

Health and Wellbeing Board

3rd March 2021

Preventing Homelessness in Warwickshire: a multiagency approach

Recommendation(s)

1. Note the contents of this report.
2. Agree to the strategic vision and recommendations within the strategy; Preventing Homelessness in Warwickshire: a multiagency approach.
3. Support the Homelessness Strategic Group to develop the action plan underpinning these recommendations and continue to work towards preventing homelessness in 2021/22.

1. Key Issues

1.1 In January 2019, Warwickshire's Housing Board sought approval from Warwickshire's Health and Wellbeing Board to:

- Form a Homelessness Strategic Group that reports directly to the Warwickshire Health and Wellbeing Board
- The Homelessness Strategic Group begins to work on a countywide strategy on Tackling and Reducing Homelessness

1.2 Since then, the Warwickshire Homeless Strategic Group has been formed and has been working collaboratively across a wide range of partners, writing a countywide strategy on preventing homelessness.

1.3 The development of the strategy has been delayed for several months during 2020 due to COVID-19, however since wave 1, partners have made a concerted effort to continue work on the strategy, to bring it to fruition.

1.4 Since the strategy is countywide, District and Borough Council's have taken the completed strategy through their own governance processes in January/February 2021, with the final version going to the Health and Wellbeing Board in March 2021.

2. Development of the strategy

2.1 Since the Homelessness Strategic Board was formed, it has held five board meetings to progress the countywide strategy. Broad chapters were agreed following feedback from the homeless conference in 2018. Each chapter had a nominated lead and has worked in smaller task and finish groups to collate the evidence and work up the chapter content and strategic recommendations collaboratively.

2.2 The strategic vision for the strategy is:

“statutory, voluntary and community organisations working together for the benefit of our residents to promote and deliver the changes expected by the government in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 with particular reference to the prevention duty and the Duty to Refer.”

2.3 Within the strategy, there are five strategic priorities, each with their own detailed chapters, which include: what we know (the evidence to support the inclusion of that strategic priority), what are we currently doing to tackle homelessness within that chapter theme, what opportunities are there to improve services – including recommendations for each chapter.

2.4 Strategic priorities include:

- Health – to reduce the inequalities and improve the health of people at risk of homelessness, homeless or sleeping rough.
- Financial inclusion – to ensure that a wide range of appropriate services are available to support those at risk of homelessness due to financial difficulties.
- Young people – to enhance and improve services that prevent homelessness among young people.
- Domestic abuse – to prevent domestic abuse and the crisis homelessness resulting from it wherever possible.
- Offending – to deliver better-focused housing and related support services for those at risk of homelessness when leaving prison.

3. Strategy Engagement

3.1 Following the collaborative approach to develop the strategy, a formal countywide online engagement was launched in October, this gave partners and members of the public the opportunity to comment on the high-level strategic vision and recommendations. The recommendations and content have been refined following the engagement, to ensure relevant comments have been reflected within the strategy.

3.2 A webinar was held with members of the community and voluntary sector to obtain their views and shape the strategic vision and recommendations. Due to COVID having a wide impact, in particular on health partners, an additional webinar

was held to discuss the health recommendations to determine if any changes needed to be reflected as a result of COVID.

3.3 Thanks to Warwickshire County Council Business Intelligence colleagues, feedback was analysed and presented in a detailed report (Appendix 2). Overall, respondents either agreed or agreed to some extent that the recommendations proposed for each strategic priority are the correct ones to focus on for 2021/22:

- Priority 1 – Health: 62% agreed, 31% agreed to some extent
- Priority 2 – Young People: 60% agreed, 24% agreed to some extent
- Priority 3 – Domestic Abuse: 73% agreed, 15.6% agreed to some extent
- Priority 4 – Offending: 57.8% agreed, 24.4% agreed to some extent
- Priority 5 - Financial inclusion: 64.4% agreed, 22.2% agreed to some extent

3.4 Many of the qualitative comments fed back featured in the existing draft of the strategy, however there were some additional changes made as a result of the engagement:

- Education – more focus was given to education in the context of offending and preparing people for release, one of the existing recommendations was updated to specifically include education to help people reacclimatise, integrate into society and find suitable employment.
- Veterans – whilst veterans were mentioned in the strategy, following engagement feedback, services to support veterans with their mental health was included within the health chapter. The matter of the military covenant requiring housing authorities to prioritise veterans was also raised. After discussions with Heads of Housing, it was determined that this was a housing allocations and policy matter and that there was work happening elsewhere to progress this and therefore considered linked, but out of scope for this strategy.
- Digital inclusion – little focus was given to this within the draft strategy, however following helpful feedback on this within the engagement, this has been strengthened within the financial inclusion chapter, specifically around financial support for customers in digital formats.
- Service user involvement – COVID restrictions have prevented meaningful service user involvement. This was raised both in the engagement feedback and webinar with the community and voluntary sector. To keep within COVID secure guidelines and avoid tokenistic engagement, a commitment has since been made to involve service users in parts of the action planning, where appropriate and to establish a service user involvement feedback mechanism, to gain their unique and integral perspective into the delivery of the strategy recommendations.

4. Options and Proposal

4.1 That Warwickshire's Health and Wellbeing Board adopt the strategy, Preventing Homelessness in Warwickshire: a multiagency approach.

5. Financial Implications

None

6. Environmental Implications

None

7. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

7.1 District and Borough Council's have taken the strategy through their governance processes in January/February 2021, before the Warwickshire Health and Wellbeing Board receives the final version for consideration and sign off in March 2021.

7.2 The homelessness strategic group will reconvene in 2021 and continue to work collaboratively with partners, developing the action plan that will underpin the strategic recommendations. This will result in the development of different workstreams around homelessness, in order to achieve the strategic vision. Updates on progress will be provided to the Health and Wellbeing Board and other boards as requested.

Background papers

Appendix 1 – Preventing Homelessness in Warwickshire: a multiagency approach

Appendix 2 – Draft Countywide Homeless Strategy – Survey Results

Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment

| | Name | Contact Information |
|--------------------|-----------------|--|
| Report Author | Emily Fernandez | Emilyfernandez@warwickshire.gov.uk |
| Assistant Director | Shade Agboola | Shadeagboola@warwickshire.gov.uk |
| Strategic Director | Nigel Minns | Nigelminns@warwickshire.gov.uk |
| Portfolio Holder | Cllr Les Caborn | Lescaborn@warwickshire.gov.uk |

The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): N/A

Other members: Councillor Caborn, Councillor Redford, Councillor Roodhouse, Councillor Bell, Councillor Adkins, Councillor Kondakor