

## The single homelessness service for the sub-region – May 2013

### Question and answer sheet on how it will work

#### What is 'the single homelessness service'?

The single homelessness service aims to offer accommodation to a single homeless person. Essentially this could be into any type of accommodation as long as it alleviates homelessness and ensures that the individual does not have to sleep rough. The expectation is that a single homeless person approaching any of the 8 districts within the cluster (see below) will get an offer of accommodation anywhere within one of the 8 districts within 24 hours to align with the national *No Second Night Out* strategy to tackle rough sleeping. So, for example, someone approaching Forest Heath might get an offer in Fenland or Peterborough. The following day someone may approach East Cambridgeshire and secure accommodation in Cambridge.

#### Where did this concept come from and how will delivering this idea be resourced?

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has issued a number of single homelessness fund allocations to clusters of local authorities across the country. Our local sub-regional cluster comprises of the following authorities:

Cambridge City Council  
South Cambridgeshire District Council  
East Cambridgeshire District Council  
Huntingdonshire District Council  
St Edmundsbury District Council  
Forest Heath District Council  
Peterborough City Council  
Fenland District Council

The fund available to our sub region is £323,000. This money can be spent over a number of years or can be spent in one go.

#### Who is eligible for the single homelessness service?

A customer will qualify for the single homelessness service if they meet all of the following criteria:

- § Aged over 18
- § Assessed by a Housing Advice Team or designated local services as being at risk of rough sleeping
- § Does not already have a tenancy elsewhere

The single homelessness service is not designed for those who require supported housing provision or who are likely to be considered a 'priority need' for accommodation under the 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the 2002 Homelessness Act). The above definition allows for some local discretion but we will work towards a common assessment process.

Housing advice teams will be trained to assess whether a customer qualifies under the above criteria using a model developed specifically for this purpose.

As stated above, this process should not compromise housing advisor assessments of homeless applicants, under homelessness legislation. If the customer is homeless and likely to be in priority need, a homeless application should be taken. If not the single homelessness service will come into play.

### **Yes, but what about support?**

We will need a responsive support service ('rapid response service') that can operate across the 8 districts. This could be a service that offers immediate help until a referral to mainstream floating support services can be accepted (if required). Customers referred into a supported housing scheme should not require additional support until they move on. For customers with more chaotic lifestyles, who have a history of falling between gaps in service provision, a referral to the countywide Chronically Excluded Adults service can be made for consideration. For those with reasonable prospects of employment the rapid response service could aim to link the person into local employment support services in the area they are moving to. This could be critical in helping customers to settle in, especially, if it is in an area they are not familiar with.

A rapid response service could augment the work already done by the chronically excluded adults service at Cambridgeshire County Council but would serve all 8 districts in this cluster.

### **How will the single homelessness service process work in practice?**

We will be approaching accommodation providers across the 8 districts to encourage them to join the partnership to make this scheme work. The accommodation providers could be offering:

- Self contained flats or houses, which may be hard-to-let or operate outside of the choice based lettings (CBL) system
- Shared houses
- Co-ops
- Training flats
- Lodging schemes

The accommodation providers will be asked to sign up to the scheme and accept any referral of a single homeless person who has a local connection to the sub region and who meets the criteria for that scheme. Likewise local authorities should be attempting to resolve homelessness for all single homeless people with a connection to one of the 8 districts even if the connection is not to their own district. Those districts with a reconnection policy (Peterborough and Cambridge) will redraft their reconnections policies to allow customers who have a connection to one of the eight districts into the homelessness services they offer. Other authorities will sign up to a sub-regional reconnections protocol.

The process of alleviating a person's homelessness will, in many cases, operate in two-stages. The first stage will be to tackle the customer's immediate homelessness and the second stage will be to offer a longer-term option either in social or private rented housing. As social rented housing is in short supply across the region the supply of additional private rented options will be critical.

All local authority partners in the scheme will sign up to a common assessment system currently used by Cambridge City Council called IN-FORM or the CAPITA system being developed in St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath. The system will retain customer details and provide information about their support needs, housing history etc. Once a customer is logged on to this system there is no need to re-refer to projects in the single homelessness service scheme. The projects may all need to own licences to access the scheme.

The accommodation providers will use IN-FORM to record void beds on a daily basis.

### **Private rented accommodation**

The local authority sub-regional partners to this scheme commissioned a PRS procurement study. We wanted to consider whether a local lettings agency model could help deliver more housing options for homeless people, but for single people in particular, in order to support the single homelessness service. One of the key recommendations from the report is that the sub-region could develop a small local lettings agency model based on the development of packages for landlords willing to offer 3 bedroom properties to let to sharers. Following discussions with sub-regional partners it has been proposed that Cambridge City Council pilots such a scheme on behalf of the sub-region and that other local authority partners can 'opt in' at a later stage if they wish.

### ***The process in detail***

Housing advisors / housing options staff within local authorities will, upon receiving an approach from a single homeless person, record or update the customer details on IN-FORM

The housing advisor will check availability on the voids list on IN-FORM and, on identifying a match, will contact the housing provider to try and secure a bed space  
Once a bed space is identified the advisor will generate a letter from the IN-FORM system

The housing advisor will also check private rented housing availability across the sub-region.

If no bed spaces are identified the housing advisor will refer the customer to temporary accommodation to be identified by the local authority that had first contact with the customer.

Once an offer has been made the Housing Advisor will confirm the offer using a standard single homelessness service letter template.

### **What other accommodation can be found?**

There may be other providers that have hard-to-let or temporarily void accommodation that may be available on a short-term basis such as schemes earmarked for refurbishment.

### **What happens if the customer refuses an offer from the single homelessness service?**

If a single service offer is refused the customer will remain on a list of people who may require assistance but is likely to be given less priority than someone else who has not received an offer or who has had a change of circumstances. The single homelessness service coordinator will devise a procedure to re-prioritise cases accordingly.

### **What services will be offered to those who do not have a local connection to one of the 8 councils in the cluster?**

In general no service will be offered other than basic street outreach services if the person is a rough sleeper and payment for travel to return to the area where a local connection is held unless there are exceptional circumstances such as a) no local connection anywhere b) the person is too ill to travel.

If the local authority is not offering assistance and providing payment for travel the advisor should notify the designated single homelessness service contact within the receiving local authority.

### **How will all of this be developed?**

As the coordinating authority Cambridge City will provide a full time officer (our current Landlord Liaison Officer (LLO)) to set the project up – a project development role. We will provide this resource at no cost to the project budget. The project development will be overseen primarily by the Housing Advice Partnerships Manager and the Deputy Housing Needs Manager at Peterborough City Council and regular reports will go to the sub-regional homelessness group and the Cambridgeshire Countywide Homelessness Executive. The project coordinator will be funded from the single homelessness fund and will be employed by Cambridge City Council to support all 8 local authority partners to deliver this scheme. We hope the coordinator will be in post by the end of July 2013.

The coordinator will work closely alongside the LLO (performing the project development role) and will:

- Provide training and information to housing advisors across the 8 districts
- Liaise with support providers, landlords and other professionals to ensure that the accommodation placement starts off on the right footing
- Ensure that IT systems are working effectively are fit for purpose and deliver all the necessary outcome information
- Recruit new housing providers to join the scheme
- Provide advice to all partners engaged in the scheme
- Liaise with other the single homelessness service clusters as appropriate

### **What are we spending the money on?**

We have committed £25,000 to extend the funding for an officer working with people who have no recourse to public funds and are either sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough. We have also commissioned a study into private rented sector (PRS) procurement across the sub region. The study will help us to make the work we are doing in this area more effective by making some key recommendations for improvement. Alleviating homelessness and working towards a single homelessness service approach will be highly dependent on getting our private rented sector delivery right.

We will require £35,000 per annum for each of the following 3 posts:

- The single homelessness service Coordinator
- Rapid response support officer x 2

We may also need some money for IN-FORM licences for accommodation providers and district authorities so that their staff can use the system. These are currently £85 per annum

each. We are targeting 28 housing providers across the sub-region (10 Cambridge providers are already IN-FORM licence holders). The expectation would be that licence holders would pay for their own after year 1 if they wanted to remain in the scheme.

We will also be reviewing the availability of money and debt advice across the cluster.

The annual budget, therefore, could look something like this:

Area of expenditure	Annual commitment
No recourse to public funds (NRPF) worker	£25,000 <sup>1</sup>
The single homelessness service coordinator	£35,000
Rapid response service	£70,000
IN-FORM licences	£5000 (year 1 only)
<b>Total</b>	<b>£135,000</b>

In addition to this we have already committed **£19,950** to PRS procurement study.

#### **What about the costs of travel from one part of the sub-region to another?**

Initially this will be funded from Cambridge City Council Homelessness Grant under spend or using any remaining monies in the sub-regional pot.

#### **When will the scheme start**

We are anticipating that the single homelessness service programme will start in September 2013. It may be a while before the scheme is working at maximum efficiency but we are aiming to work towards that goal within the first year.

#### **The funding is for a limited period. What is the exit plan?**

The initial funding should last from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. Thereafter, assuming that Homelessness grant continues beyond 2015, authorities will give consideration to offering a pro-rata proportion of its homelessness grant to ensure that the project continues.

Based on the funds outlined above the figures below show the potential ongoing contribution per authority per annum beyond March 2015.

Sub regional partner	Homelessness grant allocation	as a proportion of total sub-regional allocation %	Potential ongoing annual contribution to the single homelessness service work
Cambridge	572,223	49.5	66,825
Peterborough	210,277	18.2	24,570
South Cambs	50,185	4.3	5805
Hunts	84,988	7.4	9990
St Eds	50,000	4.3	5805
Fenland	71,067	6.1	8235
Forest Heath	50,000	4.3	5805
East Cambs	66,890	5.8	7830

<sup>1</sup> With additional match funding from Cambridge City and Fenland DC of £5000 per annum

<b>Total sub-regional allocation</b>	<b>1,155,630</b>	99.9	134,865
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The single homelessness service coordinator will be developing this service with a view to enabling partners to deliver the service without a coordinator in post 2 years down the line. It may not be possible to continue funding for the coordinator role beyond March 2015.