housing authority to account for the outcomes they achieve with people who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless, using key data and evidence;
effective
- g) Holding delivery partners to account for the outcomes they achieve with people who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless, using key data and evidence;
somewhat effective

2. Leicestershire Wide Homelessness Delivery Group

- a) Developing a strategic vision for tackling homelessness in the area;
effective
- b) Agreeing actions that each delivery partner will take forward to help reduce homelessness;
effective
- c) Co-ordinating use of funding and resources to reduce homelessness;
effective
- d) Evaluating the effectiveness of homelessness services and interventions;
effective
- f) Holding the local housing authority to account for the outcomes they achieve with people who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless, using key data and evidence;
effective

- g) Holding delivery partners to account for the outcomes they achieve with people who are at risk of homelessness or are homeless, using key data and evidence;
somewhat effective

3. Leicestershire Wide Homelessness Steering Group

New group first meeting to be held in June 2019.

Consultation Question 3

More generally, what are your views on whether these sorts of non-statutory structures can drive system change support the reduction of homelessness in the local area and hold all local partners to account for delivering their commitments?

Council Response

These structures are effective at identifying problems and potential solutions and building commitment to change/ownership across partners. They encourage partnership working, mutual understanding and prevention/resolution of conflicts between partners. Charnwood Borough Council works closely with partners to deliver its objectives and reduce homelessness.

2. Statutory Structures and Roles

The Government's view

There are a number of statutory multi-agency structures which do not have a formal responsibility for reducing homelessness, but whose members are often involved in delivery of services, which support people who are homeless, or which can contribute to the reduction of homelessness in an area such as Health and Wellbeing Boards, Community Safety Partnerships.

In the Rough Sleeper Strategy, the Government made a number of commitments to strengthen how some of these structures contribute to the reduction of homelessness. Additionally, the Government is committed to supporting Health and Wellbeing Boards recognising that they need to respond to the health needs of people who sleep rough.

The Government is seeking views on whether a Cabinet member or a Chief Officer within the Local Authority should be assigned specific responsibility for homelessness.

Consultation Question 4

Which statutory structures and individuals with statutory roles in your local area currently have strategic and operational conversations about how individual services and interventions can help reduce homelessness?

Council Response

- Strategic Director of Housing, Planning, Regeneration and Regulatory Services
- Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing
- Housing Needs Manager
- Senior Housing Options Officer
- Senior Allocations and Lettings Officer
- Social Lettings Coordinator
- Head of Landlord Services
- Landlord Services Manager
- Principle Officer for Tenancy and Income Management
- Housing Services Team Leader
- Tenancy Support Team Leader
- Income Management Team Leader

Consultation Question 5

Which statutory structures and individuals with statutory roles in your local area do you think should be having strategic and operational conversations about how to reduce homelessness?

Council Response

Leicestershire County Council:

- Social Care
- Safeguarding
- Health

Probation
Youth Offending
Police
MAPPA
MARAC

Consultation Question 6

Please describe how you think the statutory structures and individuals with statutory roles in your area should be discussing and contributing to plans and actions to reduce homelessness i.e. what should they be doing?

Council Response

Involvement in the development and reviews of local authority Housing, Homelessness and Rough Strategies and achievement of actions.

Consultation with local authorities on the development and reviews of their key related policies and strategies.

Joint commissioning of services (for example health, support and supported accommodation services) that ensure a focus on the prevention of homelessness may be beneficial, in recognition of the positive impact of homelessness and homelessness prevention on wider outcomes.

Two-tier Authorities

The Government's view

It is vital that in two-tier areas districts and borough councils work closely and effectively together. The Government considers that this is not always the case. That in two-tier area there can be particular challenges associated with working relationships, capacity and resourcing as well as geographical and different objectives between local authorities.

Consultation Question 7

For homelessness services alone, what are your views on how effective two-tier working is in your area, the specific challenges in two-tier working and or the opportunities for strengthening joint working in two-tier areas?

Council Response

Despite having statutory responsibility for homelessness and homelessness prevention, the Borough Council has no decision making powers over County Council commissioned housing support and supported accommodation contracts.

There is therefore limited ability to influence criteria, or meet local need. There are concerns that funding could potentially be transferred from housing support services to other services for which the County Council do have a statutory responsibility. A County Council consultation is due to commence on the reduction in funding by £200k of a service currently available for the homeless.

Consultation Question 8

If you work in an area with two-tier local government, which individuals in a higher or lower tier of local government do you believe should have a responsibility for reducing homelessness and do you think they are already involved in strategic and operational conversations? Please explain your answer.

Council Response

Question 4 and 5 highlights those that should be involved a conversation at both a strategic and operational level from a housing and support point of view.

2. Homeless Reduction Boards

The Government's view

The challenge of reducing homelessness may not always be given the attention needed under existing statutory and non-statutory structures. For this reason, the Government are considering the merits of establishing a new structure – a Homelessness Reduction Board - that would be responsible for tackling homelessness in the local area.

The Government is seeking views on whether Homelessness Reduction Boards should be established and, should they be, how these Boards can most effectively be set up with the right incentives and characteristics which ensures local partners work together to reduce homelessness.

Consultation Question 9

What are your views on whether the aims for Homelessness Reduction Boards could be met by amending the remit and function of existing local non-statutory and or statutory structures?

Council Response

Existing non-statutory structures work well to ensure that the Council can deliver the aims of its homelessness strategy and prevent homelessness.

The Council's view is that to give prominence for the need to address homelessness, the Homelessness Reduction Board, should be a new Statutory Board, and not met by amending the remit and function of an existing Board/Group and be Chaired by a Member and or Officer assigned homelessness responsibility.

This should be for statutory services only.

Consultation Question 10

What are your views on the merits and drawbacks of establishing Homelessness Reduction Boards, and whether we should establish them?

Council Response

The Council considers that Homelessness Reduction Boards should be established.

However, to be successful this will require possible mandatory attendance from key groups such as Adult Social Services attendance.

The merits include:

- Would provide a clear platform for homelessness matters

- Established across all boroughs and districts would provide a clearer structure for sharing good practices and resolving common problems.

The drawbacks include:

- May be resource implications for those agencies who work cross boundaries in attending numerous Boards. However, this could be addressed if the government put in place appropriate resources to facilitate the appointment of additional officers.
- Potential impact of regulation and accountability structures on established collaboration and partnership working

Consultation Question 11

If we were to establish Homelessness Reduction Boards, what do you think their purpose and objectives should be?

Council Response

Strategic county-wide planning for the prevention and reduction of homelessness.

The Council considers that the main purpose of the Homelessness Reduction Board should be to ensure that resources available to statutory services and additional resources are appropriately used to prevent homelessness and achieve related outcomes, such as improved health and wellbeing and crime reduction.

Consultation Question 12

If we were to establish Homelessness Reduction Boards, in which authorities should Homelessness Reduction Boards be established (e.g. in all local authorities, areas of high homelessness, top-tier authorities only)?

Council Response

The local authority size and extent of homelessness is likely to influence the issues pertinent to areas. Hence, the decision as to which areas should establish a Homelessness Reduction Board should be left to the discretion of each local authority.

Consultation Question 13

Who should be members of Homelessness Reduction Boards?

Council Response

Homelessness Reduction Boards should include representation from all the relevant statutory services.

Consultation Question 14

What is needed to make Homelessness Reduction Boards effective (e.g. guidance, legislation, incentives etc)?

Council Response

There should be additional resources to support the facilitation of meetings and appropriate research to support decisions, interventions and key organisations should have a statutory responsibility to be represented on the Board. Consideration could be given for the Boards to publish an Annual Report setting proposed objectives.

Other ways of supporting Effective Partnership Working

Structures and roles are just one of the means by which local authorities develop effective partnerships and accountability arrangements. At the heart of successful partnership tends to be strong local leadership, where leaders across different organisations are able to foster effective working relationships that enable them to collectively agree and drive systemic change and better outcomes in the local area.

The Government understands that it is these informal leadership relationships and working arrangements, alongside individualised local responses to tackling homelessness that can be critical and have a significant impact.

Consultation Question 15

Other than, through the creation of structures and roles, how else do you encourage effective partnership working in your area?

Council Response

Regular liaison and partnership working at strategic and operational level with statutory and voluntary partners.

Consultation is carried out with statutory and voluntary partners on key policies and strategies (for example the Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy and Housing Allocations Policy).

Consultation Question 16

Where there is effective partnership working in your area, what are the characteristics of this and what makes the partnership effective?

Council Response

Strong strategic and operational level working relationships with voluntary organisations have been built up over time. Shared aims and a mutual understanding of obligations, priorities and constraints are key to these relationships.

Consultation Question 17

What data exists locally to help delivery partners design services and interventions to reduce homelessness and monitor implementation, and how effectively do you think the data that is available is used?

Council Response

The key data used to shape services is the Government's statistical returns such as P1E and H-Clic along with local knowledge.

H-Clic data collection is likely to be more effective at identifying risk of homelessness, once this is fully embedded. It would be helpful if data collected by organisations such as Adult Social Services, Probation Services have a statutory responsibility to share data at a local level on those who historically are at risk of becoming homeless. For example the number of prisoners likely to be released back into the community each year, number of care leavers due to leave care, number of people being treated for drug and alcohol abuse etc.

Consultation Question 18

Are there good examples of how data is being used effectively in your area and what do you think prevents the effective use of data?

Council Response

Data for previous homelessness applications is analysed and used to identify objectives for the Homelessness Strategy.

Consultation Question 19

What do you think we should consider and include in the design of the data pilots?

Council Response

Data collection should be concise and based on key issues and outcomes, to ensure that data is used effectively on a local level and local authority resources can focus on homelessness prevention activities.

Consultation and communication should be carried out with local authorities at the earliest possible opportunity to ensure that data collection is fit for purpose and to enable effective preparations for data collection (taking into account staffing and IT resource requirements).

Consultation Question 20

Do you think a Duty to Co-operate should be introduced and, if so, how do you think a Duty to Co-operate could be designed to work in practice, and what steps can we take to ensure that a duty is practical and effective?

Council Response

The Council is very supportive of this proposal.

There needs to be a clear definition of the assistance that local authorities can request from statutory bodies and when statutory bodies must co-operate with these requests. In addition there needs to be a structure for accountability and timely resolution of disputes.

Consultation Question 21

What else could the Government be doing to support partnership working across local delivery partners in an area to systemically reduce homelessness?

Council Response

The Government can ensure that there is sufficient long-term 'ring-fenced' funding available to support homelessness prevention services.

Consultation Question 22

Do you think that any of the issues discussed in this consultation could or already do have a disproportionate impact, positive or negative, on any individuals, in particular those with 'relevant protected characteristics' (i.e. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation)? Please provide evidence to support your response.

Council Response

No comment.

Consultation Question 22

How could any adverse impact be reduced and are there any ways we could better advance equality of opportunity? Please provide evidence to support your response.

Council Response

No comment.