

# HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

## Agenda Item 26

Brighton & Hove City Council

**Subject:** Report on the Youth Homelessness Strategy 2007-2010 and interim action plan for 2010-2011

**Date of Meeting:** 7 July 2010

**Report of:** Director of Housing, Culture and Enterprise

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**Key Decision:** No

**Wards Affected:** All

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE

#### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

This report covers the Youth Homelessness Strategy 2007-2010, detailing key achievements of the strategy action plan for that period. It also covers the interim action plan for 2010 – 2011

- 1.1 The national policy context of this strategy has been directed by the government white paper 'Every Child Matters' and the Homelessness Prevention agenda.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Housing notes this report and approves the interim action plan for 2010-2011.

#### 3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

The Youth Homelessness Strategy (YHS) was produced by the Housing Strategy Division in consultation with The Children and Young People's Trust (CYPT) the voluntary and community sector and with input from young people. It was launched in November 2006 and covered the period of time up to the end of March 2010. The action plan published alongside it was updated in November 2007, and again in December 2008. The Strategy was highlighted by Communities and Local Government as an example of good practice and used as a case study on their National Youth Homelessness Scheme website. The actions related to working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender homeless young people, especially those relating to the joint working with the voluntary and community sector were also highlighted on the website.

- 3.1.1 In November 2006 the government announced a new target for local authorities to achieve, which was that by 2010 no sixteen or seventeen year olds who were homeless would be placed in Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation unless in an emergency. The lack of support staff in this type of emergency accommodation, and the inevitable exposure of young people to adults with complex needs results in them being in situations where risk factors are increased. In Brighton and Hove, our performance around this target has been good. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2005/6 there were 54 16 and 17 year olds in temporary accommodation. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2009/10 this figure had reduced to 3

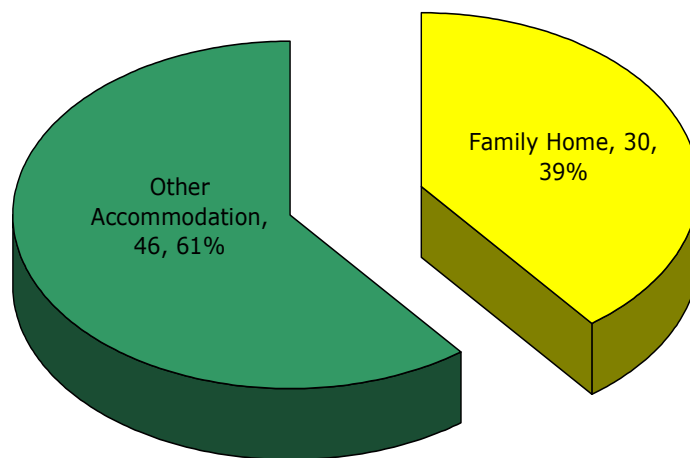
- 3.1.2 In Brighton and Hove, levels of homelessness amongst 16 and 17 year olds were higher than the regional average. In 2005/6 78 16 and 17 year olds were accepted as homeless by the council. By 2009/10 this figure had dropped to 16, an improvement in performance of over 80%. This improvement can be directly attributed to the actions embedded with the YHS and the partnership working that was the basis of the strategy
- 3.2 Within the action plan for the Youth Homelessness Strategy there are 76 actions in total. Of these, 69 have been achieved since its publication in November 2006. 7 actions have been partially achieved. The YHS actions have been delivered by a partnership of organisations and monitored by the members of the Youth Homelessness Working Group. The improvement in joint working between teams such as Housing Options, the Support to Young Parents team and RUOK (both part of CYPT) has meant a real difference to the young people that the strategy is designed to help. For example on 31/03/06 there were 23 pregnant teenagers or teenage mothers in temporary accommodation. On 31/03/10 this number had reduced to 4
- 3.3 The Youth Homelessness Strategy has 5 objectives which reflect the differing needs of young people who may become homeless, and the integrated methods of working that are needed to ensure the best possible outcomes for these young people.
- 3.4 The paragraphs below are a brief explanation of some of the actions within the Youth Homelessness Strategy that have been achieved since its launch in November 2006. The full action plan of 76 actions is attached for a more detailed breakdown of the work that has been finished, or is still in progress. In addition, an interim action plan for 2010/2011 is attached which will pick up those actions that have not been completed, and set out some new actions for this financial year, which will build upon and expand the good practice of the Youth Homelessness Strategy.
- 3.4.1 It is proposed that a new Youth Homelessness Strategy be developed during this time period, to be published in April 2011, and covering a three year period 2011-2014. The strategy will be developed in consultation with the Youth Homelessness Working Group, Supporting People and wider partners throughout the city, including young people and their parents and carers.
- 3.5 **Objective 1 – Intervene early to prevent homelessness –**

One of the actions under this heading was to ‘provide a programme of support information and advice to parents’ to prevent relationship breakdown between young people and their parents, which often results in them becoming homeless from the family home. In partnership with Sussex Central YMCA, the council’s Housing Options service developed the Respite Scheme, which has increased support given to parents and carers, by offering a family liaison and mediation service. Parents are able to see a trained family mediator, either with their children or separately, to explore the difficulties that the family may be experiencing. In many cases this is a clash of lifestyles, which can be increased by circumstances such as cramped housing conditions due to overcrowding, or the young person not being engaged in employment education or training.

If the family and the young person need a break from each other, the young person can stay in a Sussex Central hostel for up to 3 weeks, whilst support is given to them and their parents to look at the issues that caused the family breakdown. The table below shows that 39% of families that have engaged with the family mediation service have had their young person return to the family home.

Table 1

Percentage of young people engaged with Family Solutions that returned to the family home



**3.6 Objective 2 – Provide support to vulnerable young people –**

The housing needs of vulnerable teenage parents were audited in 2007, and it was identified that there was a gap in supported housing provision for this client group. A successful bid was made in November 2008 by Housing Strategy and the CYPT to the Department of Children Schools and Families for a pilot supported housing project teenage parents. The funding is for 2 years the project is providing an enhanced package of support and accommodation for 10 households. The project is working with midwives, health visitors and where necessary social workers to improve parenting, engagement with work and learning, and reduce social isolation. Each young parent – including fathers is able to access a life coach, to address aspirations, improve relationships with partners and families, and to improve engagement and moving towards independence. At present 15 young parents are being supported at the project, with a further 4 accessing life coaching. Accredited learning is delivered through groups within the project, covering subjects such as nutrition, parenting and nurture skills, finance and budgeting, and healthy relationships.

**3.7 Objective 3 – Address the underlying causes of youth homelessness**

Young people who become homeless often have other factors in their lives that can cause their relationships with their parents or carers to break down. Additionally, where young people are housed in supported accommodation,

factors such as mental health problems or substance misuse can impact on their ability to sustain that accommodation. Through the YHS links between the sexual health teams within CYPT and hostel support workers have improved. Staff have received training on assessing the sexual health needs of young people and helping them to access the services they need. Additionally, hostel staff have improved the numbers of young people with substance misuse issue to RUOK the substance misuse service for young people in Brighton and Hove.

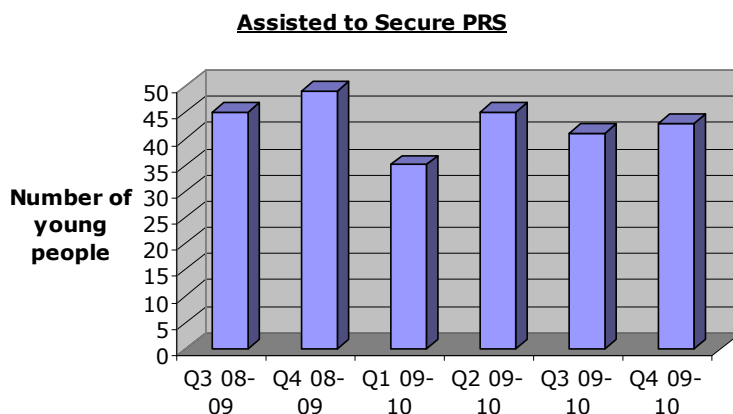
**3.8 Objective 4 – Prevent a new generation of rough sleepers –**

Every rough sleeper under 25 has a worker who will proactively relocate out of area rough sleepers, or refer those with a local connection to hostel accommodation. In 2008/2009 there were 52 young people relocated out of Brighton and Hove. In 2009/10 this figure was 55. Where they are aged 16 or 17 there is a co-ordinated response involving Housing Options who organise multi - agency professionals meetings to ensure fast track referrals to substance misuse agencies and mental health services, amongst others, and liaise with the relevant social care team, if there is a child protection element to the case.

3.8.1 All supported housing providers have signed up to an Eviction Protocol, to ensure that a multi agency meeting occurs before any young person is evicted (and therefore runs the risk of rough sleeping) from a supported housing project. The client group traditionally has a high eviction rate from supported accommodation; however, rates have been decreasing since the eviction protocol was put into practice.

**3.9 Objective 5 – Provide a wider range of housing options for young people -**

A private sector development worker employed by Sussex Central YMCA and funded by Housing Strategy has consistently produced good results, allowing young people to live independently following a period of homelessness. Young people have been able to move through the integrated support pathway, from Band 2 hostels to band 3, and then into private sector accommodation. In 2009/10 164 young gained PRS accommodation through this service, an average of 41 per quarter.



**4. Continuation of the work around youth homelessness**

The Youth Homeless Strategy now needs to be updated to incorporate the continuing challenge of supporting young people at risk of homelessness, and ensuring that key partners work together to provide the best possible services for vulnerable young people in the city. The Youth Homelessness Working Group has consulted with its members to devise an interim action plan covering the period 2010/2011. During that time, the group is in the process of collaborating with the Supporting People team to consult with key stakeholders regarding a longer term strategy, which would be in operation from April 2011-March 2014. In the interim strategy, the five overarching objectives have been kept, and various priorities have been added. For example, building on the family support model and Think Family approach to prevent family breakdown. This links in to the integrated working that the Children and Young People's Trust has instigated in the last few years, which uses the Common Assessment Framework to bring a team of professionals together to support a child or family, to cut down duplication, and offer early intervention and prevention strategies. Another priority is to prevent the homelessness of young people and young families aged 18-25. There will be a focus on making sure the transitions between young people's services and adults services are easily accessible, where young people have a variety of support needs. There will also be support given to young families who are living with extended families and are at risk of homelessness due to overcrowding.

**5. CONSULTATION**

Consultation on the updating of the Youth Homelessness Strategy action plan was done through the Youth Homelessness Working Group, which sits beneath the Homelessness and Social Exclusion Steering Group. Membership includes managers from the CYPT - including the Youth Offending Service, Integrated Youth Support Services, Social care, the Post 16 Team, Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Health, and RUOK (the under 19 substance misuse service) Also represented are B&HCC Housing Options Service, Supporting People, and providers such as Hove YMCA, Impact Initiatives, The Foyer, and Friends First.

- 5.1 Hove YMCA has also carried out consultation with young people and parents, on their experiences of homelessness services for young people, which has influenced the design of services, especially the Respite scheme.

**6. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

**6.1 Financial Implication**

There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations made in this report. The youth homelessness strategy action plan 2010/11 forms part of the budget strategy and can be funded from within the agreed budget allocations for 2010-11

Finance officer Consulted: Neil Smith    Date: 07/06/10

## 6.2 Legal Implications:

The strategic and legal context to the action plan are as set out in the body of the report.

As the plan notes major challenges are presented by a House of Lords decision known as the Southwark judgement. The Southwark judgment gave express clarification that local authorities should presume that where the criteria for Children Act S20 accommodation to be provided has been met, ie where a child is in need and where their parents are unable or unwilling to provide suitable accommodation or care, children's services do not have discretion to use Section 17 powers of the Children Act to provide accommodation. The effect of providing accommodation under Section 20 is that the child becomes "looked after" within the meaning of Section 22 of the Children Act 1989. There are a few limited exceptions to this and the CYPT pathway being developed will highlight these. The duties of local authority children's services to accommodate children in need can not be circumvented by referring the child to a housing authority.

The cross working with CYPT promoted by the plan will be essential to ensure that the impact of the judgment is minimised, and to ensure the range of statutory duties to homeless young people are being met. Key in meeting the challenges arising from the implications of the judgment will be the strategies to prevent young people becoming homeless so as to trigger the duty to treat homeless young people under the age of 18 as a looked after children, and so trigger all the ancillary duties associated with becoming a young person in care.

Ongoing legal advice regarding the development of specific aspects of the plan is being provided by the senior lawyer for housing, and the principle lawyer for the CYPT . All tendering processes relating to implementation of the Youth Homelessness Strategy go through the B&HCC Procurement and Legal Teams.

*Name: Natasha Watson Managing Principal Lawyer Litigation Group*

*Date: 24.0610*

## 6.3 Equalities Implications

An Equalities Impact Assessment of the Housing Options Service has been completed and is awaiting sign off by the corporate equalities team and the senior management team. The Housing Options Family and Young People's Team has been assessed as part of this process.

## 6.4 Sustainability Implications:

With reference to the sustainable communities agenda, this ensures family and community cohesion, by encouraging young people to remain within the family home, to engage in education, employment and training and to address support needs that may affect their communities, such as drug and alcohol misuse, or involvement in the criminal justice system.

6.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

Addressing the causes of youth homelessness and therefore preventing young people from becoming homeless decreases offending and anti-social behaviour amongst this cohort.

6.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

The Youth Homelessness Strategy is relevant to the following indicators that have been identified as key priorities within the Brighton and Hove Local Area Agreement:

- N1 116 – Proportion of children living in poverty
- NI 112 – Reduce the numbers of teenagers becoming pregnant
- NI 156 – Number of households living in Temporary Accommodation
- N1 117 – Number of 16-18 year olds in work, education or training
- N1 141 – Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living
- NI 40 – Drug users in effective treatment
  - L 24 - Reduce the numbers of rough sleepers to as near zero as possible

6.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

The Youth Homelessness Strategy is part of the wider Homelessness Strategy and Housing Strategy, and illustrates the directorate priorities of Adult Social Care and Housing which are:

Reducing Inequality

Working in partnership to improve the commissioning and provision of services

Providing homes to meet the needs of the city

It also feeds into the Corporate Priorities:

Reducing inequality by increasing opportunity

Better use of public money

Fair enforcement of the law

**7. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

Not necessary.

**8. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

To approve the Youth Homelessness Strategy interim action plan

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendices:**

1. The Youth Homelessness Strategy action plan 2007-2010
2. The proposed interim Youth Homelessness Strategy Action plan 2010-2011

**Documents In Members' Rooms**

1. None.

## **Background Documents**

1. None