



HULL SUPPORTED HOUSING PILOT KEY MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

About Homeless Link

[Homeless Link](#) is the national membership charity for services working directly with people experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness with housing, health, care and support needs.

Representing over 800 organisations across England, we work to improve services through research, guidance and learning, and to promote policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.

We aim to bring about positive policy change as well as providing practical support to individual organisations. Our Innovation and Good Practice (IGP) Team runs a range of special projects including focuses on welfare reform; the future of supported housing rents; the Homelessness Reduction Act; Housing First; Ending Women's Homelessness and Youth Homelessness.

We are a leading training provider delivering both public and in-house courses around the country to local authorities, registered housing providers, third sector and charitable organisations and service user groups across housing, homelessness, support, health & social care and criminal justice services.

We have a strong consultancy service; our staff and bank of associates nationwide support members across the spectrum of their activities from the strategic - strategy development, business planning, service evaluation, commissioning and workforce development - through to the operational, such as policies and procedures and rent setting. Our team brings many years' operational and consultancy experience as well as a strong understanding of the sectors in which we work, and an empathy with the daily challenges that staff face. We have experience working with large and small providers from local authorities to the smallest charities, and with commissioners and service providers.

This document summarises findings from discussions with staff, managers and service users within Hull commissioned and non-commissioned providers. Detailed findings in relation to both groups of stakeholders have been provided previously in separate reports.

Key Messages

Support Work

Both commissioned and non-commissioned providers have processes in place to manage referrals, keyworking and support planning. Commissioned providers perceive needs and risk information received via the SPOA is often incomplete, leading some to carry out their own internal referral process and to seek the right to refuse referrals.

Support work in commissioned and non-commissioned services is responsive and person-centred, but not always well-structured, ie: there may not be formal keywork sessions or support plans in place. The quality and pro-activity of support can vary according to individual workers. This can create difficulties in articulating support outcomes achieved.

Commissioned hostel providers and some non-commissioned providers consider current staffing arrangements limit capacity to deliver support to clients. In some non-commissioned projects, staff are essentially lone workers: this removes clients' choice of keyworker and means there are limited opportunities for staff to discuss and find solutions to casework issues.

There is potential to adopt the Outcomes Star as a common framework across all supported housing providers, to demonstrate and measure clients' progression towards identified outcomes. The Outcomes Star is already utilised by many commissioned and some non-commissioned providers, although several versions are currently used and providers vary in how and when readings are made. Outcomes Star take-up amongst non-commissioned providers is likely to be increased by SART's offer of a free three-year licence.

Both commissioned and non-commissioned providers are committed to developing a PIE framework to deliver support. However, work to date has largely related to improving the physical environment and understanding of how PIE can support work around clients' complex needs and challenging

behaviour is less well understood. Similarly, the concept of trauma-informed practice (TIC) is not yet integrated into providers' practice.

Whilst practice around evictions is improving, eg: some commissioned and non-commissioned providers now seek to arrange sideways moves as an alternative, clients may still be evicted from some projects on the grounds of moderate rent or service charge arrears.

There is scope to develop multi-agency working. This includes:

- Improving access to mental health and substance misuse services
- Where relevant, aligning supported housing providers' support plans with those of statutory services
- Utilising the MEAM approach to facilitate move-on for clients with higher support needs.

Accommodation and the physical environment

Discussions indicate it is challenging to manage clients' complex needs within large hostels. The cluster model being developed by some commissioned providers is considered to be beneficial – producing a calmer environment, with fewer incidents and better client outcomes/less incidences of repeat homelessness.

Commissioned providers indicate there is a value in retaining shared housing for young people, as this this can help create a community/'family' environment. Non-commissioned providers suggest the shared living environment can be improved via: creating an on-site office space, using a 24-hour on-call system, having secure buildings and carrying out daily welfare checks.

Commissioned providers indicate it would be beneficial to increase capacity of emergency beds and Housing First provision; establish intermediate care and wet house provision.

Move On

All providers agree the value of pre-tenancy training in supporting move-on, particularly for young people and clients with an offending background. There is less consensus about what pre-tenancy preparation should contain; some commissioned providers consider it is not possible to provide adequate tenancy preparation within current contract values.

Discussions with clients around likely move-on options do not take place consistently across all providers.

Some non-commissioned providers are reluctant to commit to move-on within the standard maximum two-year length of stay, especially for clients who have higher support needs. Discussions indicate other potential barriers to timely move-on:

- Hull City Council's Nominations Policy, which requires rent arrears to be cleared before this takes place
- Insufficient supply of one-bed flats (the preferred option of most clients)
- The perceived poor physical quality of some move-on accommodation
- The belief that PRS landlords are unwilling to offer tenancies to homeless people, due to potential rent arrears and challenging behaviour.
- Commissioned providers also indicate that accommodation pathway throughput could be improved by removing the expectation for clients with lower support needs to live in first and second stage accommodation before living independently.

Floating support is viewed as facilitating successful move-on. Whilst current floating support services are valued, there is a need to:

- Increase overall supply of floating support
- Extend the standard support offer (currently six weeks)
- Increase focus of floating support services on developing clients' independent living skills, to avoid future tenancy breakdown.

Workforce Development Issues

Non-commissioned providers indicate varying awareness of and support for the Supported Housing Provider Charter and its aims to improve the quality and consistency of service delivery. However, there is strong interest in SART's training programme, especially in relation to the Outcomes Star.

As outlined above, there is scope for additional training around PIE and TIC approaches. Discussions also indicate there the potential value of ensuring all frontline staff are full trained in person-centred and strengths-based practice.

Other Issues

Housing Benefit procedures are perceived as being slow and bureaucratic, eg in response to changes in clients' circumstances.

Some non-commissioned providers would like greater flexibility around changing enhanced HB to general needs awards, to facilitate entry into work.

Recommendations to inform the Position Statement

Support Work

Commissioned providers

To improve the referrals process and reduce refusals, Hull City Council should:

- Review expectations around the amount/quality of needs and risk assessment information provided
- Explore the potential for creating an integrated needs and risk assessment for all commissioned providers
- Explore the possibility of creating a shared database for commissioned housing providers, backed up with formal information-sharing arrangements

Non-commissioned providers

Enhance SART checks to ensure:

- Regular formal keywork sessions take place, which offer opportunities for comprehensive discussion of issues and which can demonstrate Engagement Tracker requirements
- Support plans are strengths-based, regularly reviewed/updated and align with support plans developed by statutory agencies, where applicable
- Questions seek to understand client experience around skills learned and goals achieved.
- Continue to promote the Supported Housing Provider Charter as a means of promoting consistency of practice amongst non-commissioned supported housing providers

Commissioned and non-commissioned providers

SART/Hull City Council should:

- Continue to promote the Outcomes Star as a sector-wide progression tool, backed up with an offer of free training and licences to promote uptake amongst non-commissioned providers.
- Support effective partnership working by:

- Promoting the MEAM model
- Developing joint training with mental health and substance misuse services, to enhance awareness of homeless clients/homeless services.

In relation to evictions:

- Review commissioned and non-commissioned accommodation providers' practice in this area and establish expectations around eviction on the grounds of moderate rent and service charge arrears
- Explore how commissioned providers can communicate via the SPOA in relation to clients at risk of eviction.

Accommodation and the physical environment

- Explore funding options to increase the use of cluster models within hostels
- Explore the viability of providing office space and 24-hour on-call services within all non-commissioned supported accommodation, including costings
- Explore possibilities to increase Housing First and emergency bed provision.

Move On

Non-commissioned providers

- Enhance SART's visit pro-forma to request additional information on the nature of move-on discussions
- Explore the possibility of an annual move-on review process. This would require providers to evidence the need for on-going support for clients receiving an enhanced HB payment.

Hull City Council should:

With commissioned providers

- Review the accommodation pathway model and explore the possibility of setting up a 'fast track' for clients with lower support needs.

With commissioned and non-commissioned providers

- Explore the potential to enhance resources for tenancy preparation work, prioritising projects which accommodate young people and people with an offending background
- Review Hull City Council's Nominations Policy
- Seek to increase the supply of good quality self-contained move-on accommodation by:

- Exploring if supported accommodation providers can increase access to their own self-contained stock
- Work to reassure private rented sector landlords about letting properties to homeless tenants.

Review floating support provision to explore:

- The feasibility of a standard six-month support period
- How to increase focus on developing independent living skills

Workforce development

Offer training to commissioned and non-commissioned providers around:

- Strengths-based and person-centred practice
- PIE and TIC approaches
- Homeless Outcomes Star
- Consider establishing a Communities of Practice to improve networking and good practice-sharing opportunities for staff in non-commissioned supported accommodation

Other issues

With the Housing Benefit Team, explore:

- How to achieve speedier reviews of change of circumstances
- What flexibility exists for changing enhanced HB claims to general needs awards to facilitate entry into employment.