

DENBIGHSHIRE HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION EARLY INTERVENTION PROJECT SPECIFICATION

A. Introduction

Early intervention must be a cornerstone of our approach to preventing homelessness. Denbighshire County Council want to develop our support offer around early intervention to prevent homelessness, so that we can identify and engage with people much earlier on to prevent any risk factors/problems from escalating. This focused early intervention project will be a key part of this work.

We want this project to offer a robust early intervention model, which is assertive and proactive. We envisage that there will be two main 'strands' to this project (although we are interested in hearing proposals for other methods/models of delivery as part of the tender process). In brief these are:

- 1) Identifying individuals who may currently or in future be facing risk of homelessness, and offering rapid, practical early intervention guidance and support, to prevent problems escalating into risk of homelessness - and prevent the need for statutory homelessness and other formal service intervention wherever possible.
- 2) Raising awareness/educating (potentially via a training programme) within key settings around homelessness warning signs/risk factors, and practical prevention knowledge and skills (e.g. awareness of appropriate support services that could be signposted to).

The project must take a person-centred, holistic approach to engagement and intervention; liaising and effectively co-ordinating with key agencies to both identify and support at risk individuals. Alongside addressing any immediate issues that may lead to risk of homelessness, the project will work to equip individuals with the knowledge and skills to prevent homelessness/risk of homelessness in future.

B. Project Description

We expect that key components of the project will include:

- A targeted early intervention approach, to deliver practical support and guidance (including ensuring that people understand their rights) to prevent people from facing risk of homelessness. Intensity of engagement and intervention will vary depending on individual needs and circumstances. We would like to see a 'personal budget' resource to enable this to be delivered in a person-centred, creative way.
- Using local intelligence, thinking strategically and working closely with key partners to identify at risk individuals, and offer support/guidance at critical junctures to prevent risk of homelessness.
- A key driver/co-ordinator of multi-agency responses to support individuals to address a broad range of issues and support needs that may lead to risk of homelessness.
- Engaging with a broad range of key agencies (including landlords) and settings where there are opportunities for early intervention on both practical and strategic levels.
- Promoting understanding within such settings of homelessness prevention, including around identifying and appropriately responding to risk factors/warning signs.

Given the nature of this project, we would ordinarily expect support to be short to medium term (usually no longer than 3-6 months). This is because we would ordinarily expect that individuals with longer term support needs would be referred to more appropriate longer term support services (e.g.

floating support), as required. However, the project will need to be flexible to respond to changing needs and circumstances, and to ensure that trust can be built and maintained as much as possible.

To be most effective, we feel the project must be:

- Person-centred – with the individual’s voice, choice and control at the forefront.
- Non-judgemental, with a psychologically informed approach - understanding that we’re all individuals with different needs, goals and stories, and that everyone should be treated with dignity and respect.
- Needs-led – targeting and offering support/guidance where it is needed most.
- Accessible – being responsive, easy to find and contact, and not creating arbitrary processes, criteria or other barriers. This will include thinking carefully about the language the project uses to promote itself and its message, including avoiding jargon, and ensuring that its purpose and message resonates with people who may not even realise or acknowledge homelessness risk factors in their lives. Linked to this, the message/language should also seek to reduce the stigma associated with homelessness/risk of homelessness.
- Co-productive – working in true partnership with citizens and other key stakeholders to plan solutions and shape the ongoing development of the project. We would also like to see citizens actively involved in the delivery of the project, e.g. through sharing their expertise by experience as part of the awareness raising/training work.
- Strengths-based in its ethos and support approach – maximising people’s own strengths and resources, and recognising that people are experts in their own lives.
- Staffed by a competent and dynamic team – with staff with a broad and diverse skill set to enable the successful delivery of both ‘strands’ of this project, and to be able to provide effective guidance and support to individuals with a broad range of needs and circumstances. It is felt that in particular, understanding and skills in supporting people experiencing poor mental health and wellbeing will be vital to the success of this project.
- Innovative – striving to continuously refine and improve this new project and way of working; making best use of intelligence/data, and working together with the commissioners and stakeholders to build on and develop best practice. We would for example be interested in hearing ideas around how more direct support for landlords may form part of this early intervention project / Denbighshire’s early intervention approach more widely.

C. Key aims and objectives

- Risk of homelessness – and by extension, homelessness - is prevented.
- Through the provision of effective guidance, support and easy to understand information, people feel equipped to identify risks / deal with problems before they escalate into homelessness or risk of homelessness.
- People have a better understanding of what homelessness/risk of homelessness means, enabling more open conversations and reducing the stigma.
- People have a better understanding of their rights in relation to their housing and other associated areas.
- People can access support and guidance that is proportionate to their needs.
- People are able to achieve good quality of life and wellbeing.
- People are able to live independently, increasing their confidence and independent living skills, and preventing dependency on services.
- People are able to manage their housing tenure, including being able to:

- Pay for their accommodation
- Meet the responsibilities of having a tenancy or owning their own home
- Know how to get all necessary utility services at their accommodation
- Deal with repairs and/or improvements to their property
- Keep warm, comfortable, safe and secure
- Get on with their neighbours
- People are able to benefit from formal and informal support networks when needed.
- People are supported to achieve their full potential, including accessing education, employment, training, and voluntary work.
- People with lived experience are able to play a key role in shaping the delivery and development of the project.
- Where needed, people are able to resettle into suitable accommodation.

Housing Support Grant Programme Outcomes:

- Personal and community safety
People will be supported to:
 - feel safe
 - contribute to the safety and wellbeing of themselves and others
- Independence and control
People will be supported to:
 - manage accommodation
 - manage relationships
 - feel part of the community
- Economic progress and financial control
People will be supported to:
 - manage money
 - engage in education/learning
 - engage in employment / voluntary work
- Health and wellbeing.
People will be supported to:
 - be physically healthy
 - be mentally healthy
 - lead a healthy and active lifestyle

D. Delivery Requirements

i. Citizen Involvement

People supported must have their voices heard, both when it comes to shaping their own support and in influencing how the project itself develops and is reviewed. We would also like to see citizens actively involved in the delivery of the project, e.g. through sharing their expertise by experience as part of the awareness raising/training work.

ii. Support planning and risk assessments

All paperwork used with citizens must be user friendly, proportionate, and appropriate to individual needs and circumstances. It should be designed in a psychologically informed way.

The project will work with citizens to create strengths-based and outcomes-focused support plans. Agreed exit strategies will also be developed.

Support staff will undertake comprehensive risk assessments and will develop appropriate and effective risk management plans where required.

Individuals supported must have ownership of their needs and risk assessments. All support plans and risk assessments/management plans will be reviewed regularly.

iii. Hours

It is expected that support hours will be managed dynamically, and will be allocated flexibly in response to individual needs. It will be necessary for a sensible balance to be struck between time allocated to each 'strand' of this project, to enable the project to achieve its priority outcomes. Staff will work flexibly to provide responsive support and guidance. We would ideally like to see this flexibility extend over 7 days, with working hours outside of the usual 9-5.

iv. Location

The service is to be delivered county-wide, throughout Denbighshire. Staff will be required to deliver support/guidance and training/awareness raising in a variety of places, including citizens' homes, various organisations and a broad range of community settings. We would also be very interested in proposals around web/tech based platforms/solutions that could be used to deliver positive outcomes for this project.

v. General

The support delivered will be housing related and conform to Housing Support Grant Guidance standards, purpose and eligibility criteria. The project should not provide personal care, health care, professional or therapeutic counselling, or formal advice services.

The project will be required to meet identified performance indicators, as outlined in section in section E, below.

vi. Community Benefits

Community Benefits must be delivered as part of this contract, and we are inviting proposals for these as part of the tender. We are particularly interested in proposals that will support Denbighshire County Council to achieve its Net Carbon Zero goal, and/or to support better access to meaningful employment opportunities for citizens who are homeless/at risk of homelessness.

Suppliers may also wish to consider that a lack of affordable accommodation is one of our most significant challenges in preventing and ending homelessness across Denbighshire, and we are always extremely keen to explore new ways to address this pervasive problem.

E. Monitoring

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The below are estimated KPI target levels that the project would be monitored against on a quarterly basis. We are however keen as part of the tender process to understand what level of performance that suppliers estimate they can achieve, based on evidence of previous targets/outcomes achieved, and anticipated resources and capability.

KPI	Target	Achieved
People feel that the support/guidance from this project has made a positive difference to their situation and to their wellbeing.	90%	

As a result of the support/guidance from this project, people feel they have the tools they need to prevent homelessness or risk of homelessness in future.	90%	
<p>% of planned, successful exits, i.e. the project's intervention prevented risk of homelessness.</p> <p>This measure relates to individuals being prevented from triggering the homelessness statutory prevention duty, i.e. becoming at risk of homelessness within the next 56 days.</p> <p>Where individuals have exited this project as part of an appropriate referral to another service to meet longer term support needs, this may be recorded as a planned, successful exit only as long as the appropriateness of the referral can be demonstrated and the individual does not subsequently become at risk of homelessness (as defined above) within 2 months of the referral to the other service.</p>	90%	
People still in secure accommodation 6 months after exiting the service.	90%	
Organisations/services (and their users, where appropriate) feel they have a better understanding of homelessness/homelessness prevention, and can better identify risk factors/warning signs.	90%	
Organisations/services (and their users, where appropriate) feel they have better knowledge and skills to be able to respond to risk of homelessness, including knowledge of local support services that can help.	90%	

These KPIs are intended to provide a broad guide as to performance and quality standards. Where minimum targets are routinely met, there will typically be a lighter touch approach to monitoring. Where KPIs are routinely not met, monitoring may be increased to determine the causes for the under-delivery. As a new approach, the nature and target levels for these KPIs will be monitored and may be re-negotiated between the commissioners and providers.

Additional monitoring will be undertaken throughout the year, including via contract monitoring meetings as required, and submission of quarterly Performance Monitoring Returns. There will also be a requirement to submit Outcomes returns in accordance with the Housing Support Grant Outcomes Framework. Full service reviews will be undertaken as needed, and written notice will be given to the provider when a full review is required. These reviews will include the commissioners gathering citizen and other stakeholder feedback, and viewing a sample of support plans.

As a new model of support in Denbighshire, we would be keen to see proposals for the use of creative data capturing, analysis and presentation tools, to produce robust and inspiring evidence of effectiveness of the early intervention approach, and demonstrate the cost-benefit.

F. Eligibility

This project will provide guidance and support to people 16+ who are in need of a (typically) short to medium term intervention to prevent risk of homelessness. This will include people across all protected characteristics, and from a wide variety of backgrounds. People supported must be resident in Denbighshire.

The project will not be able to provide direct support to anyone under 16 (with the exception of some individuals close to their 16th birthday, agreed on a case by case basis); however, it is expected that children under 16 will benefit from the awareness raising/training strand of this project, e.g. where this work has been undertaken with schools – as well as any support/guidance provided to parents, taking a whole family approach.

The project will not typically work with people who are already at immediate risk of homelessness (in the next 56 days), or people who are already homeless. Flexibility may on occasion be required, but this must be agreed with the Homelessness Prevention Pathway. We would also expect that the project may sometimes continue to work for a period of time with individuals who reach the point of more immediate risk of homelessness (in the next 56 days), i.e. where the early intervention has not been successful, usually at least until alternative appropriate support has been secured.

The project will engage with individuals who may have a broad variety of support needs, related directly or indirectly to any future potential risk of homelessness. This project is certainly not intended or expected to meet all of these support needs, but it must work to ensure that other appropriate support is in place where required, e.g. mental health support, debt advice etc. This will likely include taking an assertive and proactive role in coordinating multi-agency responses.

The areas of support needs of people accessing this project may include (but are not limited to) one or all of the following:

- Poor mental health and/or wellbeing
- Difficult home life / families struggling to cope / family breakdown
- Problems with landlords
- Problems with neighbours
- Problems with the condition of accommodation
- Survivors (or those at risk) of domestic abuse, sexual violence, or other violence
- Facing discrimination because of gender identity or sexuality, or any other protected characteristics
- Being socially isolated
- Low self-esteem
- Poor literacy and/or numeracy skills
- Financial difficulties, including debt, unaffordable rents etc.
- Difficulty budgeting
- Developmental disorders (e.g. autism)
- Physical or sensory disabilities
- Learning disability or other additional learning needs
- Chronic illnesses (including HIV & AIDS)
- Substance use issues
- Offending or history of offending
- Behavioural issues
- Leaving care, and other young person's support needs
- Multiple and complex needs, including complex trauma

People will only be excluded from this project in extreme circumstances, where risk is unmanageable. Any such decision will be made in collaboration between the provider and the Homelessness Prevention Pathway. These individuals will be referred to the most appropriate agency in all cases.

As above, the project should not provide personal care, health care, professional or therapeutic counselling, or formal advice services.

G. Access

Given the nature of the project, we would expect that most individuals accessing support/guidance will do so directly, without the need for a referral via the Homelessness Prevention Pathway. However, the project will provide at least a twice weekly report to the Single Pathway with the names of any individuals formally engaged with to offer guidance/support. This will enable the Pathway check whether any individuals are already accessing other Housing Support Grant services, and advise accordingly.

The Pathway may also make referrals to the project, where an appropriate early intervention opportunity has been identified.

Any refused referrals will be referred promptly back to the Homelessness Prevention Pathway, with an explanation for the refusal.

The project will also notify the Pathway if they have capacity to take further referrals.

The provider will have their own assessment and allocations policies and procedures; however, we expect that this will be a responsive service that will offer support / guidance to people as soon as possible - within a 24 hour period following initial identification / contact / referral wherever possible. We would also expect that any assessment and allocations policies will be designed in line with a psychologically informed approach.

H. Key partner agencies and related services

We would expect the project to work with a broad range of partner agencies and other organizations – many of which may not be ‘typical’ homelessness prevention partnership agencies, such is the nature of this project (with its aim of engaging with people much earlier on than we typically currently do in our homelessness prevention support).

While not an exhaustive list, we would expect that for one or both strands of this approach, the project will need to engage with the following organizations / services / settings:

- Social Services, including Children and Adult Services
- Families First and Flying Start
- Other family support services / settings
- Mediation services
- Education settings, e.g. schools, colleges and universities
- Community groups / day centres
- Various third sector organisations
- The Denbighshire Single Point of Access and Children and Families Gateway
- Talking Points
- Community Mental Health Teams, CAMHS, and non-statutory mental health services
- The Substance Misuse Service, and non-statutory substance misuse services
- Food banks
- Police
- Probation
- Youth Justice
- Prison services
- Debt advice services

- Housing advice services
- Housing Maintenance Workers
- DCC Community Housing
- Private sector landlords, including landlords associations
- Housing Associations
- Estate Agents
- Taxi drivers
- The Job Centre / DWP
- Benefits Advice Shop
- Employability support services, e.g. Working Denbighshire, Careers Wales
- Housing Benefit
- General healthcare settings, e.g. GPs and hospitals
- Barnardo's
- Youth clubs
- Environmental Health / Housing Enforcement
- Other housing related support projects

We would also be very interested in ideas or proposals around web based platforms/agencies that could be used/engaged with to deliver positive outcomes for this project.

I. Contract Dimensions

Start date: **TBC**

Duration: 3 years (with an option to extend for 2 years)

Minimum units (these may be negotiated as part of the tender process): We expect that the project will engage with at least 110 individuals at any given time to provide direct support/guidance (and that each of these individuals will have recorded outcomes).

We would expect that a further approx. 700 individuals each year will benefit from training/awareness raising sessions across a diverse variety of settings (the provider will be asked to provide information on these settings).

Maximum contract price: £1,213,365 maximum for the full (3 year) contract term
£242,673 per annum

(Continued funding is reliant on continued grant funding from the Welsh Government)