

Title of Report:

Response to the Scrutiny Review into the Reasons for the Apparent Prevalence of Homelessness amongst Young Families in West Berkshire

Report to be considered by:

Executive on 19 March 2015

Forward Plan Ref:

EX2947

Purpose of Report:

To provide the Executive's response to the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.

Recommended Action:

That Officers' response to the recommendations is endorsed by the Executive.

Reason for decision to be taken:

To provide a response to the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.

Other options considered:

None

Key background documentation:

Report presented to Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission on 21st July 2014

Published Works:

Housing Act 1996 (as amended)

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Strategy priority:

CSP1 – Caring for and protecting the vulnerable

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Strategy priority by:
ensuring that young families receive an appropriate response when in housing crisis.

Portfolio Member Details

Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Roger Croft - Tel 07765 224249
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Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	02 January 2015

Contact Officer Details

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Implications

Policy: The Council has a range of statutory duties towards households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness, dependent upon their specific circumstances. The Council also has a duty to provide advice and assistance to residents, free of charge. The range of duties is set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002)

Financial:

Personnel: N/A

Legal/Procurement: N/A

Property: N/A

Risk Management: N/A

Is this item relevant to equality?	Please tick relevant boxes		Yes	No
Does the policy affect service users, employees or the wider community and:				
• Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Is it a major policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Will the policy have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Does the policy relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Does the policy relate to an area with known inequalities?			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Outcome (Where one or more 'Yes' boxes are ticked, the item is relevant to equality)				
Relevant to equality - Complete an EIA available at http://intranet/EqIA				<input type="checkbox"/>
Not relevant to equality				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Is this item subject to call-in?	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval		<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council		<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position		<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>
Report is to note only		<input type="checkbox"/>

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In November 2012 the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission undertook a scrutiny review into homelessness. Recommendation 12 from the review was:
- 1.2 “Further investigation should be undertaken into the reasons why West Berkshire seems to have a very large proportion of young families facing homelessness whose friends and extended family are unwilling or unable to provide them with temporary housing/accommodation.”
- 1.3 At its meeting of 10 December 2013, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission agreed to commence a review as recommended.
- 1.4 The review was undertaken in 2014, with evidence being presented to the cross-party OSMC Task Group between March and May 2014.
- 1.5 The findings of the review together with recommendations arising were endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission at their meeting on the 21st July 2014.
- 1.6 This report sets out the Officers response to the recommendations for consideration by Executive. It has been written in consultation with both the Public Health and Education Services.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment Outcomes

- 2.1 Any specific recommendation, if implemented, would require an EIA assessment.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 That Officers' response to the recommendations is endorsed by the Executive.

Executive Report

1. Introduction

1.1 In November 2012 the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission undertook a scrutiny review into homelessness. Recommendation 12 from the review was:

“Further investigation should be undertaken into the reasons why West Berkshire seems to have a very large proportion of young families facing homelessness whose friends and extended family are unwilling or unable to provide them with temporary housing/accommodation.”

1.2 At its meeting of 10 December 2013, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission agreed to commence a review as recommended.

1.3 The review was undertaken in 2014, with evidence being presented to the cross-party OSMC Task Group between March and May 2014.

1.4 The findings of the review together with recommendations arising were endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission at their meeting on the 21st July 2014. The report as submitted to the OSMC on 21st July 2014 is attached for information as Appendix A.

1.5 The recommendations have been considered by officers within Care Commissioning, Housing and Safeguarding in consultation with both the Public Health and Education Services.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The recommendations are set out below, together with the Service response.

(1) The Head of Housing should review what information is made available within secondary schools and Academies in order that pupils are made aware of the realities of homelessness, the options available to those made homeless, and possible actions to avoid homelessness.	The Housing Service is unable to implement this recommendation as it is not resourced to review the information held by every school in West Berkshire.
(2) The Head of Housing should review whether all secondary schools and Academies in West Berkshire are providing information about homelessness to their pupils.	The Housing Service is unable to implement this recommendation as it is not resourced to review the information offered by every school in West Berkshire to their pupils.
(3) The Head of Education should explore with schools the scope for life skills, as might be required by a self-sufficient adult, to be taught as part of or alongside the existing curriculum (<i>Added in as per the</i>	The Head of Education accepts this recommendation and will write to all secondary, special and PRU Headteachers, promoting the use of homelessness materials in delivering life skills education in line with the skills and knowledge that might be required by a

<i>OSMC minutes 21/07/14)</i>	self sufficient adult. The materials, in all likelihood to be included within the Personal, Social, Health Education and Citizenship curriculum.
(4) The Portfolio Holder for Education should write to the head teachers of any schools found not to be delivering homelessness materials, to encourage the inclusion of educational information as set out in recommendation 1.	The Head of Education accepts this recommendation and will write to all secondary, special and PRU Headteachers, promoting the use of homelessness materials in delivering life skills education in line with the skills and knowledge that might be required by a self sufficient adult. The materials, in all likelihood to be included within the Personal, Social, Health Education and Citizenship curriculum.
(5) The Head of Housing should review what information is available to members of the public to advise them of the options available when considering moving away from home or about the Housing Service, in what format it is provided, and in what locations, in order to reach a wider audience.	The literature provided to members of the public was reviewed in 2013 and a wide range of leaflets are available, both in paper form and electronically. All residents who approach for housing advice are provided with a housing options pack of written information relevant to their situation and post-options advice is provided in writing. All leaflets are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they remain correct and appropriate.
(6) The Head of Housing should assess the range of skills required for a young family to live independently, and ensure that information, training and support is available to enable this.	The Housing Service introduced a Temporary Accommodation Support Officer role to the team in April 2014. This role provides floating support and signposting to families in temporary accommodation and is designed to ensure that families have the appropriate skills needed to sustain a tenancy prior to moving on to more settled accommodation. Families are not enabled to move-on to settled accommodation until the Housing Service is sure that they are able to sustain a tenancy.
(7) The Head of Housing should investigate ways to secure more supported accommodation placements for young families.	Supported accommodation placements are already available for young families who have need of it, both through Supported Lodgings and through Bramlings. In addition, there is a Temporary Accommodation Support Worker in post who provides floating support to young families in temporary

	accommodation. Supported accommodation is reviewed on a regular basis and it is considered that the current provision meets identified needs.
(8) The Head of Public Health should develop the role of midwives and health visitors to enable them to identify young families at risk of homelessness, once the health visitor function transfers to the Council in 2015.	The Head of Public Health has advised that Public Health do not currently commission Health Visitors and will not be able to develop their roles until they transfer over in October 2015. Midwives will not be transferring to the Council. The Head of Public Health works with the CCG and Health & Wellbeing Board to address the health needs of homeless households.

3. Conclusion

3.1 That Officers' response to the recommendations is endorsed by the Executive.

Appendices

Appendix A - Report entitled 'Scrutiny review into the reasons for the apparent prevalence of homelessness amongst young families in West Berkshire' presented to OSMC on 21st July 2014

Consultees

Local Stakeholders: N/A

Officers Consulted: Head of Public Health, Head of Education, Head of Housing, Corporate Board

Trade Union: N/A