

27 January 2015

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| Report of | Head of Commercial Services | Author | Geoff Beales 📞 506514 |
| Title | Homelessness Gold Standard | | |
| Wards affected | Not applicable | | |

The Panel is invited to review the feedback from the peer review on the Homelessness Gold Standard

1. Action required

- 1.1 To note the report outcomes and recommendations.

2. Reason for scrutiny

- 2.1 The Panel had previously asked for an update and feedback on the peer review of homelessness services provided by Colchester Borough Homes following Scrutiny Panel in July 2014. This report provides the panel with headline outcomes from the peer review, which will be used to develop a continuous improvement plan.

3. Background information

- 3.1 Colchester Borough Homes was delegated responsibility for the Housing Options service by Colchester Borough Council in November 2013. The peer review has been completed by them on behalf of Colchester Borough Council.
- 3.2 The Greater Haven Gateway is a partnership developed between 8 Local Authorities which supports housing options services. Each Local Authority shares the cost of a Project Co-ordinator and funding which can provide overarching research to advise, support and develop their services.
- 3.3 Colchester Borough Homes agreed that it would be beneficial to undertake the 'Gold Standard Challenge' which is a local authority, sector led peer review, funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) designed to deliver more efficient and cost effective homelessness prevention services.
- 3.4 The first part of the challenge – which has a ten-step continuous improvement approach - was to undertake a diagnostic peer review of the Housing Options services. To provide consistency the Greater Haven Gateway Co-Ordinator has participated in all the assessments. The process follows a diagnostic assessment framework that is validated by the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS).
- 3.5 The Colchester Peer Review was carried out by Maldon District Council during July 2014. The Colchester Borough Homes staff then led a review of the services at Braintree District Council during August 2014. Tendring District Council and Chelmsford Borough

Council are also participating in the review. Outcomes and best practice from all Local Authorities that have participated will be shared and used to develop our service.

- 3.6 The overall process is likely to take 18 months to complete before accreditation is awarded, providing assurance that this service meets national expectation.

4. Homelessness Gold Standard Peer Review

- 4.1 The peer review is completed as a three stage process. The first stage is a 'desk top' review of information including the Homelessness Strategy and access and information for customers on the web site. A review of statistical information which is provided to the DCLG quarterly is assessed and compares the service with others.
- 4.2 The second stage assessment is completed over 5 days with assessors reviewing facilities, process and procedures and included the review of case files, interviews and outcomes. This part of the review also included visits to temporary accommodation.
- 4.3 The third stage is a series of interviews with frontline staff, managers and directors from Colchester Borough Homes and key stakeholders.

5. Outcomes and Recommendations

- 5.1 The assessment process benchmarks services through a scoring process. A score of 60% and above is accepted as "Good".
- 5.2 The overall average score of 64% confirms that CBH operate a good service, which has scope for improvement. ***(A more detailed baseline summary and breakdown of the assessment is attached to this report as Appendix 1)***
- 5.3 The individual elements were scored as follows:

Pre-visit assessment (strategy, website, returns) 65%

On-site assessment (reception, observations, file reviews) 58%

Interviews with staff and visits to temporary accommodation 73%

- 5.4 A number of areas of good practice were identified from the assessment, and the review was particularly complimentary regarding the way in which staff manage complex casework, and how CBH work in partnership with local agencies to deliver support services.
- 5.5 The supported temporary accommodation developed and managed by Family Mosaic in partnership with CBC was commended for the high quality accommodation and range of support available. The Colchester Night Shelter was commended for the way it provides direct access accommodation to complement and support the Housing Options service.
- 5.6 A number of recommendations are provided to improve the service. However, only one part of the customer process was reviewed as poor, that being "confirmation of advice is provided". Currently services are "triaged" through the Customer Service Team who make early assessment of the need for further advice or a homelessness assessment. The outcomes are not currently confirmed in writing to the customer.

- 5.7 CBH accept this as an area of weakness and will work with the Customer Services Team to re-assess the way in which advice is provided, particularly at the first point of contact.
- 5.8 Overall, Colchester Borough Homes have found the review to be challenging but fair and will use the outcomes and improvement plan to continue to develop the service. The report provides us with a baseline assessment in which to demonstrate their commitment to achieve the Gold Standard. An action plan has been developed as part of the Peer Review process. All four of the Authorities intend to meet together and to work jointly on each of the areas highlighted for improvement. It is hoped that not only will this provide a consistently high level of service across boundaries for those facing homeless, but also that efficiencies will be made by sharing the workload needed to apply for the Gold Standard challenge.

6. Strategic Plan references

- 6.1 The services and projects delivered by Colchester Borough Homes contribute directly to the following Strategic Plan priority areas:-
- Providing more affordable homes across the borough
 - Regenerating our borough through buildings, employment, leisure and infrastructure
 - Improving our streets and local environment
 - Tackling anti-social behaviour and using enforcement to support priorities
 - Enabling local communities to help themselves
 - Supporting more vulnerable groups

7. Consultation

- 7.1 Colchester Borough Homes has developed a focus group that will provide the opportunity for residents to review service outcomes called the Customer Services Improvement Group.

8. Publicity considerations

- 8.1 The Medium Term Delivery Plan has been widely distributed.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1 The cost of the Gold Standard assessment is available within existing budgets, with resources for the assessment process supported by the Greater Haven Gateway Co-Ordinator.

10. Other standard references

- 10.1 Having considered equality, diversity and human rights, health and safety and community safety implications, there are none which are significant to the matters in this report.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 – Baseline summary of Diagnostic Peer Review