LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY WORKSHOP

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

TUESDAY 5 SEPTEMBER 2017– SALUTATION HOTEL, PERTH

Background

As part of our Local Housing Strategy (LHS) Update, a series of workshops were organised for each of the four LHS themes. Stakeholders with a professional involvement in each of the themes were invited to attend workshops on Tuesday 5 September 2017, in Perth, with a view to:

1. Reviewing the key priorities and challenges of each LHS theme;

2. Acknowledging best practice examples and considering whether there was scope for us to be doing anything better; and

3. Reviewing the existing Action Plan and identifying whether any changes were required.

Event Summary

A total of 19 stakeholders attended this workshop (list of attendees can be found in Appendix 1).

Lorna Cameron (Interim Director - Housing and Community Safety) welcomed all delegates to the afternoon session and short presentations were delivered to all delegates to prompt discussion in workshops. Groups were then split into workshops on Housing and Homelessness; and Independent Living to discuss the key priorities and challenges; any best practice examples and finally the Action Plan for each LHS theme.

At the end of all discussions, delegates from both workshops gathered back together and Eileen McMullan (Planning & Commissioning Manager) provided a summary of the key pieces of information from each workshop and explained that the information from the day would now be written up and taken to Housing and Communities Committee in November 2017.

Delegates were then given the opportunity to provide feedback on the event or any topics they would like to see covered at future LHS events by noting this down on post-it notes contained within their packs.

Presentations

Electronic versions of the PowerPoint Presentations by Elaine Ritchie and Paul Smith will be circulated along with the workshop summaries.

Brian Cowie (CATH) spoke briefly about the challenge for charities to plan ahead when funding cannot be guaranteed as a result of public sector reform. He also spoke about the importance of Health and Social Care Integration and the benefits this can have if good relationships are developed and all agencies are able to work well together to deliver better services.

Peter Jung and Patrick McKay (Turning Point) spoke about the importance that technology can have as a way of supporting people to remain in their own homes. The Housing First Model was also highlighted. This is a model which was developed by Turning Point Scotland in response to high levels of repeat homelessness amongst people with substance misuse problems in Glasgow. It works by providing housing and support to homeless people with multiple and complex needs in independent tenancies without requiring they undergo any programme or treatment beforehand. Tenants are then provided with flexible support in their homes and communities with staff adopting a 'stickability' approach to support (during periods of disengagement or times spent in institutional care settings).

Key Discussion Points

Housing and Homeless Priorities

Discussion took place around whether the following Housing and Homeless themes and priorities were still valid or whether changes were required to these.

1. Housing Options and Access/Homeless Prevention

➢ People looking for housing find it easy to apply for the widest choice of social housing available and get information they need on how the Landlord allocates homes and their prospects of being housed.
(Charter 10)
➢ People looking for housing receive information to inform their choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them.
(Charter 7)
➢ Tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options.
(Charter 8)
➢ People at risk of losing their homes receive advice on preventing homelessness.
➢ Homeless people receive prompt and easy access to help and advice.
(Charter 9)

2. Providing Temporary, Resettled and Permanent Accommodation for Homeless People

➢ Homeless people are provided with suitable, good-quality temporary or emergency accommodation, when this is needed, and are offered support to help them get and keep the home they are entitled to.
(Charter 12)

3. Managing and Sustaining Tenancies

➢ Tenants and customers receive the information they need on how to access accommodation, when this is needed, and are offered continuing support to help them find and sustain a home.
➢ Tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.
(Charter 13)
➢ A balance is struck between the level of services provided, the cost of the services and how far current and prospective tenants and others can afford them.
(Charter 14)
➢ Tenants are aware of their responsibilities and clear that the Council will intervene where individuals are not fulfilling the terms of their tenancy agreement and creating problems for other tenants and residents.

4. Safe and Secure Communities

➢ Tenants and residents live in attractive, well-managed neighbourhoods, free from anti-social behaviour and vandalism where they feel safe.
(Charter 6)
➢ We manage our Gypsy/Traveller sites so that they are well-maintained and managed.
(Charter 16)
➢ Tenants' homes meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by April 2015 and continue to meet it thereafter, and when they are allocated are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair.
(Charter 4)
➢ Tenants' homes are well-maintained with repairs and improvements carried out when required and tenants given reasonable choices about when work is done.
(Charter 5)

5. Involving and Empowering Our Communities

➢ Tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their Landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.
(Charter 3)
➢ Tenants get clear information on how rent and other money is spent, including any details of individual items of expenditure above thresholds agreed between Landlords and tenants.
(Charter 15)

There was general agreement that people are still happy with the 5 priorities and 16 outcomes listed above although there was a suggestion that the Safer Accommodation Strategy could be considered within some of the outcomes above.

Housing and Homeless Challenges

The following challenges were highlighted during discussions in this workshop session:

- **Partnership Working**

We need to look at how we can work more efficiently with Partners to avoid duplication of work, provide services more flexibly to people and intervene early to prevent crisis situations. With the integration of Health and Social Care and a move towards locality based working models, there have been some issues around changes to funding arrangements, so there are improvements still to be made. We need to look at creating better links between Providers and invest time in building relationships to make the best use of resources at our disposal. Is there a better way to commission services?

- **Housing Standards/Conditions**

Properties should be fit for purpose at the point at which they are let. There was discussion around the fact that properties should either be painted and decorated when they are let or grants should be awarded to prospective tenants to paint and decorate themselves. There seems to be variation in the standards of housing which is let. Michelle Dow advised that she is currently looking into this.

- **Service Delivery**

It is important to deliver services as flexibly as possible (e.g. many people need to access services outside the normal 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday working pattern). People should be put at the centre of service provision and should be consulted in the design and delivery of services. This is something which has been identified and is currently being looked into. There is also a need to 'upskill' teams to deliver information on all services and housing options at the beginning of the housing journey (co-location of services) as referral procedures can often slow things down. It was also identified that staff within all services should have a greater awareness and training on psychological interventions to help support people with complex and challenging needs. A greater focus on prevention and 'Assertive Support' to those with support needs is a good way of improving tenancy sustainment.

- **Geography**

The rural nature of Perth and Kinross can make it more challenging to deliver services within some areas. This is something that the Fairness Commission is looking into. There was also discussion around issues with people moving from other areas but then feeling isolated once they have moved into their tenancies. Improvements could be made on raising awareness on the information available on the Council website prior to tenancies being allocated and also on information available to tenants to move once in a tenancy.

- **Tenancy Sustainment**

The Council is currently developing an affordability model for council rents which looks to see whether the rent levels are affordable within Perth and Kinross. It is also looking to provide a range of options in the future for tenants and prospective tenants in relation to rent increases which will be available to current tenants and tenants who are 'under offer' of a Council tenancy. There was discussion around trying to make new tenants and residents feel a part of the community as well as trying to get the community to 'accept' new tenants and residents ('Passport to Housing' and the idea of citizenship). A challenge is trying to get people to accept support to sustain a tenancy when the tenant does not want the support offered to them – discussion around the 'stickability' approach.

- **Welfare Reform**

A continuing challenge is the impact of welfare reform and universal credit on people, especially the 18-25 year old age group. Early intervention and income maximisation is therefore important whenever possible. It was also highlighted that it is becoming more common for some tenants not to be entitled to benefits resulting in substantial arrears and setting some people up in homes that they have no means of paying for.

- **Inequalities**

Are we considering all options available to vulnerable groups? For example, the first consideration is to move people suffering from domestic abuse to a different tenancy and away from support networks. Can we possibly introduce more 'peer mentoring' programmes? One of the challenges with this is when mentors move into full time employment and can no longer participate in these programmes. Some of these problems can be considered by the Fairness Commission.

Housing and Homeless Best Practice

The following best practice examples were discussed during the workshop session:

- ✓ **HIT Groups** (CCIG) were a good way of developing better relationships between services and achieving the commitment from everyone required in a person's support package – this could possibly be revisited given the recent integration of Health and Social Care and the creation of Integrated Locality Teams.
- ✓ Although this project has not yet gone 'live' it has the potential to be a 'best practice example' as it has been developed in Partnership and provides the community with online access to all services available within a particular community (**Your Community PK**).
- ✓ **Boxing Project** – an independent evaluator recently highlighted this as a good example of co-production and involving people in the design of services.
- ✓ **Resettlement Workers and Tenancy Starter Packs** – these members of staff have a remit of helping people (both outreach and hostel tenants) to access all help available to them (such as Community Care grants) and settle into their tenancies quicker (CATH). This is similar to the role of Support Officers within other services that operated in Perth and Kinross Council who help support individuals with more complex needs to sustain their tenancies.
- ✓ **Mobile Housing Advice Surgeries** – important to go **to** people to deliver advice in order to increase awareness amongst those people who might not

come to us for advice such as the housing advice surgeries delivered in Perth Prison and the hospital delayed discharge hub etc.

- ✓ **Advice on Universal Credit** - Caledonia has worked closely with local authorities in other areas to provide advice to tenants but not currently doing this within Perth and Kinross due to an issue with data protection and sharing of information.
- ✓ **Speed Dating Events** – third sector event Women's Aid experienced recently and it was helpful and beneficial.

Housing and Homeless Action Plan

The Action Plan for this section will be reviewed and amended based on the discussions which took place within the workshop.

APPENDIX 1

The delegates who attended the workshop on Housing and Homelessness are listed below:

Name	Organisation	Position
Vanessa Baxter	Caledonia Housing Association	Neighbourhood Team Leader
Linda Bulle	Shelter	Community Hub Dundee
Suzie Burt	Perth & Kinross Council	Team Leader – Housing and Community Safety Customer and Community Engagement Team
Lorna Cameron	Perth & Kinross Council	Interim Director - Housing and Community Safety
Gillian Conway	Perth & Kinross Council	Planning & Policy Officer
Brian Cowie	CATH	Chief Executive
Michelle Dow	Perth & Kinross Council	Service Manager - Housing
Lynn Gowrie	Caledonia Gowrie	Operations Manager
Raymond Grant	Salvation Army (Skinnergate)	Senior Project Worker
Joan MacLean	Perth Women's Aid	Manager
Clare Mailer	Perth & Kinross Council	Interim Head of Housing
Jan Manion	Perth & Kinross Council	Community Engagement Assistant (Homeless)
Patrick McKay	Turning Point Scotland	Operations Manager and Strategic Lead for Homelessness
Colin Paton	Perth & Kinross Council	Team Leader – Drug & Alcohol Team
Rhona Pollok	Perth & Kinross Council	Planning & Policy Officer
Sam Rankin	Perth & Kinross Council	Performance and Improvement Officer
Elaine Ritchie	Perth & Kinross Council	Service Manager – Housing
Nicola Rogerson	Perth & Kinross Council	Service Manager – Community Safety
Robert Williams	Perth & Kinross Council	Team Leader – Income Maximisation