

Appendix Two

Preventing & Tackling homelessness

Our 2016-2020 Homelessness Strategy that was approved by Cabinet in October 2016 highlights the core themes we are committed to delivering over the next four years in order to prevent and tackle homelessness in Dacorum. One of the main commitments of the service is to achieve the National Practitioners Support Service (NPSS) Gold standard and this NSNO policy is directly linked to Local Challenge 4 of the 10 challenges set by the NPSS - adopting a No second night out policy or an effective local alternative.

The commitments featured in our strategy that are directly linked to the policy are as follows though Commitment Three deals with helping people remain in their private rented properties and Commitment Five is on general reduction of homelessness on young people and families:

Commitment one – Continue to build partnerships across different sectors and lead Dacorum’s response to preventing and tackling homelessness

Commitment one seeks to build on the well established relationships between the housing service and the voluntary and community sector and other statutory services. By increasing our network and developing these relationships further we can address not only peoples housing needs, but help them to improve their lives by gaining the right skills. We will explore opportunities to reduce both long-term and short-term demand on services in Dacorum. To achieve this we will;

- Increase the effectiveness of the Homelessness Forum, using it to effectively manage joint resources and tackle key issues related to homelessness
- Offer holistic support to people that are homeless or at risk of homelessness by improving pathways between services
- Review agreements between the housing service and external organisation against required outcomes and value for money achieved
- Lead a borough wide response to any national changes to ensure a consistent service
- Utilise our travel assistance fund is used to allow reconnection of homeless clients with their local area, to prevent further demand on Dacorum’s resources and services.

Commitment two - Work together with partners and residents to understand the causes of homelessness and increase the help Dacorum services can offer

Develop a Housing First model to support people with complex needs experiencing homelessness into accommodation

- Eradicate rough sleeping by developing a No Second Night Out model

- Develop our Positive Futures programme to provide increased opportunities for our clients to access support and achieve independence through developed life skills

Commitment four - Empower Dacorum residents to make informed decisions about their housing options

- Work with partners to increase access to housing advice and options support through outreach work and pop-up events

Preventing and tackling homelessness contributes to the following corporate objectives;

- A clean, safe and enjoyable environment
- Building strong and vibrant communities
- Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need

Partnership working

The service recognises the importance of working in partnership and is committed to doing so with both internal and external partners. It is important that all partner agencies and internal departments recognise the role they play in preventing homelessness and the impact that decisions made can have. By working in collaboration the Council will present a strong corporate position in respect of tackling homelessness and is likely to have far more effective outcomes.

Current progress in this area since the strategy launch includes:

- Adopting a new Homeless Forum Service standard for all partner agencies to adopt
- Appointing a voluntary sector chair to the Homeless Forum, to promote inclusivity
- Research into the development of a more effective private sector access scheme that meets the needs of all clients groups
- Working with the Legal department and Residents Services to provide evidence to consider enforcement options and other effective alternatives
- Contribution to costs to bring into use an additional 3 rooms at the Elms, making a total of 44 units for single homeless clients in Dacorum
- Chairing a partnership task and finish group specifically for single non-priority homeless clients
- Implementing an effective hospital discharge referral process

Further Strategy progress

- Development of a Housing Options toolkit for staff to support their work and ensure comprehensive advice is provided to clients (target June 2017)

- Production of customer self help guides, to enable them to facilitate online help to resolve their specific housing problem (target June 2017)
- Preparation for the transition required with the potential introduction of the Homeless Reduction Bill, which includes a move from the traditional Housing Options letter to a more comprehensive Personal Housing Plan (effective March 2017)
- Current liaison with partners to look at suitable sites to be used for potential Housing First type project or second stage accommodation
- Making effective use of CLG allocated prevention funding
- Crashpad facilities available at temporary accommodation sites including the Elms
- Continual liaison with the NPSS to explore areas of good practice