Oxfordshire County Council: Housing related support proposal - consultation document

1. Introduction

This is to tell you about Oxfordshire County Council's proposal for how to implement the reduction of funding for housing related support services for homeless people and substance misusers in Oxfordshire, and to ask for your views about it. The proposal was approved for consultation by the Oxfordshire Health Improvement Board on 29 May 2014.

2. What is housing related support?

Housing related support services aim to support vulnerable homeless people, including people fleeing domestic violence and those who misuse substances, and to try and avoid their need for services escalating.

The services that people receive as housing related support vary according to their needs but include emotional support and practical support to:

- Manage money and pay bills
- Learn how to follow the rules in their tenancy agreement
- Reduce offending, substance misuse or other anti-social behaviour
- Use community services such as day services and health services
- Find training or education opportunities

At any one time approximately 900 people across Oxfordshire receive support through this funding.

The main areas that are funded are:

- **Hostels** - provide quick access to accommodation, with minimal criteria for entry. People must have a connection to Oxfordshire and be already sleeping rough or at significant risk. All hostels are staffed 24 hours a day and provide intensive support - up to 10 hours face to face support per resident per week.

- **Move on accommodation** – part of the pathway for clients when they are more stable and less chaotic. These units are staffed daily and residents learn skills to support their independence such as managing their tenancy and securing employment.

- **Community Floating support** - is for people who already have a tenancy and is to support them to keep their homes.

- **Substance misuse services** – can be directly accessed from rehabilitation. People do not have to be homeless to use these services. Howard House provides residential detoxification and is part of treatment. Other services offer less intensive support and are part of the pathway towards increasing independence.

- **Domestic abuse services** – work in the community, provide information and advice services for everyone and enable access to refuges when required (not 24 hour access).

Details of currently funded services are attached at Annex 1.
3. The challenge

The county council received a grant from central government for housing related support and services - the Supporting People grant. Four years ago this was reduced by 38% and since then the county council has been subsidising housing support and maintaining investment in housing related activity significantly above the Supporting People grant.

The difficult financial climate means that the county council can no longer afford to continue with this arrangement. During the council's budget planning process in this year it was agreed to reduce the funding in line with the reduction in funding from central government, ending the subsidy. This means there will be a reduction of £1.5m from £3.8m to £2.3m, phased in from April 2015 (£1m 2015/16; £0.5m 2016/17).

The County Council recognises that making these cuts is very difficult, and partner organisations have also expressed concerns. In particular Oxford City Council is very concerned about the possible closure of any hostels.

4. How we have arrived at this proposal?

Since December 2013 we have worked closely with partners to look at different options for delivering the savings. Oxford City Council, the Vale of White Horse, Cherwell, West Oxfordshire and South Oxfordshire District councils, the Oxfordshire NHS, Public Health, adults and children’s Social Care teams, Thames Valley Police, the Thames Valley Probation Service and the Community Safety Partnership are some of those who have been involved. We have considered a variety of different ways of making the savings we have to make.

Together we have developed a proposed set of principles for commissioning housing related support services and a set of outcomes for people who use the services. Commissioning principles are what the services we choose to buy should be able to achieve. The proposed principles are outlined later.

We looked at whether the reduced budget could be shared between the City and District councils so that they could deliver services directly. However, although Oxfordshire's services for those with the most complex needs are located in Oxford city, people from throughout the county use them. Any formula to distribute the budget based on population or level of deprivation would reduce the available budget in Oxford considerably, resulting in significant reductions in services and possibly hostel closures.

The proposal is therefore that the budget should be managed across Oxfordshire by the county council who can take a broad strategic view of needs throughout the county.

The county council recognises that there may have been an underestimate of the need for dedicated resources in Banbury. Banbury is Oxfordshire's second largest town, with one third of our most deprived wards. We think that the current pattern of service provision does not adequately recognise this need and so the proposal aims to address this through commissioning additional resources for the Cherwell area.

We recognise that in order to be more efficient future support will need to be delivered differently. To prepare for this the county and city councils are jointly funding a project with Mayday Trust to test an innovative model of support for adults with complex needs. This is
looking at how support which is currently provided on a one to one basis could be delivered differently.

5. The proposal for delivering the savings required

To achieve the savings required and keep all hostels open, using the proposal described in more detail later, some further funding is required in this particular case. The proposal is that the council's Public Health Team will commission some substance misuse services to the value of approximately £150K. and contribute an additional £250K to the overall future cost.

The county council believes the proposals set out below are a realistic way through a very complex issue. Importantly these proposals allow us to:
- Keep all hostels open
- Retain a pathway for single homeless people in Oxford City
- Retain complex needs service with access from across the county
- Retain community floating support across the county
- Increase accommodation based services outside Oxford city and particular in Banbury.

6. What are we asking your views about?

The amount of the overall saving needed has been agreed. Now we want to know your views about:
- The principles we are proposing to use for commissioning (choosing what services to buy) of housing related support
- What housing related support services should help people to achieve (outcomes)
- The detailed proposals for
  - Hostels
  - Move on accommodation
  - Floating support
  - Substance misuse
  - Domestic abuse

Outlined here are the details of the proposal for your comment:

6.1 Principles for commissioning of housing related support

The commissioning principles we are proposing are:

1) Housing related support helps people to live independently and complements the delivery of statutory duties.
2) Housing related support funding should pay for support services, not 'bricks and mortar'.
3) Accommodation and building related costs should be paid for through housing funding streams such as rent, housing benefit and service charges.
4) There is a need for emergency accommodation across the county to prevent rough sleeping.
5) Support provided should meet a range of high to medium to low levels of needs.
6) Support provided should offer best value for money.
6.2 Outcomes for people using the services

Housing related support services have historically been commissioned to support people to achieve the following overarching outcomes:

- Economic wellbeing
- Enjoy and achieve
- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Make a positive contribution

The achievement of these outcomes is measured by more specific targets. Specific measures for future services could include how clients are supported:

- to achieve independence or move on in a planned way
- towards and into employment, education and training
- to engage with appropriate health services
- to determine their own support needs and take the lead in addressing them
- to develop positive relationships with family and friends
- to reduce substance misuse
- to remain safe
- to reduce offending behaviour
- to increase their motivation and self-confidence

6.3 Detailed proposals for savings in different areas of housing related support

Overall the necessary savings target has been agreed. The below outlines how we are proposing each service area is changed to achieve it. We want to know what you think about each area: tell us your views about what is proposed to be changed, how and by when.

We want to know whether you think the savings should be divided up differently between the five service areas - have we got the balance right?

Hostels

The first part of the proposal for hostels does not contribute to the savings. It is proposed to maintain the 56 bed spaces at O’Hanlon House and to create a new Assessment Centre within the service. This will further reduce rough sleeping and be the entry point into the pathway (the ‘pathway’ is a model to think about the way services are provided from the perspective of the person using them: their aims, aspirations and increasing independence and how they can access the support they need to achieve these at the right times.)

It is proposed to reduce funding for hostel-based support from £1.5m in 2014/15 to £1.1m in 2015/16. This is a proposed reduction of £450k or 28%.

It is proposed that this reduction in funding is achieved by:
• Commissioning support at a reduced cost of £18 per hour (support is currently paid for at between £18.50 and £25 per hour. Nationally the average cost of home support is £15 per hour)
• Reducing intensity of support at Simon House and Lucy Faithful House, with 23 bed spaces no longer having support attached

**Move on accommodation**

It is proposed to retain provision of three emergency access beds in Cherwell, South and Vale and West Oxfordshire. This part of the proposal does not have costs or savings attached and aims to improve access and better meet the needs of local population.

It is proposed to reduce funding for move on accommodation from £488k in 2014/15 to £413k in 2015/16. This is a proposed reduction of £75k or 15%.

It is proposed that this reduction in funding is achieved by:

• Reducing intensity of support at Julian Housing, with eight out of the 83 bed spaces no longer having support attached
• Reducing capacity at West Oxfordshire Single Homeless service by four bed spaces or £39k, to better reflect the needs of local population
• Transferring the Cherwell Connection project into the main adult homeless pathway from the substance misuse pathway
• Increasing Cherwell funding to £100k to support developing services for single homeless people to better meet the needs of local population

**Floating Support**

It is proposed to reduce funding for floating support from £1.2m in 2014/15 to £0.9m in 2016/17. This is a proposed reduction of £390k or 31%.

It is proposed that this reduction in funding is achieved by:

• Commissioning new innovative models of community based support including 1:1 and group support
• Making the saving in two phases - 15% reduction in 2015/16 and a further reduction in 2016/17. This allows any learning from using the new models of support in the first year to be applied when planning the second year.

**Substance Misuse**

It is proposed to reduce funding for substance misuse from £214k in 2014/15 to £0 in 2015/16. This is a proposed reduction of £214k or 100%.

It is proposed that this reduction in funding is achieved by:

• Stopping funding Howard House and Project 195
• Stopping funding Osney Court
Julian Housing in Oxford will continue to be available for move on accommodation from treatment services. In addition, the Public Health Team is already in the process of re-commissioning treatment services which will pick up these needs, providing £150k of subsidy.

**Domestic Abuse**

It is proposed to reduce funding for domestic abuse from £331k in 2014/15 to £199k in 2016/17. This is a proposed reduction of £132k or 40%.

It is proposed that the need for local helpline, access and outreach services is reviewed to develop the most efficient and cost effective service distribution. The savings plans will be based on this review and will be put in place in 2016/17, following a separate consultation.

A financial summary of how we are proposing making all the savings is available at Annex 2.

7. **Social and Community Impact Assessment (SCIA)**

We have undertaken an assessment of the impact on individuals and groups of these proposed changes. These are outlined in the Social and Community Impact Assessment which is available on the consultation page.

8. **What happens next?**

The consultation is open until 17th September. During that time we want to hear from as many people and groups as possible. As well as the consultation questionnaire we will be meeting with people who use housing related support, organisations which provide it and others with views and ideas about the services and the proposed changes.

What you tell us will be carefully analysed and a final decision about how to make the savings will be made in the autumn by the Health and Wellbeing Board, a body made up of elected representatives from Oxfordshire councils, officers and the chairman of Healthwatch.

If you have any suggestions about more ways to hear people's views, or need any assistance with the questionnaire or to take part in this consultation please contact:

Rachel Taylor, Senior Engagement Officer, Oxfordshire County Council, New Road, Oxford, OX1 1ND.
Phone: 01865 323610
Email: Rachel.taylor@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Lead officer for this consultation:
Natalia Lachkou, Interim Commissioning Lead for Younger Adults, Oxfordshire County Council, New Road, Oxford, OX1 1ND.

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