

Report for Health Improvement Board on 20 October 2014

Housing related support services in Oxfordshire:

Proposed way forward following the consultation

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For discussion and decision

Recommendation

The Health Improvement Board members are asked to consider the proposed way forward following the consultation about housing related support services set out in this paper and recommend this proposed way forward for approval to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 13 November 2014 and final sign off by the County Council Cabinet on 16 December 2014.

Introduction

Housing related support services have largely been protected from cuts for the past four years, but the scale of financial challenge facing the County Council now has required action to be taken to reduce the budget by 38% in line with the actual funding available.

On 29 May 2014 the members of the Health Improvement Board agreed a proposal for how to implement the reduction of funding for housing related support services to go forward to consultation with other stakeholders.

This report outlines the findings from the public consultation that ran from 26 June to 17 September and sets out the proposed way forward following that consultation.

Background: What are we trying to achieve?

Given the complexity of the funding mechanisms in this area, and the interplay with district council housing responsibilities, substantial discussion took place with both housing officers and the county Chief Executive' and Leaders' groups prior to any formal external consultation.

Whilst district colleagues were unhappy at the proposed reductions they understand the scale of financial problems facing the county and after some debate and amendment, agreed on a set of principles which have guided our recent process. We believe that this has allowed us to put forward a realistic way through a very complex issue.

The agreed principles allow us to:

- Keep all hostels open
- Retain a pathway for single homeless people in Oxford City
- Retain complex needs service with access from across the county
- Retain community floating support across the county
- Increase accommodation based services outside Oxford city and particular in Banbury.

We said from the outset that these proposals would be challenging and difficult to implement. Results of this consultation confirm our view. However, they are achievable ***with some additional help from the county council*** and we are proposing to smooth the process by making available an additional £400k from Public Health funding and phasing the overall reduction in funding over two years.

In addition, it is clear that further work is required in relation to Domestic Violence services and these will be reviewed separately over the next year prior to any final decisions being taken about changes to current services.

Consultation responses

Overall, most responses were not in favour of the proposals. Alongside this overall view, there was good level of support for the proposals on principles and outcomes, and some support for specific elements of the proposed distribution of funding or of how future services could be commissioned and provided.

As part of this consultation we have identified a number of suggestions that we believe would make the original proposals more robust and flexible. Therefore we are proposing to make some changes to the original proposals, as set out in more detail in the rest of this paper.

In addition, this consultation provided a wealth of information and case studies to evidence potential impact of these proposals on vulnerable people, in particular on women and children, those from BME groups, or those with a disability. We welcome this robust contribution to the impact assessment process and will be revising the associated Social and Community Impact Assessment in November 2014.

Proposed Way Forward

The County Council believes that this core set of proposals should go ahead as they allow us to implement the required reduction in funding whilst keeping all hostels open in Oxford, retain a range of services across the county for people with different levels of need, and increase access to local services outside of Oxford, in particular in Banbury.

For discussion:

- *Do you agree with this proposed way forward?*

Next steps

Following today discussion at the Health Improvement Board the final reports would be submitted for approval to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 13 November and subsequent final sign off by the County Council Cabinet on 16 December 2014.

At the same time work is taking place within the joint-commissioning team to prepare for the implementation of the proposals, subject to final approval. This includes work to negotiate extensions on a sub-set of housing related support contracts that otherwise will expire on 31 January 2015, so that the end of these services can be aligned to the timeline for commissioning new services.

Detailed responses to consultation proposal

This section of the report first summarises the original proposal for each service area, secondly provides detailed responses received during consultation for that service area and finally suggests whether the proposal should be revised and how.

1 Principles and outcomes

The original proposal contained principles and outcomes for future housing related support services listed in the table below.

The commissioning principles we are proposing are:

- 1) Housing related support helps people to live independently and complements the delivery of statutory duties.
- 2) Housing related support funding should pay for support services, not 'bricks and mortar'.
- 3) Accommodation and building related costs should be paid for through housing funding streams such as rent, housing benefit and service charges.
- 4) There is a need for emergency accommodation across the county to prevent rough sleeping.
- 5) Support provided should meet a range of high to medium to low levels of needs.
- 6) Support provided should offer best value for money.

Proposed overarching outcomes:

- Economic wellbeing
- Enjoy and achieve
- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Make a positive contribution

Consultation responses

Overall, there was a good level of support for the proposed principles and outcomes with a number of constructive suggestions for additions. We welcome this support and will take these suggestions into account when we commission future services.

To be revised in response to consultation? Yes.

Proposed changes:

These principles and outcomes will be revised to take into account a number of suggestions we received. Following these revisions we expect the principles and outcomes to remain broadly the same.

Specific measures will be revised to add additional suggested measures, for example around management of arrears and other types of debt, reducing antisocial behaviour and taking up volunteering.

For discussion:

- *Do you agree with these proposed changes to principles and outcomes?*

2 Hostels

The original proposal for this service area is set out in the table below.

1. The first part of the proposal for hostels does not contribute to the savings. It is proposed to maintain the 56 bed spaces at O'Hanlon House and to create a new Assessment Centre. This will further reduce rough sleeping and be the entry point into the pathway of support services.
2. It is proposed to reduce funding for hostel-based support from £1.5m in 2014/15 to £1.1m in 2015/16. This is a proposed reduction of £450k or 28%.

It is proposed that this reduction in funding is achieved by:

- Commissioning support at a reduced cost of £18 per hour (support is currently paid for at between £18.50 and £25 per hour. Nationally the average cost of home support is £15 per hour)
- Reducing intensity of support at Simon House and Lucy Faithful House, with 23 bed spaces no longer having support attached

3. To make the changes from 2015/16

Consultation responses

There was a good level of support for using £18 per hour of support as a benchmark for commissioning housing related support in Oxfordshire. We have listened to a debate whether this figure should be used as a benchmark for future procurement or as a flat rate. Providers in particular expressed concerns over using this figure as a cap, as this may lead to some bidders undercutting others on price alone and providing poor quality unsustainable services as a result. It has also been suggested by a number of stakeholders that we should require providers as a matter of policy to pay a living wage to ensure business sustainability and high retention of local staff. We will take these issues into consideration when we commission these services. However, it is important to note that we do not require adult social care providers to pay the living wage when we commission those services.

There was support for retaining the O'Hanlon House beds spaces and the creation of an Assessment Centre.

With regard to reducing the intensity of support at hostels, overall, participants did not support this proposal. At the same time their comments contain a range of valuable suggestions about how to make future services more flexible, responsive to need and effective. We will take these suggestions into account when we design and commission future services.

In particular, we will retain the proposal to fund three emergency access beds (one in South and Vale, one in West and one in Cherwell) and to create an assessment centre as an entry to the pathway of services for homeless people, located at O'Hanlon House. We propose that this assessment centre has a larger capacity than the current seven No Second Night Out beds. We believe that together these changes would allow us to better meet the needs of street homeless people and are not supporting the view that direct access to hostels is a better solution. We, together with our housing authority partners, are committed to keeping the current No Second Night Out Policy under review and would seek opportunities to make it work better as we design and commission future services.

With respect to the proposal to create 23 'no support' beds in Simon House and Lucy Faithful House we have listened to the debate with providers and partners about how these may work in practice and are proposing to change this proposal. We will retain the reduction in funding for hostels the same, but are instead proposing to commission these beds with low level of support. This will allow us to retain all existing units of accommodation and sustain access to intensive housing management funding and move on options.

Alongside this proposal, we plan to commission future services in a more flexible way focusing on the number of people supported, their level of need and outcomes to be delivered. Under this type of arrangement, providers would have more flexibility over how to deliver their services and manage fluctuating support needs over time in

a more person-centred way - something both providers and service users have asked for as part of this consultation.

To be revised in response to consultation? Yes.

Proposed changes:

- We will commission an assessment centre that has a larger capacity than the current seven No Second Night Out beds.
- We will work with our housing authority partners to keep the No Second Night Out policy under review.
- We will reduce intensity of support at Simon House and Lucy Faithful House, with 23 bed spaces having low level of support attached, rather than no support at all.
- We will commission future services in a more flexible way focusing on the number of people supported, their level of need and outcomes to be delivered.
- When we commission housing related support we would consider further whether £18 per hour of support should be used as a benchmark, a flat rate or a cap on price, and whether to require providers to pay their staff a living wage

For discussion:

- *Do you agree with these proposed changes to the proposals for hostels?*

3 Move on accommodation

The original proposal for this service area is set out in the table below bellow.

The detailed proposals for move on accommodation

1. It is proposed to retain provision of three emergency access beds in Cherwell, South and Vale and West Oxfordshire. This part of the proposal does not have savings attached and aims to improve access and better meet the needs of local population.
2. It is proposed to reduce funding for move on accommodation from £488k in 2014/15 to £413k in 2015/16. This is a proposed reduction of £75k or 15%.

It is proposed that this reduction in funding is achieved by:

- Reducing intensity of support at Julian Housing, with eight out of the 83 bed spaces no longer having support attached
- Reducing capacity at West Oxfordshire Single Homeless service by four bed spaces or £39k, to better reflect the needs of local population

- Transferring the Cherwell Connection project into the main adult homeless pathway from the substance misuse pathway
- Increasing Cherwell funding to £100k to support developing services for single homeless people to better meet the needs of local population

3. To make the changes from 2015/16.

Consultation responses

Overall, participants did not support this proposal. However, there was support for increasing Cherwell funding. Additional comments made by respondents were similar to those made about the hostels, as set out above. In response to these suggestions, we similarly propose to replace 8 'no support' beds at Julian Housing with low support beds.

This will mean that we will retain the reduction in funding for all move on accommodation the same, but are instead proposing to commission these 8 beds with low level of support. This will allow us to retain all existing units of move on accommodation and sustain access to intensive housing management funding and move on options.

In addition, as we design and commission future services, we will carefully reconsider the length of time all housing related support services are provided for at each stage of the pathway and in total. In doing so we aim to target support at those who need it most and incentivise service users and providers to work together to achieve greater independence (also called 'progression through and out of the pathway'). This in turn will improve move on rates overtime and prevent people from becoming institutionalised. This is something service users feel passionate about and asked us to improve. We also recognise that availability of affordable accommodation in Oxfordshire is a challenge. We are committed to working with our housing authority partners and providers to address these issues in the long term.

To be revised in response to consultation? Yes.

Proposed changes:

- We will reduce intensity of support at Julian Housing, with eight out of the 83 bed spaces having low levels of support attached, rather than no support at all.
- We will reconsider the length of time all housing related support services are provided for at each stage of the pathway and in total. In doing so we aim to target support at those who need it most and incentivise service users and

providers to work together to achieve greater independence and prevent people from becoming institutionalised.

- We will continue to work with our housing authority partners and providers to address issues about availability of affordable accommodation in Oxfordshire.

For discussion:

- *Do you agree with these proposed changes to the proposals for move on accommodation?*

4 Community floating support

The original proposal for this service area is set out in the table below bellow.

1. It is proposed to reduce funding for floating support from £1.2m in 2014/15 to £0.9m in 2016/17. This is a proposed reduction of £390k or 31%.

It is proposed that this reduction in funding is achieved by:

2. Commissioning new innovative models of community based support including 1:1 and group support
3. Making the saving in two phases - 15% reduction in 2015/16 and a further reduction in 2016/17. This allows any learning from using the new models of support in the first year to be applied when planning the second year.

Consultation responses

Overall, participants did not support this proposal. We recognise the value of this service in preventing homelessness through practical support around tenancy sustainment for a wide range of households and its flexibility of access, especially in rural areas. We have listened to the debate about the merits of 1:1 support versus potential future use of group support. We will retain the proposal to phase the reduction in floating support funding over two years and to allow sufficient time for us to learn from other models of floating support developing nationally and locally.

To be revised in response to consultation? No.

For discussion:

- *Do you agree with this proposed response about community floating support?*

5 Substance misuse services

The original proposal for this service area is set out in the table below bellow.

1. It is proposed to reduce funding for substance misuse from £214k in 2014/15 to £0 in 2016/17. This is a proposed reduction of £214k or 100%. However, services will still be provided.

Julian Housing in Oxford will continue to be available for move on accommodation from treatment services. In addition, the Public Health Team is already in the process of re-commissioning treatment services which will pick up these needs, providing £150k of subsidy.

2. It is proposed that the reduction in funding is achieved by:

Stopping funding Howard House, Project 195 and Osney Court

3. To make the changes from 2015/16

Consultation responses

Overall, participants did not support this proposal. Based on the consultation feedback, we have recognised that most respondents found this part of the proposal confusing. They appeared to have understood that a proposed 100% reduction in housing related support will lead to the closure of current services - Project 195 and Osney Court, and to no provision of future support to people addressing their substance misuse issues. This was not the intention of the original proposal.

To clarify our intension, we will make it clearer in our response to the consultation that although we do indeed plan to stop funding support for people in this group from the housing related support budget in full, we are at the same time proposing that these needs are met in future through the Public Health funding.

Public Health are the lead commissioners of drug and alcohol treatment services in Oxfordshire and will be addressing the housing related support needs of this group of people going forward. £150k from the additional total £400 Public Health funding mentioned earlier in this paper has been put aside for this purpose. The future of Project 195 service will be decided when this transfer of commissioning responsibility takes place.

We will retain the proposal to stop funding in full Osney Court service. As originally stated, move on services such as Julian Housing will continue to be available to accommodate people leaving treatment services.

To be revised in response to consultation? No.

However we propose to clarify our intention in the original proposal as follows:

- We do indeed plan to stop funding support for people in this group from the housing related support budget in full, we are at the same time proposing that these needs are met in future through the Public Health funding.
- Public Health as the lead commissioners of drug and alcohol treatment services in Oxfordshire will be addressing the housing related support needs of this group of people going forward.
- £150k from the additional total £400 Public Health funding mentioned earlier in this paper has been put aside for this purpose.
- The future of Project 195 service will be decided when this transfer of commissioning responsibility takes place.
- We will stop funding in full Osney Court service. Move on services such as Julian Housing will continue to be available to accommodate people leaving treatment services.

For discussion:

- *Do you agree with this proposed response about substance misuse services?*

6 Domestic abuse services

The original proposal for this service area is set out in the table below bellow.

1. It is proposed to reduce funding for domestic abuse from £331k in 2014/15 to £199k in 2016/17. This is a proposed reduction of £132k or 40%; subject to a strategic review over the next year
2. It is proposed that the need for local helpline, access and outreach services is reviewed to develop the most efficient and cost effective service distribution.
3. The savings plans will be based on this review and will be put in place in 2016/17

Consultation responses

Overall, participants did not support this proposal. We acknowledge the strength of concern expressed by a wide range of stakeholders, including service users, about the proposal to reduce funding for these services by 40% in 2016/17.

We recognise that any reduction of funding for these services needs to be planned carefully as to do otherwise is likely to have an adverse impact on women and children these services support. Wellbeing and safety of vulnerable women and children who flee from domestic abuse is paramount for the council.

This is why we have said in the original proposal that we would not implement the proposed reduction in funding until we have conducted a strategic review of these services and developed a set of proposals specifically for these services. We have allowed a year for this work to take place. We remain committed to this original intention and will undertake a separate consultation on specific domestic abuse proposals when they have been produced following that review.

To be revised in response to consultation? N/A: further work required

The wellbeing and safety of vulnerable women and children who flee from domestic abuse is paramount for the council. This is why we have said in the original proposal that we would not implement the proposed reduction in funding until we have conducted a strategic review of these services and developed a set of proposals specifically for these services.

We have allowed a year for this work to take place. We remain committed to this original intention and will undertake a separate consultation on specific domestic abuse proposals when they have been produced following that review.

For discussion:

- *Do you agree with this proposed response about domestic abuse services?*

7 Overall balance of reduction in funding

Consultation responses

Overall, participants did not support this proposal. At the same time, a number of suggestions have been made about different ways we could divide the overall saving required between service areas or about alternative funding sources which could be contributing to housing related support.

To be revised in response to consultation? No.

We have considered these suggestions carefully. On balance, the consultation did not produce a viable robust set of alternative proposals which we believe would enable us to both deliver the required reduction in funding and the strategic aims we have set out at the beginning of the proposals. Therefore we will keep to the original set of proposals, subject to a number of specific changes set out in this report.

We remain committed to doing so in close partnership with other stakeholders and will continue to seek opportunities to commission services for vulnerable people jointly to achieve better targeting and maximisation of available resources.

For discussion:

- *Do you agree with this proposed response about overall balance of reduction in funding?*

8 Social and Community Impact Assessment

We welcome all comments we received on the Social and Community Impact Assessment that was part of this consultation, in particular additional information, data and case studies made available to us by a number of respondents.

We acknowledge that the impact assessment should be revised to include key findings from this consultation, especially with regard to potential impact for women and children, those from BME groups and those with a disability. We will do so as we take this work forward and will make a revised impact assessment available in November 2014.

To be revised in response to consultation? Yes.

The Social and Community Impact Assessment will be revised to include key findings from this consultation, especially with regard to potential impact for women and children, those from BME groups and those with a disability.

For discussion:

- *Do you agree with these proposed changes to the Social and Community Impact Assessment?*