

MAYOR AND CABINET		
Report Title	Response to Housing Select Committee - Youth Homelessness Prevention Strategy	
Key Decision	No	Item No. 10
Contributors	Executive Director for Customer Services	
Class	Class 1	Date: 16 September 2009

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Housing Select Committee produced a report entitled "Youth Homelessness: A review by the Housing Select Committee" in May 2009. The report was received by Mayor and Cabinet on 10th June 2009. It was agreed that Mayor and Cabinet would provide a report to the Select Committee setting out a response to their recommendations. Each recommendation is reproduced below in paragraphs 5.1 to 5.9 with officer responses following each.

2. Purpose

This report provides a response to the matters arising from the Housing Select Committee Report presented to Mayor and Cabinet on 10th June 2009.

3. Recommendations

The Mayor is recommended to

- 3.1 Agree the responses to the recommendations set out in paragraphs 5.1 to 5.9.

4. Policy Context

- 4.1 Lewisham's Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2020 contains the shared priorities for the borough. It sets out a framework for improving the quality of life and life chances for all who live in the borough. The Homelessness Prevention Strategy and the Youth Homelessness Prevention Strategy, in conjunction with the new Housing Strategy directly relates to the 'Clean green and liveable' priority to increase the supply and quality of housing to accommodate the diverse needs of the population.

- 4.2 The Council has outlined ten corporate priorities which enables the delivery of the Sustainable Community strategy. The Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Youth Homelessness Prevention Strategy addresses the corporate priorities and Local Area Agreement targets to reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation, prevent homelessness and address housing need and aspirations.

5. Response to recommendations

- 5.1 *The pilot Schools Education Programme should be closely monitored and, if found to be successful, the Council should seek to identify funding to allow the programme to continue, as a matter of priority.*

Response: The South East London Housing Partnership secured funding from Communities and Local Government (CLG) to set up a School's Peer Education programme for a year with the St. Christopher's Fellowship. The initiative will formally start in September 2009 at the beginning of the new school year. The pilot will be closely monitored. The Steering Group will be looking at the issue of continued funding as part of developing an exit strategy for the pilot scheme.

- 5.2 *A representative from Education should attend every meeting of the Schools Programme steering group in order to provide input from an education perspective.*

Response: Lewisham has representation on the Steering Group from the Housing Needs Service and the CYP Directorate whose representative is from the Healthier Schools Partnership.

- 5.3 *The mediation service should be designated a priority and significant efforts should be made to identify funding.*

Response: This recommendation has been included within the Youth Homelessness Prevention Strategy. We will seek to consolidate existing funding for mediation services into one accessible service which is jointly commissioned by housing, social care and the youth service.

- 5.4 *The Council should develop a 'Time Out' service as part of the youth homelessness strategy to allow young people to be offered a period of time away from home before negotiating a managed return.*

Response: This recommendation has been included within the Youth Homelessness Prevention Strategy, which was approved by M&C and we are now looking to develop such a service.

- 5.5 *As part of the Supporting People review (a) the balance and spread of supported accommodation should be considered, in particular, the availability of supported accommodation for vulnerable 18-21 year olds who are not necessarily ready for independent living; and (b) extending the current supported lodgings scheme for care leavers to young homeless people with low needs should be considered.*

Response: The above recommendation for supported lodgings has been identified as a commissioning option in Lewisham's Supporting People's Overarching Commissioning Strategy for housing support services. Lewisham's Supporting People Commissioning Body has introduced a new Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) to validate all their existing services, which will include reviewing services for young vulnerable people. In tandem with this, Lewisham and Southwark are the lead boroughs in developing a new commissioning framework agreement. Lambeth and Bromley are also involved. The framework is a key vehicle for the boroughs in terms of procuring, commissioning and delivering effective and efficient services in the immediate and mid-term future. It is anticipated that the new framework will be in place in April 2010. Any new services, such as the supporting lodgings scheme will be considered once the new framework is in place in April 2010.

- 5.6 *Before being re-housed, young people should be obliged to take a mandatory course on resettlement/independent living (covering topics such as budgeting).*

Response: This recommendation has been included within the Youth Homelessness Prevention Strategy. We will be exploring options for funding and delivering such a course. We also have an action within the Strategy to work with housing providers to design individual 'life plans' for young people entering social housing linking them into education/employment opportunities.

- 5.7 *Officers dealing with young homeless people should place more emphasis on managing expectations, in line with the approach taken by Southwark, to ensure that young people are aware that homelessness is not an easy option and is not a fast track to a Council flat.*

Response: The establishment of the Single Homeless Intervention & Prevention (SHIP) team has meant for the first time there is a place for single people including young people to access housing advice on all options available to avoid homelessness.

There are dedicated Youth Assessment Officers in the SHIP team who work with young people threatened with homelessness to find the most suitable housing option and part of their role is to manage expectations.

- 5.8 *Service users should be consulted on the youth homelessness strategy and their feedback should be fed into the development of the strategy.*

Response: Service users were consulted on the development of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Youth Homelessness Prevention Strategy. Service users will be regularly consulted on service improvements and developments.

- 5.9 *Mayor & Cabinet should track the progress made in achieving the desired outcomes of the strategy, listed at paragraph 32 of this report (which will provide an indication of the success of the strategy); and regular updates are provided to the Housing Select Committee.*

Response: The key outcomes at paragraph 32 will be reported regularly to the Cabinet Member responsible for Housing and included in the wider Management Report to Mayor and Cabinet and Scrutiny. Regular updates will be provided to the Housing Select Committee.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The Council's expenditure budget for 2009/10 provides £3.438m from the General Fund (excluding any external funding) and £3.405m from the Housing Revenue Account for Strategic Housing, including homelessness.
- 6.2 As initiatives are developed to meet changing needs, fully costed proposals will be reported to Mayor & Cabinet for consideration as appropriate.
- 6.3 Officers will also explore central, regional and sub regional funding opportunities to support the existing budgets in taking this work forward.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 16 and 17 year olds (with certain exceptions) and young people aged between 18 and 20 who were formerly in care have a priority need for accommodation under the homelessness legislation (namely, Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996). This means that they must be secured suitable accommodation if they become homeless through no fault of their own.
- 7.2 The Homelessness Act 2002 creates a duty upon all local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness and to produce a Homelessness Strategy detailing its response to the problem. Section 3 of the 2002 Act provides that the Strategy should be developed for:- preventing

- 7.3 The Code of Practice on Homelessness confirms what should be included within a Homelessness Strategy.
- 7.4 The Homelessness Strategy must set out the Council's plans for the prevention of homelessness and for securing that sufficient accommodation and support are or will be available for people who become homeless or who are at risk of becoming so. Housing authorities will therefore need to ensure that all organisations, within all sectors, whose work can help to prevent homelessness and/or meet the needs of homeless people in their district are involved in the strategy. This will need to include not just housing providers (such as housing associations and private landlords) but also other statutory bodies such as social services, the probation service, the health service and the wide range of organisations in the private and voluntary sectors whose work helps prevent homelessness or meet the needs of people who have experienced homelessness.
- 7.5 The European Convention on Human Rights states in Article 8 that "Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and correspondence". The Human Rights Act 1998 incorporates the Convention. Whilst it does not, however, necessarily mean that everyone has an immediate *right* to a home, (because Article 8 is a "qualified" right and therefore is capable in certain circumstances, of being lawfully and legitimately interfered with,) the provision by an Authority of a relevant proactive Homelessness Strategy does assist to reinforce the Article 8 principles.

8. Equalities Implications

- 8.1 The Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Youth Homelessness Prevention Strategy have been subjected to a full Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA). All actions identified in the EIA will be incorporated into the annual action plans of the strategies.

9. Crime and Disorder Implications

- 9.1 It is recognised that being homeless or at the risk of homelessness can increase the possibility of drugs and/or alcohol abuse and potentially lead to other criminal activities. The implementation of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Youth Homelessness Prevention Strategy, which incorporates the Housing Select Committee's recommendations, will

ensure greater prevention work in service delivery, tailored support to help vulnerable clients and therefore, minimise the risk of criminal behaviour.

10. Environmental Implications

10.1 There are no specific implications pertaining to this report.

11. Background Information

If you have queries on this report please contact Clare Ryan on 020 8314 3603.