Supporting HRA compliance and enhancing service delivery using 360 degree case file reviews

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Introductions

Allan Glennon, Localities Manager

- Over a decade's experience in early intervention and prevention

- Focus on families with additional needs in Sefton (North Liverpool). These are families that require targeted services to meet their needs but are not yet at crisis point

- Currently responsible for Sefton's Housing Options Team Sefton Housing Options became part of a new Locality operating model in September 2018. The focus of this model is EIP and includes a number of services spanning Leisure and Libraries to YOT and Children's Centres

- Previously managed 2 projects (Commissioning and Commercialisation) realising a total of £5m budgetary savings over a 3 year period

- Leads on Housing and Homelessness within the locality model and aims to fully embed EIP (pre 56 days) work into the Housing Options function over the next 12 months

Lindsay Megson, Head of Service

- Over 15 years' experience in developing and delivering housing options services

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

- Gave evidence to the Homelessness Select Committee during scrutiny of the then Homelessness Reduction Bill

- Leads on development and delivery of NPSS' new programme of commissioned services including the Diagnostic Practitioner Review, 360 degree file review service and NPSS' wide range of in-house training courses

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In this session

Sefton Borough Council recognise that informed service delivery is crucial to ensure their housing options service remains effective in identifying early opportunities for preventing homelessness for all in housing need

During this masterclass we hear how they used the NPSS 360-degree case file review service to review the practices and processes they have in place to prevent and tackle homelessness

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Context – Local Demographics

- Sefton is a metropolitan borough of Merseyside. It is part of 6 local authorities that make up the Liverpool City Region.
- Sefton has a population of approx. 275,000
- 23% of the population is over 65
- In its entirety it is in the most deprived quarter of English Local Authorities with five of its lower super output areas (LSOA) in the top 1% nationally. Yet other parts of the Borough are some of the least deprived areas, with two LSOAs being in the least deprived 5% of areas nationally.
- In 2017/18 there were a total of 18,651 social housing dwellings, within Sefton 58% of these properties are owned by One Vision Housing
- Between January and December 2017 there were approximately 15,300 workless households, which equates to 18.5% of all households within Sefton

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Context – Housing and Homelessness 2018/2019

- New homeless cases – 1120
- 477 households prevented or relieved average of 40 a month
- Statutory homeless 24
- Rough sleeper count 11
- 133 have accessed sit up services
- Main reasons for approach:
  - End of PRS tenancy – 137
  - Family unwilling to accommodate – 99
  - Domestic abuse related – 69
- 312 households have been rehoused
- 170 single people placed in temporary accommodation
- 183 duty to refer referrals

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Context – Challenges

- Increased use of B&B accommodation
- Engaging partners in early intervention
- Further budget reductions to come
- Changes to staffing, currently:
  - 2 team leaders (1 temp)
  - 7 Housing Options Advisors (2 temp)
  - 2 Accommodation Support Advisors
  - 3 new EIP HOAs (temp, start 1 July 2019)

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Implementing the HRA 2017

- Developed implementation plan, albeit from Feb 2019!
- Sought advice from MHCLG
- Training from NPSS, NHAS
- Modelled potential number of future cases based on historical data
- Briefed cabinet members
- Procured Jigsaw system and trained staff
- Renewed the Homelessness Review process
- Prepared stakeholder communications and factsheets
- Prepared staff for change (legislation, delivery, assess-plan-review, plus other internal changes)
- Recruited temp staff with New Burdens funding

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Measuring Service Delivery

- Regular quality assurance ensures that a high quality service delivery is being maintained, 6 monthly dip sample
- This is supported by 4 weekly 1:1 supervision by line manager, which helps to monitor staff performance
- Ensures that clients are achieving positive outcomes and that we are meeting our statutory obligations
- Demonstrates good practice
- Identifies opportunities to improve the service

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Why Commission NPSS?

- Quality assurance benchmark completed by NPSS in Jan 2019
- 10 cases are free for Jigsaw customers but we paid for an additional 40
- Feedback of findings provided by NPSS directly to staff
- We implemented the recommendations immediately
- Helped identify gaps in service and practice
- Highlights good practice
- We wanted to make sure that staff were delivering a consistent level of service to clients
- The same exercise is to be conducted summer 2019 to show distance travelled and identify further learning

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360 degree case file review methodology

- The purpose is to participate in a structured assessment of the way in which the LA administers its statutory housing options and homelessness duties as set

- This review process supports local authorities to ensure that the best possible outcomes for the customer are being achieved, that staff are supported, and appropriate training identified and delivered

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Benefits

- Determine your effectiveness in meeting housing needs
- Evidence positive outcomes for customers
- Highlight effective practice
- Highlight areas for improvement including recommendations
- Identify service shortfalls to capitalise on prevention opportunities
- Target where partnership working could be developed and how
- Identify unmet training and support needs for key staff
- Review and identify where processes could be more efficient
- Evidence compliance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

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Process

- Names and roles of officers whose case files will be reviewed
- Number of cases per officer to be reviewed
- Agree the percentage split of reviews
    - e.g. 50% prevention and/or relief and 50% main duty
- Temporary, read only, access to the local authority's IT system
- Agreed timescale for delivery and feedback

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Feedback

- Feedback report including:
  - Background to the project
  - Overview of findings
  - Review feedback structured by staff member including:
    - effective practice identified
    - recommendations
    - Identified training needs
- On site feedback and bespoke training session for staff
- Registration with the free NPSS SAHRA tool

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Outcomes

- Feedback was constructive and honest with a balance of some positive some negative findings
- Staff were progressing all approaches to assessment
- Limited actions in Personal Housing Plans or no PHP at all
- Issues highlighted about timely sending out of letters
- High numbers of successfully finding accommodation but low numbers for maintaining existing accommodation
- High numbers of H-CLIC errors

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Next Steps

- We began 4 weekly supervision sessions enabling closer caseload management
- Implemented drop down actions in PHP plans
- Provided staff with mediation training to help with maintaining client accommodation
- Identified future refresher training on legislation
- Improvements in case note recording
- Staff monitor and amend their own H-CLIC errors in Jigsaw
- Introduction of casework days to complete admin tasks (letters, etc)
- We plan to repeat the process on roughly a 6 monthly basis for 2 years

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Over to you

- Are you checking compliance with the HRA 2017?
- If so, how have you approached this?
- What effective practice have you identified?
- What learning can you share?

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Feedback form

This masterclass is:

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Contact us

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