

Cherwell District Council

Executive

1 July 2019

Joint Housing and Homelessness Strategy for Vulnerable Young People and Families in Oxfordshire

Report of Assistant Director, Housing and Social Care Commissioning

This report is public

Purpose of report

To present the Joint Housing and Homelessness Strategy for Vulnerable Young People and Families in Oxfordshire and adopt the Strategy.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To adopt the Housing and Homelessness Strategy for Vulnerable Young People and Families as set out at appendix 1.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The Joint Housing and Homelessness Strategy for Vulnerable Young People and Adults sets out the joint strategic aims in preventing homelessness and meeting the housing needs of vulnerable young people and families across the county.
- 2.2 The vision is that every child and young person in Oxfordshire should have access to a full range of housing services and the opportunity for a decent and affordable home suitable to their needs; and that vulnerable families should be enabled to live in safe and suitable housing as a basis for supportive family relationships and thriving communities. This report highlights the key objectives of the strategy and the action plan for achieving them.

3.0 Report Details

Joint Housing and Homelessness Strategy

- 3.1 There is common agreement that safe and suitable housing is a basic human right for children, young people and families. Conversely transient lifestyles and

inappropriate housing have been identified as one of the risk factors on the pathway to harm¹.

- 3.2 The Oxfordshire Housing Needs Analysis for vulnerable young people and families highlighted the difficulties Oxfordshire faces in terms of cost and availability of housing. Whilst there are active house building programmes around the county, affordability is still an issue and the number of homeless people is increasing. Young people in our supported housing pathway have increasingly complex needs and progress through the pathway is hampered by a lack of suitable places for them to move on to.
- 3.3 The increasing number of looked after children is creating an ongoing pressure on places in the pathway. We need to ensure adequate support and housing for vulnerable families, especially those that find themselves in temporary or emergency accommodation. We also need specialist housing provision for young people with disabilities and more support for young people in the youth justice system.
- 3.4 Our key objectives are to:
- support vulnerable families to maintain secure and long-lasting housing;
 - provide a range of housing options, with support and intervention, for Care Leavers and other vulnerable young people including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and young people involved with the Youth Justice System;
 - increase the supply of affordable housing options to meet the needs of families and single young people, and optimise the use of available property;
 - maintain partnership working between District and County Councils, housing providers, specialist support services and other stakeholders including young people and families;
 - resource early prevention work with families and young people at risk of homelessness; and
 - support landlords to mitigate negative perceptions of social care service users and/or benefit claimants.
- 3.5 We have a comprehensive joint action plan to achieve these objectives and progress will be monitored at bi-monthly meetings of representatives from the County Council, Cherwell District Council and the other 4 housing authorities. (see pages 8-15 of the Strategy).

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

Adoption of Housing Strategy

- 4.1 The Strategy is based on a comprehensive and countywide needs analysis which highlighted a range of gaps in current services. It is vital that the County and District Housing Authorities work jointly to address these.

¹ Pathways to Harm, Pathways to Protection: Triennial Analysis of Serious Case Reviews 2011-14'

- 4.2 The other 4 housing authorities are also taking the Strategy through their democratic processes for adoption. The County Council is the lead authority for this Strategy and the Cabinet will adopt the Strategy at its meeting on 18 June 2019.

5.0 Consultation

Housing managers in City and all District Councils

Operational teams in all councils working with vulnerable young people and families

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 6.1 Option 1: Not to have a strategy. This has been rejected on the basis that partnership working with a shared vision and objectives is necessary in order to meet the needs of vulnerable young people and families and to inform service development and commissioning plans.

7.0 Implications

7.1 Financial and Resource Implications

The objectives in the Strategy will be delivered through existing teams. There may be financial implications in terms of joint commissioning of accommodation and support and these will be brought forward for consideration once commissioning intentions are known.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

- 7.2 There are no specific legal implications arising from this Strategy but all local authorities involved have a role to play because of their responsibilities under safeguarding, housing or children's legislation.

Comments checked by :

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8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision

Financial Threshold Met: no

Community Impact Threshold Met: yes

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

Support and Safeguard Vulnerable People
Homelessness Prevention
Deliver affordable Housing

Lead Councillor

Councillor John Donaldson, Lead Member for Housing

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	Joint Housing and Homeless Strategy for Vulnerable Young People and Families
Background Papers	
None	
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