

Agenda Item 3 - Questions from Non-Executive Councillors

Submitted by Councillor J. H. Rooke

Agenda item 7 - Homelessness: BVPI 213

What are the criteria for this performance indicator?

Could you explain the figure 0.37 in the terms of the number of homelessness preventions?

How many people does it represent?

According to the Housing Advice Review - Appendix C - the number of preventions from the CAB from August 2005 to present is 41. Out of these 41 how many did not fit the criteria needed for BVPI 213?

Response: The criteria for this Performance Indicator is as follows:

Prevention of Homelessness Indicator- an outcome where casework intervention has resolved the immediate homelessness or threat of homelessness and it is likely that this will be sustainable for at least 6 months

“casework” is defined as detailed file-based case recording, the outcome of which is subject to a system of quality checking and control. One-off telephone advice provided through for example an advice line is not included in the definition.

“resolution” through housing advice casework intervention is defined as “an outcome where casework intervention has resolved the immediate homelessness or threat of homelessness and it is likely that this will be sustainable for at least 6 months.” This must be measured through a system of objectively checking and verifying case outcomes. A senior officer or another advisor who was not directly involved in the case intervention must undertake these checks.

Both priority and non-priority households

Outcome will be either:

No enquiries made under Section 184 as problem resolved before formally threatened with homelessness

Or:

Enquiries had commenced and intervention resolved the problem resulting in a “not homeless” decision

What can be included:

- Helping a household find private sector accommodation
- Resolving issues with Housing Benefit
- Intervention to tackle disrepair
- Assisting a household in accessing social housing or shared ownership
- Negotiation with a landlord, family or friends to prevent homelessness
- Court representation
- Etc

What cannot be included:

- Intervention where homelessness only delayed or for less than 6 months

- Assisting someone to complete a homeless application
- Advice with no follow up direct intervention
- Referral to a third party such as CAB
- Giving a letter to the client to give to a landlord or third party
- Informing landlord that an invalid notice has been issued
- Etc

Auditors will require details such as:

Identifying number, brief description of problem, details of intervention, outcome and the process for following up casework intervention to ensure that homelessness has been prevented for a period of at least 6 months

Cases will be subject to a random audit

The figure of 0.37 represents 20 cases where homelessness was prevented by active intervention.

20 expressed as a percentage of the number of households in the District (54,229) = 0.37%

Unfortunately, the information provided by the CAB for the prevention of homelessness in 2005/2006 cannot be included, as no follow up is possible to establish whether homelessness was prevented for at least 6 months. Therefore the only figures included are the small number of cases undertaken by the Homelessness Team

Agenda item 12

Draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy - Appendix 3 - Agents Fee Structure

Would this work be done in house by NWDC or will it be from an external independent service? Would the fee paid to the agent come out of the grant or would it have to be found from the client's own personal money?

Response: This work will be undertaken by an external independent service. The money is paid direct to the Agent, which in most cases tends to be North Wiltshire Care & Repair, or Westlea Housing Association in terms of tenant disabled facilities grants.

NWDC could be the agent but then this would involve taking officers away from the processing of the grants and slow down another side of the process. Most Councils in the country use agents in this way to ensure clients receive a good and personalised service. It is important to note that the Agent can also assist people who are not eligible for grant assistance

The Agent's fee is included as part of the grant approved. As indicated in Appendix 3 the maximum agent' fee of 12% for the first £5,000 and then 10% thereafter has been in operation since 1997. The difference in fees is due to the time & complexity of the work involved for the agent. For example the submission of a Disabled Facilities Grant is a lot more time consuming and specialised in terms of taking on contractors than a small works grant.