

Budget & Performance Panel

Review of Homeless Service Level Agreements

13th March 2007

Report of Corporate Director (Community Services)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides a review of Service Level Agreements between Strategic Housing and voluntary agencies. It proposes action to be taken in the coming year to ensure that value for money is secured from these agreements which will continue into 2007/8.

This report is public

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

- That Budget and Performance Panel support the proposed improvements in performance-monitoring and management of the SLAs considered in this report.

2 BACKGROUND

In September 2006, Budget and Performance panel considered an over-view of all existing SLAs which included a summary of Agreements with the following voluntary agencies

Agency	SLA 2006/7	Funding	SLA 2007/8	Funding
Lancaster and District YMCA	£22,500		£23,000	
Signposts	£14,500		£14,800	
Lancaster and District Homeless Action Service	£30,300		£30,900	
Lancaster and District Womens Aid	£11,400		£11,600	
Morecambe Homeless Action	£3,500		£3,600	

The remaining SLAs run from October 2005 to the end of March 2008. They state that Agreements will then be continued on an annual basis after that, unless terminated earlier (for reasons such as a fundamental breach of its terms or a failure to provide satisfactory documentation). All the Agreements specify that a report will be required annually from each organisation that includes monitoring information and allows the City Council to review the value of funding the service in the forthcoming financial year.

This report gives a summary for each agency of the information that they have provided for the annual review. All of the agencies have met the requirement to produce a report.

3 REVIEWS

3.1 Lancaster and District YMCA

The Agreement with YMCA is to provide the following services:

- Offer an assessment interview by YMCA staff to young people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Provide advice and support and assist young people in staying in their existing residency or finding suitable alternative accommodation
- Prevent young people from becoming homeless through mediation, rent deposit guarantee scheme and appropriate support
- Develop and manage the supported hostel for young people in Portland Street, Lancaster
- Keep, and make available, detailed monitoring of the service and its users
- To work with Strategic Housing in the development and implementation of a co-ordinated action plan to meet the housing and housing related support needs for young people
- Provide operational and financial reports
- To co-ordinate the Lancaster Young Persons Housing Forum.

Summary of the service provided

- YMCA provide information and advice services which aim to be as accessible as possible and the YMCA is the initial point of call in the district for most young people experiencing homelessness. An activity programme which enables friendships to be made and counsel sought is also provided. There is a good working relationship with Strategic Housing staff who deliver drop-in sessions at the YMCA twice each week. Linked to this, YMCA run a number of schemes. Advice is given over the following wide range of housing options and problems
 - Tenancy rights including harassment, illegal eviction and disrepair
 - Prevention of homelessness
 - Maximisation of income, rent and mortgage issues
 - Deposit guarantee scheme
 - Truce mediation, counselling and conciliation project
 - Finding private rented accommodation
 - Floating support
 - Housing options following a relationship breakdown
 - Key workers
 - Finding affordable housing
- A Deposit Guarantee Scheme supported by the City Council which enables YMCA to work with the individual in sustaining tenancies and provides access to accommodation which would otherwise be unattainable.
- Preventative work – the YMCA is involved in awareness and preventative work in local schools and colleges with partners with a plan to develop work in all of the local high schools. Work is also ongoing to develop a strategy for delivering preventative work in primary schools, and developing a young people's resource pack aimed at ensuring they do not become homeless in the first place.
- The Wise Up Project – now in its sixth year, this project for offenders has had an 80% success rate in terms of not re-offending.
- Anger Management – one to one anger management sessions are run with clients, but whilst there is an overwhelming demand for the service, YMCA are only able to meet a very small percentage of this due to a lack of staff and funding.
- Domestic Violence – a workshop was run at Lancaster University on the impact of domestic violence on children and young people. YMCA were invited by Lancaster and District Women's Aid and Red Oak Children's Services to

undertake this work. Whilst the workshop was a one-off, it was regarded as a huge success, and YMCA plan to work alongside Lancaster and District Women's Aid in the coming year to highlight the problems young people face after the fallout of domestic violence.

- Cook and Eat Sessions – These have been provided with help from the Healthy Living Centre in Morecambe, and the aim is to improve clients' knowledge of health and nutrition and how to have a well balanced diet within a limited budget.
- Emergency Accommodation – work has been ongoing throughout the year to open an emergency accommodation project at a Council property in Portland Street. The City Council has made funding available to get the project off the ground in 2007/8. A project manager funded by LSP, has been employed during the last year to take this forward, and to ensure that the project is linked closely to the other services that YMCA provide. Work has also been undertaken to ensure that existing models elsewhere are looked at and lessons are learnt from positive and negative experiences in providing emergency accommodation.
- Floating support – this service can accept 30 clients, including ex-offenders or people on the verge of offending behaviour, young people under 25 and people in RSL accommodation. It is funded by Supporting People.
- Truce – this project, which has now been going for two years, provides conciliation counselling to young people in conflict with their families. It was set up as a response to the fact that family conflict is a major factor in large numbers of young people becoming homeless. It includes a team of counsellors and while not all the young people are in imminent danger of eviction, ultimately working with children and parents to provide problems arising should have an impact on the numbers becoming homeless.

Monitoring

Since October 2006, YMCA have kept two sets of figures: one for those using their deposit guarantee scheme and one for general enquiries: these are shown separately below.

Deposit Guarantee Scheme

	Oct 06	Nov 06	Dec 06	Jan 07	Feb 07
Males	7	14	5	16	2
Couples		2	1	2	1
Females	5	7		7	1
Total number seen	12	23	6	25	4

Total callers with housing enquiries

	Oct 06	Nov 06	Dec 06	Jan 07	Feb 07
Males 17-19	11	12	8	4	10
20 - 25	30	37	33	29	35
25+	40	42	39	36	45
Females 17 - 19	8	6	5	5	10
20 - 25	15	17	15	12	19
25+	10	9	7	6	12
Total number seen	114	123	107	92	131

Development plans for the forthcoming year

- Open the Portland Street Project.
- Work with Strategic Housing to develop further supported accommodation to young people
- Work towards accreditation with both Supporting People and Insync for all housing, homelessness, tenancy support and accommodation based projects
- Seek to employ a full time manager for the deposit guarantee scheme through funding from charitable trusts
- Develop a fund raising strategy to increase the impact of the Truce project to turn it into a full time service

YMCA currently chair the Young People's Housing Forum which focuses on the Homelessness Strategy and aims to ensure that the strategy remains a "living" document and keeps the attendees focused on the strategy as an action plan.

3.2 Lancaster and District Women's Aid (LDWA)

The service provided by LDWA through their Agreement includes the following:

- provision of information and support to women who contact Lancaster and District Women's Aid or who are referred by other agencies or organisations to present them with a range of options that enable them to make informed choices about their future
- developing domestic violence prevention work to reach women in need at an early stage, prior to a crisis point, with co-operation from other agencies or organisations through early referrals
- developing homeless prevention work in the context of domestic violence through exploring the set up of Sanctuary Scheme and establishing access to private rented housing stock
- provision of support and practical assistance for women who are moving into new safe and secure accommodation (including liaison and negotiations with private sector and social landlords, Benefits Agency, Public Utilities, Local Authority Departments, Social Services etc)
- provision of on-going support and assistance for women in their new accommodation to enable them to overcome practical difficulties that may otherwise jeopardise the sustainability of the tenancy
- ensure that support to women is verified and appropriate in a realistic context and is delivered in a structured and planned manner and in such a way that outcomes can be monitored
- in providing support services to women in their homes every reasonable effort shall be made to pursue additional funding sources

Summary of the Service Provided

LDWA is a registered charity run by women for women covering the Lancaster and Morecambe district. It works with women and children who are experiencing or trying to escape domestic violence and who are dealing with its effects and consequences. It offers support in the following ways:

- Helpline – offering advice and a listening ear to women, friends and family who know abuse is occurring and don't know what to do.
- SAL's Place – LDWA and the Police are the main partners in this award winning multi-agency one-stop shop for domestic abuse. Strategic Housing, CAB and solicitors provide weekly surgeries there.
- Outreach – if more than a chat is needed, an outreach / tenancy support worker can be assigned. Support can include accompanying the client to see agencies, arranging emergency accommodation and further referrals.

- Tenancy Support – this includes support with finances and budgeting, liaising with landlords and helping find employment and / or training.
- A counselling service – once an LDWA worker has assessed a client a referral can be made to this service, the waiting time is currently only 2 weeks.
- Prevention of homelessness – through advice and assistance in the Tenancy Support Service, LDWA can work with clients before an emergency situation arises and pursue options that allow them either to stay in their own home, or make a planned move to safer accommodation. The Tenancy Support Service ensures that those recently re-housed are assisted to maintain their tenancy, thus reducing the potential for repeat homelessness.
- Emergency accommodation – LDWA work closely with the City Council to support clients who are provided with the dispersed accommodation that the Council now makes available for families fleeing violence – this has helped reduce the use of B&B as temporary accommodation. LDWA also source and refer to refuges throughout the UK when this option is suitable for clients.
- Access to permanent accommodation – LDWA's support to clients assists to make sure that permanent accommodation is sustainable, affordable and safe. It helps with relevant legal procedures and facilitates counselling.
- Partnership working – LDWA works with the City Council and the County Council in their strategic aims on homelessness and domestic violence. As well as SAL's Place, LDWA are involved in numerous forums at both District and County level.

Evaluation and Consultation

LDWA consults with service users in a number of ways: feedback forms are included in the Client handbook, focus groups, feedback via SAL's Place and constant face to face discussions surrounding client's individual needs. The service is flexible, with the role of outreach and tenancy support worker combined in order to allow a holistic approach.

In developing the Lancaster and Lancashire Domestic Violence Strategies, focus groups were established which consulted with ex-service users on the current services available, gaps identified and problems encountered. LDWA's service was identified as a real turning point in client's lives. The only downside discussed was the limited helpline hours. The Domestic Violence Forum has also identified a gap in children's services.

The Monitoring of Information

Referrals have increased by 38% between 2004/5 and 2005/6

LWDA Referrals & Outcomes MAM monitoring data Oct – Dec 2006

	Oct 06	Nov 06	Dec 06
Total number seen	12	10	11
Referred by self / friend / relative	5	2	3
Referred by LA / Police	2	1	-
Referred by Other	5	7	8
Outcome – assisted to retain accommodation	5	3	1
Outcome – referred to Homeless Officer LA	3	2	2
Outcome – support provided	1	1	5
Outcome - Other	3	4	3

Development Plans

- Work to build on the new staff structure, which includes a part time Development Manager and a new Co-ordinator to ensure both sustainability development and the further increase of helpline hours and recruiting new volunteers and counsellors.
- Work with Surestart and pilot a training programme for use in schools; and provide joint training to staff in a local school in 2008.
- Seek funds to recruit another member of staff to work with children.
- Place an LDWA worker part time in Poulton Children's Centre.
- Secure funding for an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate to work within Lancaster's Specialised Domestic Violence Court.

3.3 Lancaster and District Homeless Action Service(LDHAS)

The service provided by LDHAS through the Agreement includes the following:

- provide advice and support and practical assistance to homeless or potential homeless people
- provide advice and support and assist people in staying in their existing residency or finding suitable alternative accommodation
- to facilitate effective resettlement for homeless or potential homeless people
- develop and maintain appropriate mutual referral procedures with related services
- keep and make available detailed monitoring of the service and its users and set out a monitoring criteria
- work with Strategic Housing in the development and implementation of a co-ordinated action plan to meet the housing and housing related support needs of young people
- provide operational and financial reports.

Summary of Services Provided

- LDHAS provides a general advice and support service that often identifies the underlying issues that inform homelessness : debt, benefits issues, relationship difficulties, substance misuse etc. The LDHAS day centre at Edward Street provides a place where people who feel excluded from mainstream activities can be accepted and encouraged to move on with their lives. On top of advice and support provision, LDHAS offers service users free practical support including showers, laundry facilities, hot meals, clothes, use of the internet and telephone and an address to use for postal correspondence.
- The Centre has an open access policy, making it accessible to all adults in housing poverty (particularly ex-offenders and ex-prisoners who often do not engage with more mainstream services).
- LDHAS provides an annual night shelter at Christmas time at St. Thomas' Church Centre which provides accommodation for a significant number of vulnerable adults and also provides support provision for local people in temporary accommodation.
- The day centre provides a risk managed place to go during the day for people with substance misuse issues who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Floating support – LDHAS has a floating support service and other referral pathways linked to relevant agencies. This helps people to maintain tenancies once housed.
- Joint Partnership Working including co-ordinated monitoring – work closely with other organisations, particularly Inward House. LDHAS are currently developing

their own monitoring procedures (alongside MAM) and have introduced a triage and comprehensive assessment centre system. Have also established a directory of services, and are developing a web-site that will complement promotional material.

- Addressing high support needs – all service users are offered a full holistic assessment, following which the service user and support worker can decide how to proceed in meeting what are often high support needs.

Monitoring of Information

LDHAS statistics for 2006 do not adequately demonstrate the number of requests for advice. They have therefore given the statistics documenting the number of referrals made by the centre during this period of time. The figures provided are shown in Appendix A

Evaluation of the Service

A significant amount of consultation work has taken place with clients and this has generated a "Client Charter", an enhanced food service more focused on nutrition issues, education sessions and the establishment of a clearer function for the Edward Street Day Centre. The Trustees have carried out an extensive review of all functions and elements of this are still ongoing. Funding however remains a critical issue.

Development Plans

The LDHAS review of all its service provision in May 2005 has resulted in a radical re-shift of services both in terms of the principal focus of work at Edward Street and the services expectations of clients and the range of services offered to clients out in the community. So funding is sought for two new posts

- a Resettlement Co-ordinator – who will focus on developing new initiatives with private landlords, provide "emergency intervention" and assist Lancaster and district residents leaving custody to find suitable accommodation.
- a Development Co-ordinator who will focus on building a new partnerships arrangements with agencies and ensure that all clients receive integrated support. Both posts will carry case management responsibilities with Edward Street and support case workers (paid and voluntary).
- Attempt to access further funding to build on case work practice and develop new posts within the Centre.
- Explore (funding dependant and) the establishing of satellite sites across the Lancaster and Morecambe district so that we are able to offer a more accessible service.
- Complete the organisational review and develop the capacity of the Trustees to respond to a rapidly evolving climate.
- Establish a campaigns and fundraising action plan that reflects the needs of people in housing poverty and actively engages with service users.
- Build on significant developments in volunteer support and complete a training programme that will allow selected volunteers to take up case management / key working roles within Edward Street.
- Enable volunteers to support the external agency specialist provision delivered within the Centre.
- Develop and maintain a "befriending / mentoring service" that will support clients in accessing external support, housing and education / employment opportunity.
- Enable and support clients of the service in accessing external volunteering opportunities.
- Promote a flexible and responsive "client centred" service and establish a greater advocacy role for clients in housing poverty.

- Develop the profile of LDHAS and establish a larger campaign / education role in the district.
- Ensure that stakeholders (clients, staff, volunteers, agencies) are informed and involved in the allocation of funding to specific projects.
- Take a more active role in local homelessness forums and pro-actively support the District Homelessness Strategy.

3.4 Morecambe Homeless Action (MHA)

The service provided by MHA through the Agreement includes the following :

- provide advice and support and practical assistance to homeless or potential homeless people
- develop a partnership working framework to provide specialist support and follow on service, including referral work and improving access to services, to people who visit the drop in sessions
- set up a formal referral system and procedures with related services by the end of 2005, and maintain the system and procedures
- keep, and make available, detailed monitoring of the service and its users as set out in monitoring criteria
- participate in the Multi-Agency Monitoring (MAM) system for data collection and monitoring, when MAM is in place
- to work with Strategic Housing in the development and implementation of a co-ordinated action plan to meet the housing and housing related support needs
- provide operational and financial reports

Summary of services provided

- The aim of Morecambe Homeless Action is
To promote action for the relief, directly and indirectly, of persons in need of help or support due to housing difficulties or homelessness.

Homeless means being without permanent, secure accommodation and personal space.

- Drop in sessions are provided at Signposts in Morecambe on two evenings a week and at St John's Hall in Heysham one morning a week. Meals and refreshments are provided and when the organisation is able, it provides clothing, bedding and food to take away.
- More importantly, MHA provide a welcoming, friendly environment in which service users can feel safe and supported; and mutual support can be provided.
- Volunteers offer support to service users. This can be by just spending time listening to them, befriending them or by signposting service users to other voluntary and statutory agencies that can provide specialist support.
- MHA now have a service level agreement with Signposts to support MHA's continuing work and development plans

Weekly attendance for April – November 2006

	St John's Hall	Signposts	Signposts
Average weekly attendance	7	9.5	9
Total attendance for 34/35 sessions	239	334	307

	Daytime %	Evening %
Males	78	61
Females	22	39

Over the 8 months 68 visits were by clients using the service for the first time.

Referrals to other agencies:

Clients have been referred to

- Signposts daytime service
- Strategic Housing
- Housing Officer (out of hours service)
- Local B&Bs for emergency accommodation
- International Aid
- Adult College
- Morecambe job centre
- Local MP

Development Plans

- MHA to be at a level of good practice with robust organisational standards
- Review policies and procedures
- Develop induction pack
- Review monitoring procedures to be in line with requirements for Lancaster City Council SLA
- Referral procedures

3.5 Signposts

The service provided by Signposts Multi-Agency Resource Centre includes the following:

- an holistic information and advice and support service, aimed to prevent poverty, social exclusion, homelessness and ill health
- a referral point to both statutory and voluntary agencies
- a base from which a range of statutory and voluntary workers may provide services on a sessional basis
- a venue for small meetings
- the development of opportunities to support partnership working within the Every Child Matters initiatives for children
- an opportunity for volunteers to gain skills with a view to entering employment thereby building capacity in the West End of Morecambe
- advice for statutory organisations about trends in need and recommendations about appropriate responses to meet those needs
- the development of opportunities to promote partnership working within the National Service Frameworks
- the development of preventative services for low level health intervention
- the development of smoking cessation support

- the facilitation of two-way effective community engagement with the West End Master Plan

It is important to note that the Service Level Agreement is a joint agreement between Signposts and the three agencies funding its provision of services – Lancaster City Council, Morecambe Bay PCT, Lancashire County Council. The format of information provided is therefore geared to meeting the needs of all three organisations and differs from that provided elsewhere in this report.

Detail on Signposts' existing work on homeless prevention and future plans is attached at Appendix B.

Monitoring of Information

Signposts enquiries and statistics – six month comparison April – September 2005 and 2006

Housing	06	05
Housing Associations	70	68
Local Authority Housing	99	96
Rooflessness	86	86
Furniture	274	268
Utilities	181	181
Miscellaneous	68	59
Washer/Shower use/Toiletries	187	187
Housing total	965	945

4 CONCLUSION

All five organisations with SLA agreements have satisfied the requirement to produce a report on their activities and there are clearly a number of interesting initiatives and projects being pursued. It is also clear that all are trying to address the Council's agenda as laid out in the Housing Strategy of working in partnership to prevent homelessness .

In the absence of a standard method of monitoring activity, it is difficult to see the extent to which organisations are successful in achieving this. A number of organisations are listing the number of contacts that they have had with people rather than the number of individuals they have dealt with . The Council introduced a standard format in October 2006, designed partly to ensure that double counting does not take place, but not all organisations have provided information in this form and the short period of time that it has been in place does not allow for an accurate picture of homelessness across the District to be given.

It will be important in 2007/8 to ensure that this system (MAM) is used by all those in receipt of SLAs.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The service level agreements are closely linked to the Homelessness Strategy and have a direct impact on how efficiently the City Council can deliver the actions outlined in the strategy.

The Corporate Plan includes the following high level priority :-

“Working with our partners to deliver strong, stable, sustainable communities with a decent home for everyone.”

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The service delivery supported through SLAs should have a direct positive impact on aspects of diversity, community safety, human rights and sustainability.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2006/7 General Fund includes budgets in respect of Homeless Service Level Agreements which total £86,700 (including £4,500 for Portland St). Continued funding will be required in 2007/8 totalling £88,500 (including £4,600 for Portland St). This figure includes an inflation increase of 2%.

Continued funding was agreed at Budget Council on 28th February 2007.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

This report has no legal implications

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Service Level Agreements agreed in 2005.
Renewal reports provided by organisations with SLAs

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