

## **Local Authority Gold Standard Challenge for Homelessness Services**

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### **Summary and Recommendation:**

**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). Copeland is committed to continuous improvement for front line housing services and the Strategic Housing Panel is recommended to support the process for Gold Standard.**

## **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 The Diagnostic Peer Review Process**

- 3.1 The Diagnostic Peer Review is a key part of the Gold Standard Challenge and a Peer Review handbook is being developed which will be available to Local Authorities later this month. There is also a diagnostic peer review toolkit which can be used in many different ways by local authorities for example bite size reviews can be undertaken of specific elements of the service or mystery shopping exercises etc.

## **4. The Gold Standard Application Process**

- 4.1 The Gold Standard application itself is a voluntary process which involves participating local authorities demonstrating that they have met each of the ten local challenges outlined above.
- 4.2 An Advisory Committee comprising of the NPSS, voluntary sector partners, housing and local government membership organisations and, ultimately, recognised Gold Standard local authorities, will assess, verify and confirm attainment of Local Challenges.

## **5. Conclusion**

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.