

SUPPORTED HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

Report of the Director of Adult Services

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In summer 2022 the Department of Levelling Up issued a prospectus for expressions of interest for a Supported Housing Improvement programme (SHIP). This was as a result of a successful pilot which was undertaken by a small number of authorities across the country. These pilots demonstrated that a number of outcomes are achievable, including reductions in exempt Housing Benefit, better outcomes for service users, clear gateway processes for new developments and clear quality expectations for both housing and support.
- 1.2 Following an expression of interest, in December 2022 the Council was awarded funding of £0.465m from the Department of Levelling up to support a three-year Supported Housing Improvement Programme. Throughout the duration of the project data is collected and reported to the Department of Levelling up on a six monthly basis. There will be a final report and outcomes produced in 2025.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to provide the scrutiny committee with an overview of the objectives of the programme and provide an update on our current progress.

2. SHIP – Expression of Interest (EOI)

- 2.1 The Council has a wide and mixed economy of supported housing. Supported housing is an important service offer which supports people to maintain their independence within the community. It is embedded in our plans to reduce demand in adult social care by helping us to reduce bed based placements, this will help with the delivery of our savings programme within Adult Social Care. Supported Housing is included within our ambitions in the One Health and Care Plan, Council Plan and MTFP. It is also a component part of the third pillar of the commissioning strategy – Housing with support.
- 2.2 To support the submission of the EOI a small scoping exercise was undertaken with colleagues in Strategic Housing, Homelessness services and the Community Learning Disability Team and Mental Health Teams. This exercise identified that the project would focus on the current **non- commissioned provision for individuals with mental health and learning disabilities**. The scoping exercise identified that homelessness and domestic abuse services are delivered through commissioned provision and are currently well audited and governed, it was therefore concluded that this would not meet the scope of the project.
- 2.3 There is currently a mixed economy of provision for both client groups including direct delivery services and those managed by third sector providers. Within this cohort there is a minimal amount of housing that have been commissioned directly by the local authority. In addition, there is an extensive amount of long standing (legacy) supported accommodation with multiple property owners alongside care

homes that have deregistered and now offer a supported accommodation model.

- 2.4 In the last 5 years there has been an increase of developers working with care providers to establish supported accommodation outside of commissioning processes. This has resulted in a significant increase in exempt rent claims and services being offered through other models of funding. In addition, across Stockport there is a disproportionate amount of supported accommodation that is funded through individual service funds (ISFs). This model has presented unique issues in respect of the quality of monitoring processes.
- 2.5 The Council currently offer a Quality Assurance service to all providers of care and support, including those who offer nonregulated services; this resource is not able to look in detail at housing related issues and the links to housing providers and property owners is minimal. However, through this process there have been significant concerns raised in the following areas:
- **Anti Social Behaviour** - Several cases of neighbour complaints in non-commissioned provision where neighbours were not engaged in the planning processes, this includes damage to neighbouring properties, threats, intimidation and police attendance.
 - **Poor compliance/ risk management by providers**- There have been multiple issues of care and support providers not understanding housing regulation and compliance, as a result individuals have been moved into accommodation before final snagging was completed, individuals moving into properties without tenancy agreements and incurring rent costs.
 - **Poor housing conditions**- There are a considerable number of properties across SMBC that were not commissioned to provide any specialist support and those which have been individuals homes for a prolonged period. This has resulted in poor maintenance from property owners and a lack of understanding about the impact of poor-quality housing on vulnerable individuals resulting in mental health readmissions, health issues caused through damp and a failure to rectify concerns raised. Increase risk of falls due to a failure to make reasonable adjustments to properties, behaviours that challenge due to over utilisation of space or lack of care and regard to outside environment. Health and safety risks including fire doors and fire systems not being adequate.
- 2.6 At the time of submitting the expression of interest in late 2022 there were 108 properties providing 481 placements across Stockport where exempt rent levels were being claimed for accommodation to support individuals who have a learning disability or mental health need. Of these only 7 were fully commissioned provision (housing and support). There were an additional 42 properties managed by members of the Stockport Housing partnership with varying levels of SLA's and agreements in place and 49 properties where there was no link to the Council.
- 2.7 Housing benefit exempt status is currently agreed through several channels, including social work managers, commissioning managers. There is the need to establish and embed a single process for assessing exemptions. At the time of the EOI, the housing benefit spend on exempt accommodation was £3.5m for learning disability and £0.435m for mental health.

2.8 The EOI set out our intention to establish a project team to fully audit all provision that is not fully commissioned (housing and support), creating a clear multi disciplinary team to work collaboratively on the presenting issues and to devise a clear and timely plan that offers a range of outcomes. In doing so the programme will ensure that the Council address any knowledge gaps in relation to themes and trends that are impacting supported accommodation and provide clarity on what good looks like.

3. Delivering the programme

3.1 The programme will focus on the following main objectives;

- To drive up standards of accommodation and support.
- To improve value for money of supported housing.
- To implement improved management of supported housing.
- To improve local knowledge of local supply and demand.
- To provide a process to intervene in the new housing benefit claims where the provision does not meet need or expected standards.
- To support neighbourhoods and communities affected by poor quality provision.

3.2 These objectives are delivered by the Supported Housing Improvement team and the Supported Housing Improvement multi- disciplinary team (MDT). Led by a service manager from within ASC, the team is made up of a programme manager, quality manager and 2.5 fte quality and reviewing officers. These individuals are supported by a Housing and Enforcement officer from within the Housing Standards Team.

3.3 The MDT is attended by Adult Social Care, Revenue and Benefits, Housing Standards and Enforcement and Strategic Housing. It is also supported by key partners, including Stockport Homes, Stockport Advocacy and Healthwatch. It has been set up to;

- To provide specialist advice, guidance and support to the SHIP team
- To oversee and facilitate the seamless delivery of the programme
- To ensure the SHIP team reports back on set deliverables and outcomes
- To lead on thematic pieces of work to enhance the programme
- To analyse outcomes and agree any changes to the programme
- To provide initial sign off on new policies, procedures or practices
- To champion the work of the programme and its outcomes
- To participate in case conferences to discuss specific areas of concern with providers / landlord and work with the SHIP team to create robust action plans to address barriers, challenges and mitigate risk.

3.4 The core intentions that are delivered by the SHIP programme are;

| | |
|--|---|
| Enforcement of Accommodation Standards | <p>The programme will employ a Housing Enforcement Officer. Working under the supervision of housing standards this individual will be responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devising a proforma for SHIP officers to utilise to triage allocations being made to the identified housing standards. • Offering advice, guidance and support on housing standards, legal |
|--|---|

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>requirements and next steps processes for enforcement action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing housing standards inspections in line with identified concerns, escalating concerns and issues and, where required, mobilising processes to take enforcement action. • To maintain clear data in respect of all inspections of accommodation and actions required and taken. • Developing and delivering with other key stakeholders training sessions for landlords, providers and developers in respect of expectation of housing standards and how to achieve these. Including bespoke training in respect of how landlords can work with hoarders, ASB and other issues that may impact on their ability • To contribute to the development and implementation of Gateway process for new provision |
| <p>Review of Support and Safeguarding arrangements</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A programme of reviews will be completed on all working age individuals living in supported accommodation. • Supported accommodation will be given a risk rating based on current information on the accommodation, quality of support, rent levels and outcomes being achieved by individuals. The programme will focus resources initially on the highest risk provision. • Development of training and information for providers and landlords on providing good quality supported housing will be co-produced with a range of individuals, providing resources for organisations and a clear vision from SMBC. • Service users and their representatives will be included in reviews with opportunities to take on expert by experience roles. SMBC will work closely with advocacy and Health Watch in establishing opportunities for individuals to contribute to the programme in a meaningful and appropriate manner. • Case studies and individual feedback to be gained utilising I statements and a person-centred approach and mapped against One Stockport's core values Clear working links to safeguarding and development of safeguarding protocols |
| <p>Scrutiny of Housing Benefit Claims</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial deep dive to establish all individual claims for exempt and specialist housing benefit. • Review of current process for authorisation of exempt and specified rent levels • Analysis of where there are significant increases in rent levels • Allocated worker (part of MDT) to lead on a thematic review of rents and processes with a project worker/ project lead • Development of Assessment process for new provision- building on informal process in place, using a SWOT analysis approach • Contribute to the creation and delivery of training to providers, landlords and developers on the expectation connected to HB rent levels, current process and new processes. • Involvement in the implementation of new policies and processes in respect of supported accommodation • To provide guidance and information to the MDT and SHIP team on the implementation of key legislation and policies and any challenges and opportunities this provides to the team and the programme implementation. • Setting KPIs to reduce rent spend |
| <p>Gateway Approach</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of a clear Gateway approach for new supported accommodation which ensures transparency, value for money and clear objectives of any new provision is an essential outcome of |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>the programme, it will help to ensure that there is a mixed economy in Stockport that can be flexible to meet current and future demand and will safeguard the council, provider and service users from any below par provision being established locally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stockport already has an established Supported Housing Group with trusted housing associations and a Strategic lead. • A review of this group and its functions to be completed with the strategic Housing Manager and key members of the SHIP team utilising a SWOT analysis process to establish areas of good practice, barriers and challenges in the current process. • The agreed gateway processes must have a clear view of what good looks like and be able to communicate this to prospective developers. • To assess the ability to implement a single point of referral for supported accommodation on an individual basis and from prospective developers |
|--|---|

4. Progress to Date & Next Steps

4.1 The programme team and MDT commenced in May 2023 and since then have been proactive in driving forward the ambitions of the programme. Initially focus was placed on RAG rating the current provision and developing the escalation processes. The Housing Enforcement team delivered training to the SHIP team in June 2023. The SHIP programme was established on the website in July 2023 and a concern form was created. Once contact details were shared the team saw an increase in the number of urgent queries that were received, these were dealt with during July and August.

4.2 The team have worked hard to ensure that the necessary processes and procedures in place, the team have been involved in the development of a Supported Housing Strategy. In addition the team has developed a;

- Quality Assurance Framework
- Housing benefit process
- Housing enforcement process
- Escalation process
- Communications strategy
- Co production pathway
- First draft of the gateway process

4.3 Since then the team have visited over 20 properties. There have been 9 actions completed by landlords and intensive work undertaken with a selected number of landlords. In September 2022 the first landlord forum was carried out, with Mental Capacity Act training being delivered as part of the session.

4.4 There has been a significant investment of officer time in delivering engagement sessions, this includes the 'Under one Roof' service user engagement event, service user engagement with SPARC, Redcroft engagement session, family and service user engagement sessions with CIC, United Response and Home focus as well as a presentation with the mental health carers group. This has been valuable to the

delivery of the programme and ensuring that the voice of our users and stakeholders is heard. There has also been an emphasis on learning and development, the team have met with other local authorities to share information and guidance and have met with Emma Bimpson from Sheffield University. The team have also met with the Department of Levelling up to discuss progress updates.

- 4.5 A case conference has also been delivered which focused on high risk mental health property and in follow up to the Learning Disability conference SHIP was assigned two themes, Housing (Pets) and Staffing (Holidays). The team will be providing feedback on the work completed within these themes in February 2024. Data mapping has also commenced for rent levels.
- 4.6 The programme of work will continue until March 2025, the next steps of this programme are to;
- Establish an interface with safeguarding
 - Establish a programme for landlord forums
 - Follow up with key partners (Healthwatch, Stockport Advocacy) to identify further co production opportunities
 - Coproduce and develop a charter with our partners
 - Undertake a deep dive into current processes in respect of housing and housing benefit. This will be a mapping exercise
 - Move forward from the first draft of the gateway process, arrange for this to be agreed and implemented.
 - Meet with DWP in January 2024.
 - Continue with the schedule of reviews and monitoring visits, following up with actions identified.
 - Collate data from the programme which will allow the Council to draw together a clear needs assessment and analysis.
 - Undertake analysis of data and actions from SHIP to be influential in the development of SMBC Specialised and Supported Housing Strategy.
 - Develop of a clear working group within the programme to assess the requirements of the Supported Housing Act 2023, its implementation and impact on SMBC's specialist and supported housing strategy.
- 4.7 In addition to the SHIP programme, the development of the specialist and supported housing strategy is taking place. Clear accommodation processes have been implemented to assess and review referrals for all Learning Disability and Autism Supported accommodation. Referrals, voids and areas of need are reviewed on a monthly basis utilising intelligence from SHIP service visits, referrals from social workers and known requirements, including transitions from childrens services.
- 4.8 Work is being completed to establish a similar process for mental health and other working age adults to ensure that evidence on need spans across working age, in line with the SHIP programme parameters. Other areas of specialist and supported housing that falls outside of the SHIP programme for older adults, care leavers and homelessness is being assessed through our current extra care provision, waiting lists, population information, other strategic programmes, our utilisation of residential placements and commissioned engagement work with older people and health watch.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 5.1 The funding received to support the SHIP is allowing the Council and our key housing partners to deliver a programme of work which will improve the outcomes for our service users, improve value for money and quality of services. Supported housing is embedded in our plans to reduce demand in adult social care by helping us to reduce bed based placements. It is included within our ambitions in the One Health and Care Plan, Council Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy. As a result of the programme the standards of accommodation will improve and there will be a clear gateway approach for new provision.
- 5.2 There are no specific recommendations with this report, we are pleased to invite members of the committee to ask questions and comment on the content of the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Emma Knight by email on emma.knight@stockport.gov.uk or Emma Bowe by email on emma.bowe@stockport.gov.uk