

Strategic Housing Panel
Local Authority Gold Standard Challenge for Homelessness Services

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Clements
LEAD OFFICER: Julie Betteridge
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Summary and Recommendations

The National practitioner Support Service (NPSS) is a new service set up specifically to support local authorities to deliver early intervention and prevention housing options services and is funded by DCLG. NPSS have developed a 10 step continuous improvement approach that starts with a pledge for local authorities aspiring to 'strive for continuous improvement in front line housing services' and culminates in an application for the Gold Standard Challenge. All their resources are free, easy to use and have been developed by The National Housing Advice Service (NHAS).

The Homelessness Strategy 2013 – 2018 was endorsed by members in 2013. The strategy highlighted the councils commitment to achieving the Governments' Gold Standard benchmark for ending rough sleeping and preventing homelessness.

Members are requested to approve and monitor the attached action plan.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The NPSS has been working with NHAS and other partners in the sector such as Crisis, the Chartered Institute of Housing and Homeless Link, to develop the Gold Standard process.
- 1.2 The Gold Standard Challenge is a peer review scheme designed to help local authorities to deliver more efficient and cost effective homelessness prevention services.
- 1.3 The Gold Standard Challenge is based on the ten 'local challenges' set out in the second report from the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness "Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to the Prevention of Homelessness". It has been designed to support local authorities to deliver effective and efficient services that prevent and tackle homelessness effectively.

- 1.4 By achieving the 10 challenges, local authorities will be demonstrating that they have comprehensive prevention services in place for all clients, both the statutorily and non-statutorily homeless.

2. THE TEN CHALLENGES

- 2.1 To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services.
- 2.2 To actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.
- 2.3 To offer a Housing Options prevention services to all clients including written advice
- 2.4 To adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative
- 2.5 To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support
- 2.6 To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord
- 2.7 To actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
- 2.8 To have a homeless strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually to be responsive to emerging needs
- 2.9 To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
- 2.10 To not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and for no longer than 6 weeks.

3. Conclusion

The awarding of the Gold Standard will be based upon the result of a Peer Review, the Review Group will consider whether the service meets the criteria set out under the process, the list is quite extensive but there is no reason why the team cannot achieve the 60% pass rate. The team will still aim for 100%. Many of the requirements are already in place or being achieved, however, there is still a lengthy list of improvements or added services required for the team to meet the standards.

The attached action plan does not include any functions already being achieved to the required standards, only the items needed to improve or introduce

The Housing Options team deliver early intervention and prevention services to all residents and are already delivering several of the ten local challenges. Achieving Gold Standard would be recognition of the work they undertake and would enable the team to share best practice with other authorities.

ACTION PLAN-GOLD STANDARD

STAFFING

TASK NUMBER	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION REQUIRED	DESIGNATED OFFICER	TARGET DATE	COMPLETED
1	Regular performance monitoring in place with measurement against service objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly Housing Options team meetings to commence • Monthly staff supervision meetings to be introduced • Records of individual supervision documented • Annual or periodic appraisals to be undertaken 	Debbie Cochrane	On-going from 1 March 2014	
2	Staff time is managed effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote self-help for clients to reduce the pressure on front-line staff • Improve written information available for clients to reduce staff time spent on repetitive advice 	Debbie Cochrane <i>Customer service strategy/printed materials/website</i>	Oct 2014	

TRAINING

TASK NUMBER	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION REQUIRED	DESIGNATED OFFICER	TARGET DATE	COMPLETED
3	Ensure Housing Law and skills based training is delivered to staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure training plan is periodically updated • Highlight training needs to meet changing service demands 			Via appraisals/service plan

PROCEDURES

TASK NUMBER	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION REQUIRED	DESIGNATED OFFICER	TARGET DATE	COMPLETED
4	Procedure manual is in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete manual • Training on procedures introduced • Annual update actioned 	Kevin Earl Team to meet weekly to discuss and agree procedures	1 June 2014	
5	Local standards for Housing Options Service in place for effective delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update service standards • Monitor standards and document the results • Take positive action to improve results 	Jess Hall/Gill Reid	End June 2014	

CASE FILES

TASK NUMBER	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION REQUIRED	DESIGNATED OFFICER	TARGET DATE	COMPLETED
6	Operational practices demonstrate proactive advice and assistance is provided, appropriate documentation and evidence is in place and appropriate action is taken in all cases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full information and investigations to be documented on the case file and database • Decision letters to be issued in all cases where a risk of homelessness is identified • Periodic inspection of case files introduced 	Debbie Cochrane Include in procedure manual along with supervisor checks	1 May 2014	

CASE MONITORING

TASK NUMBER	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION REQUIRED	DESIGNATED OFFICER	TARGET DATE	COMPLETED
7	Periodic quality checks on cases is in place and documented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor staff workloads and performance against service standards Ensure equal staff workloads Introduce a limited number of performance indicators to measure workloads Introduce random check of case files 	Debbie Cochrane	Procedure in place by 1 April 2014	
8	Client feedback incorporated into service improvement plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse client feedback and improve service performance to meet client needs 	Jess Hall	1 October 2014	

ADVICE

TASK NUMBER	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION REQUIRED	DESIGNATED OFFICER	TARGET DATE	COMPLETED
9	Housing advice provided meets the needs of the client	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve written housing advice provided to clients Ensure consistency of advice provided Ensure advice and actions are practical and appropriate Ensure advice information is included in the case file 	Kevin Earl Standard letters/summary sheet	1 October 2014	
10	Clients continue to receive housing advice after a homeless decision is made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure support is provided to clients after a decision is made Advice to be provided to all clients irrespective of duty 	Jess Hall Team outlook diary	1 March 2014	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing options continue to be available if a full homeless duty is taken 			
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PREVENTION

TASK NUMBER	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION REQUIRED	DESIGNATED OFFICER	TARGET DATE	COMPLETED
11	The team will continue to work with partner agencies to prevent homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services are focused on early intervention and prevention Regular meetings introduced with partner agencies to coordinate the prevention of homelessness 	Debbie Cochrane/Julie Betteridge Training for partners/housing partnership	1 Oct 2014	
12	Proactive advice and support is provided for clients to sustain their existing accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisors to seek to sustain the clients existing accommodation before considering rehousing options Ensure prevention work is undertaken as a priority on the day of the interview Home visits are undertaken to negotiate reconciliation in cases of exclusion 	HOT	On-going	

CUSTOMER SERVICE

TASK NUMBER	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION REQUIRED	DESIGNATED OFFICER	TARGET DATE	COMPLETED
13	A copy of the Authority's complaints and comments policy is available and there is evidence this is followed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of policy being documented on case files Copies available to staff and clients 			
14	To ensure the housing options service is accessible to all clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a range of advice literature Ensure the information is available on-line 	Debbie Cochrane	1 October 2014	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve information available on the website 			
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NON-PRIORITY HOMELESS

TASK NUMBER	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION REQUIRED	DESIGNATED OFFICER	TARGET DATE	COMPLETED
15	Ensure anyone who is threatened with homelessness receives a 'baseline' service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all clients receive a minimum service to assist in preventing their homelessness and in finding alternative accommodation • Ensure referrals are made to partner agencies for support in meeting clients housing need 			

PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

TASK NUMBER	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION REQUIRED	DESIGNATED OFFICER	TARGET DATE	COMPLETED
16	Support available to access the private rented sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of options to be available to allow clients to access the private rented sector • New options for working with the private rented sector to be considered as appropriate 	Debbie Cochrane Policy, procedure/landlord forum		

INTER-AGENCY WORKING

TASK NUMBER	SERVICE STANDARD	ACTION REQUIRED	DESIGNATED OFFICER	TARGET DATE	COMPLETED
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17	Show effective use of free NHAS resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full details to be included in the procedure manual• Updates to be provided to Housing Options Advisors periodically			
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