

ANGUS COUNCIL

Housing Committee – 26 August 2004

CO-ORDINATION AND ACCESS TO HOUSING AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR ALL HOMELESS YOUNG PEOPLE IN ANGUS

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

ABSTRACT

This report seeks approval of recommendations arising from the research undertaken by Ann Rosenguard Associates into “Co-ordination and Access to Housing and Support Services for All Young Homeless People in Angus”

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended to Members that they:

- i. Note the content and recommendations of the study;
- ii. Approve the action plan to address the issues identified by the study

2. BACKGROUND

A Review of Homelessness undertaken in 2002 identified that 24% of all homelessness presentations were made by young people under the age of 25. Following this the Angus Homelessness Strategy 2003-08 was produced which incorporated a dedicated Youth Homelessness Strategy with the following aims and objectives:

To bring forward a range of measures to prevent and alleviate homelessness amongst young people by:

- i. Ensuring that there is a holistic approach to assessing housing and related needs
- ii. Providing a range of accommodation and support
- iii. Developing services which allow young people to take up and sustain tenancies
- iv. Allowing young people to make informed choices about moving on to more independent living
- v. Promoting a joined up approach to devising routes out of homelessness

In light of the local context of youth homelessness, the objectives of the Youth Homelessness Strategy and the national context of new duties on local authorities to assist homeless people Ann Rosenguard Associates were commissioned to undertake research into “Co-ordination and Access to Housing and Support Services for all Homeless Young People in Angus” in March 2003.

The study brief identified 11 objectives to be addressed with the main aim of the research being to produce proposals to improve the co-ordination of, and access to, housing and

support services for all homeless young people, including young people who have been “looked after” by the local authority.

A copy of the Final Report is available in the Members Lounge.

3. MAIN FINDINGS

The study identified that there were two primary processes for assessing and supporting homeless young people and other young people moving to independence.

For young people leaving care, the Housing Consortium offered a planned route to accommodation, normally a mainstream secure tenancy, and a structured package of support. There were indications that the support did not always meet the young person’s needs and the lack of choice in both support provider and housing option could be viewed as restrictive.

For young people presenting as homeless the emphasis has been on determining their homelessness status, with little focus on support needs. There were no formal assessment of needs undertaken, limited availability of support in temporary accommodation, little follow on support and assessment facilities were under utilised.

The study also identified the lack of a training plan or strategy for tenancy support staff working with young homeless people.

Although there were a number of policies, protocols and procedures in place for responding in an integrated way to housing health and social care needs there was a lack of policies specifically related to homelessness and potential homelessness. A need for additional policies and procedures in relation to health and safety and rights in temporary accommodation was also identified.

Overall the study identified that there was a distinct lack of choice and a poor range of options on offer in Angus, both in relation to temporary and permanent accommodation. There was also a lack of formal mechanisms in place to ensure that the full range of housing options were available to young homeless people as well as a lack of formal assessment procedures.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The key recommendations from the study are:

- Develop and ensure a broader range of temporary accommodation options as identified in the Temporary Accommodation and Support Strategy.
- Address the lack of supported accommodation for specific client groups
- Develop and ensure a broader range and choice of support providers
- Initial Assessment support needs should be carried out when young people present as homeless, with a further assessment when they are in temporary accommodation. Dedicated staff should be responsible for conducting assessments in temporary accommodation. All homeless people should be involved in assessing their own needs, as is emphasised in the Guidance on young people leaving care, and by the Care Commission.
- Follow on support should be provided for those who need this after rehousing.
- Angus Council should pilot the Personal Housing Plan (PHP) with homeless young people, amending this in light of the pilot exercise
- The Housing Consortium agreement should be reviewed and revised to reflect changes since its introduction a decade ago, including local government reorganisation and the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001.
- The range of housing and tenancy options available via the Consortium is enhanced to recognise the needs of young people
- Formal protocols are developed to ensure that young people previously looked after are re-referred to the Consortium should they present as homeless
- Longer term housing and support outcomes for young people who have left care are monitored closely and a review is conducted one to two years after implementing the new through care and aftercare responsibilities.
- Angus Council should carry out a training needs audit and develop a plan for delivering training on an on-going basis
- A programme for joint training should be developed to allow local authority departments and other agencies to be better understand each others service and remits
- Policies, procedures and protocols should be developed, relating to the prevention and alleviation of homelessness, covering the areas identified through the study

5. ACTION PLAN

The study was carried out at a time of rapid change and considerable progress in the provision of accommodation and related support services.

The consultants identified evidence that certain recommendations emerging from the study confirmed earlier strategic recommendations with some already in the process of implementation as the study moved to completion.

Changes in process for all young homeless people included:

- Increasing the range of temporary accommodation;
- Expansion and development of the Tenancy Support team following Supporting People funding and;
- Progress towards complying with the Care Commission Standards;

- For young people leaving care the Regulations and Guidance on young people, who have left local authority care, were being implemented.

The work to date on the above areas is to continue and be consolidated.

Priorities for action are:

- Work with partner agencies and organisations to broaden the range and choice of support providers
- Work with partner agencies and organisations to address the lack of supported accommodation for specific client groups
- Develop a clear process for accessing support for all young homeless people
- Implement a structured assessment process, and relevant assessment tools, for all young homeless people
- Pilot and evaluate the Personal Housing Plan, noting and identifying duplication with the “Single Shared Assessment” or “Pathway Assessment”
- Revise the Housing Consortium agreement to; include a role in identifying and agreeing, as well as monitoring, outcomes; reflect changes since its introduction; identify unmet need and inform development
- Enhance the range of options and outcomes available via the Housing Consortium including a greater use of Housing Association accommodation
- Appraise, and report back in due course on, the feasibility of the revised Housing Consortium’s remit being extended to all young homeless people under 25
- Develop a training plan for Tenancy Support staff
- Develop policies, procedures and protocols to address the gaps identified in the study
- Actively consult with young homeless people to inform and develop current and future housing and support services

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Any costs associated with implementing the recommendations would be contained within current departmental budgets.

7. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no Human Rights implications arising from this report.

8. CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, Director of Social Work & Health, Director of Finance and Director of Law & Administration has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

9. CONCLUSION

Implementation of the Action Plan, as detailed in Item 4, is fundamental to achieving co-ordination of a comprehensive assessment process and delivery of an enhanced range of housing and support services for young homeless people.

Implementation of the action plan will also ensure compliance with the Regulation of Care standards, Supporting People and other legislative requirements.

Overall there should be a wider range of housing and support services reflective of the needs of all young homeless people ensuring that all young homeless people who require support to maintain a tenancy have these needs identified and met.

The issues identified in the report and relevant actions within the action plan will, also, be taken forward as part of the new Children's Services Plan 2005 –2008.

Ron Ashton
Director of Housing

Note:- No background papers, as defined by Section 50d of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied upon to any material extent in preparing this report.