

**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL/  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**HOMELESSNESS TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

**29 MARCH 2006**

**PRESENT:**

Councillor Lee Mason	NBC (Chair)
Councillor Marion Allen	NBC
Councillor Margaret Pritchard	NBC
Councillor Mark Bullock	NCC

Fran Rodgers	Corporate Manager, NBC
Madeline Spencer	Housing Services Manager, NBC
Geoff Stokes	NCC
Nigel Stock	NCC

**1 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Margaret Martin (Consortium) and Linda Brede (NBC).

**2 Minutes**

Councillor Allen clarified that *it sometimes occurred* when a person was admitted into care and when they were discharged, their family or partner refused to take them back into the family home.

Subject to the above, the minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2006 were agreed.

At this point the Chair re-ordered the agenda.

**3 Preventing Homelessness for Mental Health Services – Further Update**

Councillor Allen circulated a report compiled by – Jon Olsen (Community Service Manager) and Philip Crooke (Principal Social Worker) on 9 March 2006. (Copy attached to the minutes). She emphasised that of the 24 of homeless service users across all teams, 21 were from Northampton. Of the 21, 9 were from the Duston area, a female was living in the community, two were in-patients and the others were in specialist units. It was highlighted that some might not be easy to re-home. In response to a query, out of the 21, the eldest individual was aged 48.

M Spencer had liaised with Jon Olsen. He was undertaking an audit focussing on NBC's usage of mental health users. A questionnaire had been

produced, which was very focussed. M Spencer would be meeting with Mr Olsen on 10 April to ascertain what information he required for his audit. Various ad-hoc protocols had been produced, and it was envisaged that they could be brought into a structured approach. Councillor Allen would attend meetings with M Spencer and J Olsen.

Councillor Allen advised that she would liaise with the PCTs and Mental Health Service to ascertain how they dealt with service users. She would also contact the Police to find a way forward.

The Chair suggested that information relating to homelessness for Mental Health Services should be included in the report. There was a considerable need for this area. Information provided by J Olsen would be included in the evidence section of the report.

Councillor Bullock advised that NCC's Health Scrutiny Committee could write to the PCT requesting it to put an item on the agenda of a forthcoming meeting. He suggested that issues relating to homelessness for Mental Health Services could be requested to be an agenda item. Councillor Allen added that there was a need to concentrate on the borough figures; there was a need to encourage Mental Health Trusts towards prevention.

- Agreed:**
- (1) That Councillor Allen attends meetings with J Olsen and M Spencer.
  - (2) That information relating to homelessness for Mental Health Services should be included in the report. There was a considerable need for this area. Information provided by J Olsen would be included in the evidence section of the report.

#### **4 Chair's Report**

Copies of the draft report, foreword and executive summary were circulated. F Rodgers advised that this version of the report took into consideration comments and suggestions made at the last meeting.

Regarding financial implications, advice had been sought and details included. G Stokes emphasised that the fundamental issue was whether the £100,000 that NBC had committed for homeless prevention initiatives would cover all the recommendations or whether there was a need for funding. F Rodgers commented that it was anticipated that the £100,000 would cover the recommendations, with the exception of the Sanctuary Scheme, for which separate funding would be required. This would be stated in the report. In terms of the recommendations regarding changing internal processing and inter-working it was envisaged that huge costs would not be involved. It would however be useful to highlight areas that could incur a cost.

F Rodgers would produce an action plan, appended to the report with key objectives and detailing how the £100,000 could be allocated. There was a

need to state in the action plan the significant risks to meeting targets due to cuts in other services.

The need for NCC funding for some of the recommendations was highlighted. N Stock confirmed that he was unable to agree NCC funding but he would investigate it in principle. He would provide wording for the report regarding joint working and funding. A protocol was being devised for looked after children. F Rodgers added that a specific project plan for reducing families in temporary accommodation was being put together, which could lead to a recycling of financial savings.

There was a need for the recommendations to link to targets, such as BVPIs, NBC's Recovery Plan and to also link to evidence that the Group had received. Recommendations should be written in a way that could be measured. Recommendations should inter-connect with the Conclusion, explaining that after hearing the evidence why the Group had come to its conclusion. For each recommendation there was a clear need for a link to evidence received.

The Group suggested that there was a need to include additional groups to Section 2 of the recommendations – Partnership Working:

- Mental Health and learning disabilities
- Potential homelessness in adults

Councillor Bullock referred to the ODPM's document *Survey of English Local Authorities About Homelessness – December 2005*, page 37 – Approaches to achieving Efficiency Savings in 2005/06, commenting that the headings used in this graph could be detailed in the report, possibly using them to head up the recommendations.

Councillor Bullock suggested that it would be useful to demonstrate in the report two to three initiatives that the Group would be continuing on an individual basis, such as Mental Health issues and signposting other issues, rough sleepers and ex-army rough sleepers.

In discussing the Foreword and Executive Summary, the Group agreed that the Foreword should be written in the third person signed by all the Homelessness Task and Finish Group Councillors. The Foreword would also contain a sentence detailing that NCC's Overview and Scrutiny had already programmed homelessness into its work plan.

Regarding the Executive Summary, the Group agreed that there was a need to ensure that it contained the key messages, such as preventative work and joint working. These would be expanded upon, together with the progress and examples.

F Rodgers undertook to amend the report and email out to the Group for comment.

The report would be presented to NBC's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on April 6<sup>th</sup> 2006 and would then be submitted to NBC's Cabinet at its meeting on either 8 May 2006 or 3 July 2006. The Group would be notified of the date of the Cabinet meeting that would be receiving its report. The Group would then monitor implementation of its recommendations six months after the report had been submitted to Cabinet. (December/January 2007).

A meeting would be arranged with the other district councils in the county on how the report would be presented to the 'wider public'.

F Rodgers advised that the ODPM had produced a DVD 'Tackling Homelessness' and confirmed that she would order copies for the Task and Finish Group.

M Spencer would liaise with Councillor Pritchard regarding her attendance at the Good practice seminar - *Homelessness: how does your council measure up? in May*.

The meeting closed at 4.30 pm