

Supporting Local Authorities to review their Homelessness Strategy

Jo Marriott, Ryedale District Council
Naomi Morris, National Practitioner Support Service

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Introductions

Jo Marriott, Ryedale District Council

Focuses on multi-agency partnership working to make best use of scarce resources and support clients to resolve their housing issues

Has good working relationships with neighbouring authorities and believes in sharing good practise

Successfully ran the project to gain Gold Standard Status for Ryedale

Naomi Morris, NPSS

Believes that earlier intervention is key to bringing an end to homelessness and that this begins with practitioners taking a person centered approach

Developed and delivered Preventative services across West London to support increased capacity for Housing Options services

Supports the delivery of Diagnostic Practitioner Reviews, 360 degree Case File Reviews to develop national understanding of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

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In this session

Ryedale District Council recognise that their Homelessness Strategy underpins frontline delivery and is crucial to ensure their housing options service remains effective by identifying gaps in current provision and planning measures needed to prevent homelessness for all households in need.

During this masterclass we hear how they used the NPSS to assist in administering a review of their Homelessness Strategy Action Plan, to support the processes they have in place to prevent and tackle homelessness.

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Local Context

- Ryedale is a rural area of North Yorkshire covering a huge geographical area including markets towns, villages, hamlets and large areas of rural moorland
- Population in 2016 approx. 53,800
- Good partnership working
- Strong links with neighbouring authorities
- Low turnover of staff in the housing options team

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Ryedale Statistics

- Historically zero rough sleepers on annual estimate but in Nov 2017 and 2018 this rose to 2 each year
- Historically had a strong prevention focus
- Annually approx. 500 housing options cases
- Annually approx. 30 homeless applications pre HRA

Challenges in Ryedale

- Stock transfer authority
- Low wages and relatively high rents and house prices
- Buoyant private rented sector
- Social isolation
- Few local specialist services
- Poor transport in many areas of district
- Fuel poverty – much of district off-gas
- High number of older people

Corporate Priorities include:

- Enabling the provision of housing that meets and anticipates future need
- Minimising homelessness, improving the standard and availability of rented accommodation and supporting people to live independently



Team Challenges:

- Resource constraints
- Small team which meets the housing options function, works on homelessness, allocated and manages temporary and supported accommodation and manages the young people's pathway
- Corporate re-organisation in April 2017 resulted in housing options function being shared by 2 teams – front line Customer Service Officers and specialist decision makers (Housing Options Officers)



Implementing the HRA 2017

- **How did Ryedale prepare for the HRA?**
- Key staff attended NPSS training, NHAS training and other legal training commissioned by County Training Group
- Planned series of meetings involving key staff throughout the council
- Extensive working with neighbouring authorities and partners
- Investigated 3 different IT options – purchased PRAH along with most neighbouring authorities in the county
- One extra staff member funded by new burdens for 12 months initially

Understanding Strategic Priorities

- Links to North Yorkshire, York and East Riding Housing Strategy 2015/21
- Ryedale carries out an annual review of the Homelessness Strategy 2015/20 and updates the Action Plan to meet overarching objectives

Main reasons for approach – 2018/19

- Relationship breakdown partner non violent 15.4%
- Arrears RSL 14.7%
- Relationship breakdown parents 9.4%



Main priorities within the Homelessness Strategy

1. Reduce homelessness through prevention
2. Reduce the use & maintain the standard of temporary accommodation
3. Reduce the incidence of youth homelessness
4. Improve access to support and advice services to prevent homelessness
5. Increase the supply of affordable housing



Why commission NPSS?

- Ryedale has a small very busy team who cover several functions (manage temp, Housing Options, Homelessness)
- Limited resource to work on strategy
- Previously worked with NPSS on Gold Standard
- Good relationship with NPSS
- Good to seek external independent input to encourage participation from partner organisations
- Keen to gain insight and learn from other LAs



Benefits

- Independent organisation is able to highlight and understand gaps in provision
- Governed by national good practice
- Ensures strategy is compliant with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Considers local partnerships and how these could be improved
- Assesses the impact of national challenges; welfare reform etc.
- Identifying service shortfalls to capitalise on prevention opportunities
- Reviewing and identifying where processes could be more efficient
- Supports busy operational services who do not have capacity to invest in the Homelessness Strategy

Feedback

Feedback report including:

- Background to the project
- Requirements of a Local Authority Homelessness Strategy
- Overview of findings
- Record of how the findings were gathered
- Recommendations to improve strategy in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

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Outcomes

- To work on Improving partner organisations responsibility for actions within the action plan
- Improve marketing on private sector housing grants for partner agencies
- Lack of customer engagement
- Add a traffic light system to the action plan
- Lack of knowledge of No Second Night out
- Lack of knowledge on landlord and tenancy dispute resolution and mediation
- Reduce length of the action plan
- Develop a Communication Strategy
- Divide the strategy up in order to have more focused partnership groups

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Next steps

- Information used now to prepare the full review and Strategy for implementation for April 2020, in addition to directing workshops over the next 6 months
- Full review of the service and structure
- Statutory consultation process with service users, stakeholders and general public
- Brief Senior Management Team re upcoming homelessness review
- Prepare draft review and strategy by Jan 2020

Over to you



- How well utilised in your Homelessness Strategy?
- Are your team aware of how they fit in to wider objectives?
- What are your identified gaps?
- What plans do you have to bridge these?

Contact us

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