

Introduction

In April 2008, the Government launched a prospectus for an Enhanced Housing Options Programme. The report by John Hills, on the future of social housing, had previously highlighted the relationship between housing and employment problems, and there was growing interest in developing approaches to provide a more holistic housing service, with improved links to employment and training, to help tackle the root cause of housing need.

The Government set out an ambitious vision for the future of housing options services, seeing this delivered around four key outcomes:

- Meeting housing need with a wider range of solutions
- Using stock more effectively
- Tackling worklessness
- Improving customer service

It saw this delivered around some common principles, which would help facilitate an outcomes-based approach. These are:

- Innovation
- Personalisation
- Empowerment
- Inclusiveness
- Proactive engagement
- Holism
- Partnership working
- Working within the grain of the Local Area Agreement (LAA)
- Capturing wider resources
- Cross-boundary working

The programme initially invited expressions of interest from a small number of 'trailblazer' authorities, either through the 'extra' programme, for authorities currently undertaking such work and willing to mentor others, or through a programme for authorities interesting in developing such services. Oxford City Council made a bid submission for the latter.

In late November 2008, the Government announced the results of this programme. Although we were not successful in the full bid, Oxford was awarded 'kick-start' funding to support this work. This grant is for £40,000 in 09/10, dependent on an action plan being approved by the CLG; and another £40,000 in 10/11, dependent on us meeting the 09/10 outcomes identified in the previous action plan.

Current Provision

The Council currently provides a Housing Options Duty Service, which gives immediate advice and assistance to persons in housing need. This service saw over 3,000 people in 2007/08. Officers signpost customers to various agencies, including our rent deposit team, who help customers to access the private rented sector. Customers can also be identified for a more detailed interview – usually in their own home – to explore further housing options. The Council also funds an independent advice service to supplement its

housing advice provision. This is currently being re-commissioned and a new service will operate from a central location from May 2009.

The Housing Needs team have adopted a homeless prevention model that underpins its work. This was recognised through our selection as a Regional Homeless Champion in 2007/08. Homeless acceptances have dropped from 376 in 2004/05 to 196 in 2007/08, and the number of households in temporary accommodation has dropped from over 1,000 in 2004 to 496 at end March 2008. We met the 2010 TA reduction target in July 2008. We jointly fund a countywide Joint Housing Team to provide a dedicated service for young people, to which an Options Officer is seconded. This team are a Regional Centre of Excellence for Youth Homelessness 2008/09.

The Council launched a CBL scheme in January 2008, and is the lead authority in developing a sub-regional CBL scheme in Oxfordshire. This scheme is due to go live in July 2009.

Despite substantial progress, there remains a high number of households in temporary accommodation and a high number of homeless presentations relative to the population of the City. An enhanced options approach to persons already in temporary accommodation, and to those not yet in housing crisis, should improve performance still further.

Oxford has a very pressured housing market with high demand, high property and rental costs, and limited land availability. It has a high level of rough sleeping and a large 'hidden homeless' population. These factors necessitate an effective options approach to provide realistic solutions to housing need.

There is a high incidence of homelessness amongst young people (63% of acceptances in 2007). In 2006/07, 15% of acceptances were from persons who left institutions or care (4% for England). There is a high incidence of homelessness in the BME community (23% of acceptances in 2006/07). The development, and targeting, of options for these groups, has the potential to make a significant impact on homelessness.

Project Overview

The bid submission from Oxford City Council was based around developing the housing options service in the following ways:

- Targeted work with young people. Building on the existing arrangements with the Joint Housing Team, identifying specific alternatives to the statutory homeless route for individuals; providing more holistic advice; better links with the Connexions service; and improved planning for care leavers before they reach 18 years old
- Outreach work to BME communities and the development of an improved understanding of BME needs in a time of rapidly changing demographics, and an improved response to meet these
- In-reach work (with RSLs & Council landlord service) to households currently in Temporary Accommodation or social housing. Providing 'in-work' and 'better-off'/ income-maximisation calculations, and better referrals to work, training and education opportunities. Using the opportunity to help address needs of the whole family and prevent the exclusion of young people from the home. Exploration of a secondees from

Job Centre Plus to provide improved access for housing professionals to experts in Education, Employment and Training

- Improved service and sign-posting in relation to 'non-housing' issues, including providing 'in-work' and 'better-off' / income-maximisation calculations, and improved awareness of training and education opportunities for customers, as for identified in-reach work
- Co-location of services using a hub approach with various providers in one location. We seek to have specific services for debt counselling, welfare advice, housing advice, young people, and employment/ training advice. Where services are not co-located, staff should have sufficient knowledge and tools to make appropriate referrals and appointments for customers with the most appropriate service. ('No wrong door' model)
- New office location with improved reception and customer service areas (more interview space and space for improved 'self-help' ICT kiosks, e.g. checks on benefit and HB calculations, in-work calculations, mutual exchange matching)
- Review specific housing options for very large families, including extension schemes, identification of options available to address specific needs of large families on a personal basis
- Re-vamp under-occupation scheme for social housing tenants, including dedicated resource to assist clients agreeing to move, and working with RSLs (including top-up of incentive payments) to establish and promote one citywide scheme
- Building on existing initiatives to support customers back into work, including working with local businesses to provide work placements (used by the Adult Disability team) and competing for contract work to support work or training opportunities (as used by Aspire with OCC Grant funding), targeted to overcome barriers to employment for clients who are street homeless, NFA, 'sofa surfing' or in homeless hostels. (50% of rough sleepers in the Oxford City Rough Sleeper Survey (2006) stated that the support that would be most helpful to them, would be support to find employment.)
- Building on the Working Futures pilot to help remove barriers to employment for those in Temporary Accommodation
- Working with Job Centre Plus to help target hard to reach groups (e.g. lone parents, persons currently on incapacity benefit)
- Specialist role to help develop realistic and sustainable options for customers with high mental health or complex needs, including habitual rough sleepers.
- ICT enhancements to improve joint working between agencies and enable customers to access various services more easily from one website

Objectives and links to Strategies and Plans

The Council's Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 has the following aims:

- Prevent homelessness

- Reduce the impact of homelessness on people's lives
- Ensure homelessness services in the city:
 - Are of a high quality
 - Meet the need of vulnerable people
 - Reflect the city's diverse population
 - Are delivered in partnership, and
 - Offer value for money

The stated objectives of the Strategy are to:

1. Increase the range of housing options available to prevent homelessness
2. Reduce the numbers of homeless people against key measures
3. Support families in housing need to prevent homelessness
4. Support rough sleepers into settled accommodation and develop clear pathways into independent homes, training and employment
5. Support vulnerable young people in housing need to prevent homelessness
6. Improve housing options service
7. Identify and address the specific housing needs of different groups in the community who are at risk of homelessness
8. Ensure housing options services offer value for money

The Strategy, although published before the Government's national strategy on rough sleeping, "No One Left Out – Communities ending rough sleeping" (Nov 2008) does recognise the principles within that document, particularly in the fourth objective set out above. The Council is acknowledging this renewed focus, and aim to end rough sleeping by 2012, in its allocation of grants, and will review its targets over the year 2009/10 to seek to meet this new strategy for rough sleeping.

The Oxford City Sustainable Community Strategy relevant priorities are:

- Affordable Housing
- Health and Social Inclusion
- Safer, Stronger and more Cohesive City
- Quality of Public Realm for Residents and Visitors

The key Oxfordshire Community Strategy ('Oxfordshire 2030') visions are:

- Healthy and Thriving Communities
- Reducing Inequalities and Breaking the Cycle of Deprivation.
- A World Class Economy

The relevant National Indicators in LAA2 are:

- NI 117 - 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, training or employment (NEET) - PSA 14
- NI 152 - Working age people on out of work benefits - PSA 8
- NI 163 - Working age population qualified to at least Level 2 or higher - PSA 2
- NI 164 - Working age population qualified to at least Level 3 or higher - PSA 2
- NI 40 - Drug users in effective treatment - PSA 25
- NI 141 - Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living - CLG DSO
- NI 156 - Number of households living in Temporary Accommodation - PSA 20

Key Delivery Strands

We plan to deliver the above proposals through four strands of work, although these are all inter-linked and initiatives that work in one area will be adapted for use in another:

- 1 Development of existing options approach for customers using the service
- 2 Targeted outreach work to vulnerable and harder to reach households
- 3 Targeted 'in-reach' work to households in temporary accommodation or social housing
- 4 Better co-ordination of initiatives to improve access to employment & training, and of meaningful activity work, with the development of improved links and pathways to education, employment & training opportunities

Project Plan

In order to undertake this work, a SMART Action Plan (Appendix 1) has been developed in conjunction with key stakeholders. The initial project meeting strongly felt that the core work of the project should be to map and make linkages, between work already being undertaken by various agencies, and to disseminate information and co-ordinate this work, to develop a more integrated approach to assisting people into work or training in Oxford.

The initiatives in this plan can be grouped under seven main headings of the type of initiative:

- a Project planning and promotion of improved joint working
- b Improving information and knowledge bases; sharing this more widely; and co-ordination of activities
- c Improving advice and sign-posting services
- d Developing more holistic frontline services and improving referral arrangements
- e Increasing options outreach work; more pro-active homelessness prevention; and support initiatives for households
- f Work and employment initiatives; developing more social enterprise
- g Training, Education and Skills Development initiatives

A Steering Group will oversee the Project, and will periodically review the Action Plan and delivery on targets throughout the project. The proposed membership of this group is listed in Appendix 2. Should it be considered better, then a wider 'Reference Group' of various officers and stakeholders may be established, with a smaller 'Steering Group' create to oversee the project.

The broad Project Plan is as follows:

2008/09

- Project Initiation & development of Project Brief
- Consultation/ User Involvement
- Work with Partners/ Recruitment

2009/10

- Delivery of Enhanced Options Advice at Duty (PHPs)
- Development of framework for in-reach work & launch
- Launch of out-reach work based on Duty model

2010/11

- Development of Joint Work and longer term initiatives with partners – especially JCP, JHT and Crisis
- Detailed proposals developed for a City Centre multi-service hub ready to launch
- Crisis Skylight Centre open

It is envisaged that the project will be co-ordinated and led by a Project Co-ordinator employed for the period of the project by Oxford City Council, but key to the success of the project will be the active participation by various agencies and stakeholders, working in partnership.

Specific links are to be made from the project to other work being undertaken locally. This includes:

- The TREE (Training, Recreation, Employment and Education) Group – This has been formed with the city's frontline homeless hostels, day centres, and council funded social enterprise initiatives to help direct and co-ordinate various 'meaningful activity' initiatives based around hostels and day centres, and to help link this work to the development of the new Crisis Skylight centre.
- Participation in the recently established 'Back to Work' Action Group – This was formed by the Oxfordshire Learning and Skills Partnership (OLSP) and incorporates the work of the LAA2 NI152 group. The OLSP has been allocated some LAA1 performance reward grant to help seed fund initiatives, undertake pilot schemes and commission research

The Action plan sets out 20 specific actions that can be delivered as part of the project (plus an additional action should a DWP 'working futures' type pilot be sanctioned in Oxford). Each has a timescale, resourcing and deliverable outcomes identified against it. One action is identified as being the primary goal of the project, and the initial project meeting identified this as the most useful piece of work that would help link different work areas together. That is Action 15, to 'Improve co-ordination and partnership working between projects to help facilitate access to Education, Employment and Training opportunities'.

There was an initial proposal to judge the success of the project against indicators such as a decline in NI152 (Working age people on out of work benefits) which is set out in the LAA2 targets, however, the monitoring of project outcomes on this basis has been rejected. This is largely because a positive or a negative result against broad indicators, such as these, would not be solely attributable to this project. This is particularly so against the current economic downturn. For example, BMW, one of the city's biggest employers, announced the loss of 850 jobs in mid-February 2009, and reduced shift working for most remaining staff. The impact of this downsizing on other local supplies and employers has yet to be evaluated, but will undoubtedly make a significant impact on the number of working age people currently out of work in the sub-region.

For this reason, the hard targets in the action plan have been kept realistic and manageable within a small project such as this. All such outcomes will be the subject of

regular review and change, by the steering group, in light of any changes to the economy and situation locally.

Resourcing

It is felt that the most effective use of the additional CLG grant would be to directly employ a dedicated project co-ordinator. However, the project also expects to attract match funding to specifically support some of the initiatives developed and to help embed these into mainstream activity over the life of the project. Some of this 'match-funding' is expected to be through the provision of additional staff resources to support this initiative. We consider that two years will be sufficient time for the project co-ordinator to embed the necessary partnership links and systems, and that the need for this post will then fall away naturally. Oxford City Council is currently in the process of developing a "bank" of internal project managers who would be able to take forward any additional work necessary following the initial two year period.

Additional funding streams to help support this work, include the following:

- Mainstream housing needs budgets to continue to fund and support the housing options service; housing advice provision; rent deposit and bond schemes; homeless prevention fund, supported lodgings; sanctuary scheme; mediation; under-occupation scheme; and joint funding for the Joint Housing Team (to support work with young people). Additional training and ICT costs also to be sustained within existing Council budgets
- Additional funding is already identified to support temporary accommodation reduction targets in LAA2, including the development of a countywide supported lodgings scheme, improved working with the PCT, and co-ordinating educational work in schools
- SEEDA funding relating to areas of education and skills deprivation will be delivered via the Oxfordshire Economic Partnership
- Allocations of funds from the Council's homeless grants budget and the CLG HOWD grant allocation will continue to be awarded to initiatives that support homeless prevention and meaningful occupation objectives
- The Places for Change Programme (PCP) has just awarded £2.3m to fund 4 capital projects in Oxford, including the provision of a homeless and community facility using the 'Crisis Skylight' model. There are obvious synergies to be gained in linking this project to enhanced options work – providing sustainable solutions to homelessness and increasing access to employment and training
- The Council is considering growth bids to support further tenancy sustainment work, in the private rented sector, as a 'spend to save' initiative
- The Council works closely with Supporting People to jointly commission and fund services, and to influence provision into appropriate areas to meet service objectives
- Additional funding from Housing Benefit to help support work in relation to improving benefit take-up

- A bid for additional funding has been made from the Oxfordshire Housing Partnership (OHP) to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) from LAA1 reward monies, to support a countywide, cross tenure, initiative on under-occupation and overcrowding
- Additional resourcing to help support the initiative from partner organisations, for example, staff shadowing with the Job Centre Plus (JCP) or 'in-reach' work to existing residents of social housing and temporary accommodation by social landlords

The project would also seek to improve access to other services (beyond the traditional housing function) especially in relation to employment and training initiatives. Whilst this will not generate any additional funds, it is likely to improve the targeting of these resources to households in higher need, than might otherwise have been the case.

Appendix 1 - Enhanced Options Project – Action Plan 2009/10

Ref	Action	Timescale	Lead	Resourcing	Outcomes
1	Initiate project and convene Steering Group	By mid April 2009	OCC Housing Needs Manager	Mainstream Housing Needs Budgets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action Plan signed off by CLG Completion of Project Initiation Document (PID) City Executive Board authorises project report Steering Group membership and Terms of Reference agreed
2	Recruit a project co-ordinator	By end May 2009	OCC Housing Needs Manager	Enhanced Options Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job Description agreed and post advertised New officer recruited into post
3	Develop robust systems to capture information and monitor outcomes	By end June 2009	OCC Project Officer	EHO funds post	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear recording systems established to record project activities & progress and to record project outcomes Baseline data collected where possible and appropriate to the project outcomes
4	Investigate alternative funding sources to fund initiatives and continue these beyond the life of this project	June 2009 onwards	OCC Project Officer	EHO funds post to identify other funding streams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional funding identified for use in project Other funding streams identified to support the project objectives Where required, core funding identified in order to 'mainstream' project initiatives
5	Identification and 'up-skilling' of 'community champions' to help identify issues and help drive the initiative in the community (during and beyond the project)	June – December 2009	OCC Project Officer	Resources of various stakeholders used (inc staff and venues)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of at least 3 estate-based awareness and training sessions (ideally using community centres; community IT hubs; or Children's Centres) Participation in at least 3 social landlord initiatives to raise awareness and to train existing social tenants
6	Improve Welfare and Benefit Take-up advice	Sept 09 – March 2010	OCC Project Officer, OCC Options	Mainstream Housing Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Training for all Options staff in welfare benefits Improved access to information on welfare benefits

			Manager, OCC Housing Benefit Performance Manager	Budgets; EHO funded post; Housing Benefit grant re benefit take-up; staff and venues or various stakeholders; OCC grant to advise centres, etc	<p>including benefit calculators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income maximization & 'in-work' calculations to be under-taken (for a minimum of 30 service users and housed visited through targeted outreach) including improved joint work with Housing Benefit teams Establish surgery locations for debt/ money advice or independent financial advice services (as an early homeless prevention tool and to reduce financial exclusion) Identification of other sources of help (e.g. advice centres) and assistance given to help facilitate more service provision Better tenancy sustainment through the provision of timely information to households at risk of homelessness (esp existing social tenants)
7	Organisation of an open event to provide holistic advice to service users and give them direct access to training organisations and general well-being advice, including debt advice and better off calculations	Sept 09 – March 2010	OCC Project Officer; OCC Senior TAM; OCC Housing Needs Manager	As above, plus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of one open day event to give holistic advice and information on housing options, healthy living, training and employment opportunities To explore delivery of more regular sessions using frontline homeless services and community facilities
8	Improve Oxford City Council reception facilities to enable the delivery of a more holistic service, including services from multiple providers in one location	<p>By end 2009</p> <p>July – December 2009 Sept – March 2010</p>	<p>OCC Chief Executive</p> <p>OCC Housing Needs Manager & OCC Options Manager</p>	<p>OCC Capital funds</p> <p>Housing Needs budgets, and resources of various partner agencies, plus Options Funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear project plan agreed to provide long-term improvement to Council reception facilities Additional service providers invited to hold regular surgeries in OCC reception facilities and community centres Pilot holding Council Options surgeries in community centres; children's centres and the Farmhouse (Greater Leys)

9	Increased Options outreach work to further improve homelessness prevention, including the more pro-active identification and resolution of issues (including mortgage difficulties, etc) and improved out-reach to BME communities (using a dedicated officer located into the housing needs team from January 2009)	By end March 09 June 09 – Dec 09	OCC Housing Needs Manager & OCC Options Manager	Housing Needs budgets, and resources of various partner agencies; OCC grant funding to advice centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of a Mortgage Rescue Scheme (with referral agreements agreed with CAB and Advice Centres) • Improved referral arrangements into money/ debt advice services from Housing Options staff • An improved understanding of the needs of BME communities in the city and more assertive outreach to help address housing issues
10	Improved Tenancy Sustainment work in the private rented sector	By end April 09 June 09 to March 2010	OCC Housing Needs Manager and OCC PRS Team Manager	'Spend to Save' growth bid to OCC general fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of an additional officer to focus on tenancy sustainment in PRS properties supported by a Council deposit or bond • For this officer to visit at least 250 tenancies to identify issues and signpost support if required
11	Review of under-occupation scheme with a view to launching a combined Council and RSL scheme	Sept 09 – March 2010	OCC Housing Needs Manager, OCC CH Head of Service, OCC Tenancy Operations Manager, & ORAH partners	Resources of Housing Needs, Oxford City Homes and partner RSLs; OHP bid to LSP for LAA2 reward money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of formal review of the OCC under-occupation scheme • Development of a common ORAH scheme (with consideration of including property identification; personalised packing service; small repairs service; etc) • Increased promotion of the scheme (through tenant newsletters and targeted letters) • Increased cross-tenure working <p>(The expectation is that this would deliver an improved scheme that would result in more under-occupiers joining the Council's transfer register in 2010/11, and more under-occupiers moving in 2010/11 against the baseline of 08/09)</p>
12	Development of more options to address overcrowding situations (cross tenure,	By end Dec 09	OCC Housing	Resources of Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to be produced to identify all options available to develop services in this area (including

	where possible)		Needs Manager	Needs, Oxford City Homes and partner RSLs	consideration of adapting properties, or using minor works to help alleviate some of the issues associated with living in an over-crowded property) and any funding options to initiate these
13	Improved work to identify barriers to people finding work and determine main wants & needs of service users – particularly focusing on households in Temporary Accommodation	<p>March 09 – May 09</p> <p>May 09 – Dec 09</p> <p>May 09 to March 2010</p>	<p>OCC Housing Needs Manager</p> <p>OCC Project Officer</p> <p>OCC Project Officer</p>	Resources of Housing Needs and partner RSLs; EHO funded post; staff of various stakeholders; Supporting People commissioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-design of the Oxford Social Lettings Agency (OSLA) Home Visit form to help identify, record and address issues relating to EET when visiting households in temporary accommodation, and to more positively identify those households that may benefit from a visit from a housing options officer to explore other options of moving on from TA (including the PRS and Homebuy initiatives) • To use this form in under-taking structured home visits to at least 200 households in TA • Additional Training for OSLA staff in welfare benefits; EET & childcare opportunities; etc • Explore resourcing to enable additional work to be undertaken with households to develop life skills prior to the start of a permanent tenancy • Explore options to provide more intensive support to a small number of vulnerable families to help remove barriers to training or employment
14	Better identification of households that have missed programmed interviews at set stages with JCP and a common approach to tackle the issue (esp for lone parents of children under 12 or persons claiming incapacity benefit)	May 09 to March 2010	OCC Project Officer	Resources from JCP and Housing Needs, social landlords and stakeholders; EHO funded post	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shadowing of staff from Options Service and Social Landlords with JCP staff to improve awareness of processes and work • Information and client data sharing on JCP interview cycles, etc • Improve links with Children's Centres (following-on from JCP 'Options and Choices' meetings?)
15	Improve co-ordination and partnership working between projects to help facilitate	May 09 to March	OCC Project Officer	EHO funded post and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of a customer guide listing services available to tackle worklessness (to include

	access to Education, Employment and Training opportunities PRIMARY PROJECT GOAL	2010		resources from various stakeholders; possible bid to HOWD funds to cover guide production costs	information on courses; training and volunteering opportunities; employment opportunities; business start-up; support and advice agencies) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map childcare services/ better disseminate information, especially for lone parents and low income families
16	Improve joint working with Job Centre Plus	May 09 to March 2010	OCC Project Officer	Resources from JCP and Housing Needs; EHO funded post	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate surgeries at Housing Options Service Centres Frontline JCP staff to shadow Housing Options staff Housing Options staff to shadow JCP staff Access to JCP 'job search' or 'job points' at housing offices
17	Options Interviews to include assessment of worklessness and appropriate advice, sign-posting, or referrals to training or employment opportunities & "Skills for Life" initiative	Sept 09 – March 2010	OCC Project Officer, OCC Options Manager	Resources from JCP and Housing Needs; EHO funded post; and other stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change to Personal Housing Plans to Personal Action Plans (to give improved consideration to root causes of homelessness and to enable longer term solutions to be developed) Improved availability of information to options officers on courses available for customers – including classes on building self-esteem; writing CVs; career help; college courses; basic literacy or numeracy classes; volunteering; motivational activities; etc Improve linkages to EET opportunities for young people through better links and referral arrangements with Connexions Service and Joint Housing Team
18	Identification of course provision for basic literacy; basic numeracy; or NVQ courses. Developing better knowledge of work done by Life Skills/ Adult Education Services/	Sept 09 – March 2010	OCC Project Officer	Resources from JCP, Housing Needs, social landlords, &	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Links to RSL initiatives such as New Generation (A2Dominion) or Catalyst Education and Employment team Identify any funding available for courses in basic literacy; basic Numeracy; life skills; etc and for the

	Healthy Living campaigns, etc			other stakeholders; EHO funded post	extension of some of these – possibly NVQ level?
19	Development of improved links with the business community	Sept 09 – March 2010	OCC Project Officer	EHO funds post that seeks to identify other resourcing that may be available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased knowledge of opportunities, such as apprenticeships, work placements, volunteering opportunities, career help, etc Development of business mentoring for individuals as they plan to enter work or training Explore assistance from business/ business development agencies, in project, and in promoting business start-ups and social enterprises
20	Development of the Old Fire Station to provide a Crisis Skylight centre and social enterprise businesses with training and employment opportunity (Further detail regarding this initiative is provided at Appendix 3)	March 09 – March 2010	OCC Rough Sleeping Manager	PCP Capital Grant; Crisis Contribution; bid for allocation of HOWD funds; OCC grant/ rate relief, etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Architects and consultants to be engaged to take the project through design stage Project to be ready to start the physical regeneration of the building by end 2009 (and on target to open by March 2011)
21	Participation in any new 'Working Future' pilot to remove the barrier of high rent levels in temporary accommodation for homeless applicants wanting to enter employment	tba	tba	No funds yet identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter to be sent to DWP offering Oxford as a potential for any future pilots Scheme details to be worked up should this receive a positive response

Appendix 2 - Enhanced Options Project – Proposed Members for a Steering Group:

Name	Organisation	Job Title	Contact Details	Notes
Dave Scholes	Oxford City Council – Community Housing	Housing Needs Manager	dscholes@oxford.gov.uk 01865 252636	
Graham Stratford	Oxford City Council – Community Housing	Head of Service	gstratford@oxford.gov.uk 01865 252447	
Mike Coffey	Oxford City Council – Community Housing	Options Manager	mcoffey@oxford.gov.uk 01865 252601	
Phil Adlard	Oxford City Council – Customer Services	Benefits Performance & Quality Manager	padlard@oxford.gov.uk 01865 252112	
Ms Angela Cristofoli	Oxford City Council – Community Housing	Senior Community Co-ordinator	acristofoli@oxford.gov.uk 01865 252688	
Nicola Zaja	Job Centre Plus	Service Manager	Nicola.zaja@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk 01235 703042	
David Truesdale	Catalyst Communities Housing Association	Regional Manager	David.Truesdale@chg.org.uk 01865 334813	or/ and Sasha East, Community Liaison Officer
Phil Hardy	Oxford Citizens Housing Association	Head of Housing	Phil.Hardy@ocha.org.uk 01865 782550	Juliet Byrne or Ian Gilders until Phil is replaced
Laurinda Hornblow	A2Dominion Group	Regional Operations Director	laurinda.hornblow@a2dominion.co.uk 01865 260530	
Martyn Mumford	Oxford City Council – Oxford City Homes	Tenancy Operations Manager	mmumford@oxford.gov.uk 01865 333666	or/and Kate Warrington, Procedure Officer/ Estate Manager
Dawn Pettis	Oxfordshire Economic Partnership	Business Engagement and Support Manager	d.pettis@oep.org.uk 01865 816082	or Rosie Franklin
tbc	Representative from the TREE group	tbc	tbc	Chaired by Nerys Parry, Rough Sleeping & Single Homeless Manager
tbc	Oxford City Council – Community Housing	Enhanced Options Project Manager	tbc	Post to be advertised shortly

Appendix 3 – Information on the development of a Crisis Skylight centre at the Old Fire Station

Background

Following a successful bid to Communities and Local Government's Places of Change Programme in November 2007, a capital allocation of £2,182,393 was awarded to Oxford City Council and Crisis to redevelop the Old Fire Station.

The redevelopment presents a one-off opportunity to create a high quality community resource which will retain and develop a performance (theatre, dance and music) and visual arts space, a social enterprise café, with a Crisis Skylight at the heart of the project along with cutting edge artistic and creative enterprise in the West End of the City. All aspects of the building will be interconnected.

The benefits to the City Council are wide-ranging in terms of the proposed development of the OFS. These include:

Investment - The OFS building is owned by the City Council and this external capital grant will significantly improve the City Council's asset. In return, the City Council is expected to offer the building as the match-funding element of the PCP bid in recognition of the extensive refurbishment work that will be done and the strategic delivery.

Transforming Lives - Crisis Skylight exists to inspire and support people to progress. It has been recognised as best practice by government in helping homeless and vulnerable adults transform their lives. Their commitment to work in partnership and enhance the City's provision with their profile, services and revenue generating ability should be welcomed by the Council.

Crisis will provide workshops that will engage and inspire people to develop new skills, together with accredited training which will actively support the priorities in Oxfordshire's Local Area Agreements around increasing the numbers of working age adults qualified to level 2 and 3 and number of vulnerable adults moving on to independent living and reducing the numbers on out of work benefit.

A Cutting Edge Cultural Hub - Culture has the power to change lives and raise aspirations. It has an intrinsic value to communities, bringing people together in shared experience, strengthening community bonds and making a major contribution to the quality of life.

This development will create a cultural beacon at the heart of the city centre, enhancing provision and providing a resource that leads people to become involved in arts and cultural activity. It will also provide some working spaces for the creation of arts, meeting a key need for Oxford.

Regenerating the West End - Such a flagship project within the West End will provide a catalyst for the regeneration of Gloucester Green. In doing so, it will support the West End Area Action Plan, in particular its commitment to provide a vibrant cultural, leisure and visitor facility, will have a wide appeal and will meet the needs of hidden communities.

Contributing to Economic Development - The OFS can deliver substantial benefits for the economic development of the area. It is for this reason the project enjoys support from a number of bodies, including the Learning & Skills Council, Oxfordshire County Council

and the Oxfordshire Economic Partnership. The skills development and employment support on offer will directly contribute to growth in the area, with people supported into local employment options.

Project Objectives

The main objectives against which the project will deliver are those set down in the Places of Changes Programme:

- To increase the number of clients positively moving on to independent or more appropriate supported accommodation and
- To increase the number of clients moving into education and employment.

The project will also:

- Meet relevant targets for Oxfordshire's Local Area Agreement indicators
- Meet relevant targets in Oxford City Council's Homelessness and Arts Strategies.
- Work to provide settled and stable communities.
- Improve the efficiency, effectiveness and value for money of the City's homelessness and arts services in relation to this project
- Enable all to actively participate in the redevelopment of OFS

Project Scope

The OFS will be a busy, active space in the heart of the city, with activities taking place through the day and evening, throughout the year. It will play host to a range of arts and learning activities, with spaces for large and small-scale performance, rehearsals, music, dance, visual arts and professional development.

It is envisaged that the ground floor will largely be a "public space", fronted by a busy social enterprise café. A social enterprise business will operate various distinct spaces for use and hire for rehearsals, classes, visual arts and performances, alongside affordable creative workspace. A Crisis Skylight centre will be at the heart of the centre, located predominantly at the first and second floor. Office space will be let to like-minded organisations on the third floor.

It is proposed to essentially divide the building into two areas for management purposes.

- a) Crisis Skylight on the first and second floors, with a separate reception on the ground floor level
- b) Public Spaces on the majority of the ground floor consisting of
 - i. Social Enterprise Café
 - ii. Social Enterprise Hire Business

Crisis will operate and manage the Skylight centre spaces, maintaining a staff team that is suitable to ensure the safe running of their work and without impacting on the other uses in the building. With respect to the public spaces, Crisis will lead on the development of the café, potentially working with Aspire.

More generally, the ground floor spaces available for performance, rehearsal, visual arts and creative workspaces (music studios, digital suite) will be operated as a social enterprise, described in this business plan as "Social Enterprise Hire Business". The core elements are described below and either Crisis, Aspire or another party could take on this role with support from local partners and following further consultation and feasibility work.

There are also possibilities to links to the open space of Gloucester Green.

Crisis Skylight

Crisis will offer a wide range of activities, learning and support to homeless people, or anyone who wants to learn new skills. This will include both accredited, basic skills training, and non-accredited informal learning in the form of workshops in music, creative and visual arts and vocational areas. Part of the Crisis Skylight service will include information, advice & guidance on how to progress vocationally, with practical support offered to ensure people can move on.

The Crisis Skylight centre within the OFS will likely consist of:

- Art room
 - Regular classes held within the space, with free access at other times when Skylight is open
- IT room
 - Both accredited learning and familiarization classes held regularly, with free access at other times when Skylight is open.
 - Also used for job search & CV writing
- 2 x flexible training rooms
 - Flexible use as either classroom style spaces, meeting spaces, or for clean/dry workshops
 - Accredited training in literacy, numeracy, personal development and vocational skills (H&S, food safety etc.)
 - Job clubs, creative writing classes or other support
- Dance & exercise studio
 - Regular programme of dance and physical activities
 - Space also available for hire via Social Enterprise business at pre-determined times
 - It is hoped to include limited changing facilities
- Dirty workshop space
 - Located in the basement, with space for practical workshops such as bike maintenance
- Music rehearsal space
 - Practice space, suitable for music classes and groups
- At least 3 x 1:1 meeting rooms
- Resources to support people into further education, training and employment

Crisis will staff and operate the Crisis Skylight centre. They envisage a staff team of approximately 14 people, including management, receptionists, progression co-ordinators and tutors for the accredited learning. In addition Crisis will employ sessional tutors to lead specific workshops, and will use a wide range of volunteers.

Social Enterprise Café

A social enterprise café will help the building become an active part of the community. It will open during the daytime and will service a basic selection of hot and cold food and drinks. It is envisaged it will front onto Gloucester Green, taking up just under half the existing nightclub space on the ground floor with an opportunity for outdoor seating.

It will be run as a training project aimed at formerly homeless people, providing trainees with opportunities to develop customer services and catering experience and will look to place people directly into work.

Crisis currently operates two successful social enterprise cafes (one in London and one in Newcastle) under the branding of 'Skylight Café' and both run along similar lines. The exact business model in terms of the USP will only be decided nearer opening, once a full market analysis has been completed. The ongoing economic uncertainty will mean the competitive market place may look significantly different in early 2011, and the project will look to respond appropriately to take full advantage. It is likely that the business will be marketed around its social and ethical roots, and reflect the artistic nature of the wider uses which surrounds it. The Project Board will look to take expert advice in the coming months to ensure the right USP and business angle can be found to make this part of the project a business success.

Crisis is currently in discussions with Aspire Oxfordshire about potentially partnering on the running of such a café. Having examined the financial figures of the current Crisis cafes both are confident that a viable social enterprise café business can be made to work in OFS.

As a guide cost, Crisis Newcastle's Skylight Café has costs of approximately £150k annually, operating on a model that provides 3 hot meals, a range of cold food and snacks and hot drinks, and uses up to 6 trainees working for the café at any one time. We envisage a similar scale operation at OFS, which would require a take of £2,800 a week. Nevertheless, were there initial operating losses during the start-up period, these would be met by Crisis.

The café can be run reasonably independently from the wider activity within the building, although there is also potential to integrate activities. The café would look to provide food for daytime events in the wider building, and the same space could be used to support evening events. The café would look to potentially build on support from the business community.

Social Enterprise Hire Business

The Social Enterprise Hire Business will operate all 'for hire' spaces, marketing them for use by arts & cultural organisations, students, community groups and local businesses.

All arts related activity will therefore be facilitated through this business, whose purpose will be to market and manage the spaces to make them active places serving a range of art forms in Oxford. The spaces for hire will require branding under a common name, for example 'The Old Fire Station'. Office space would be made available for use by this business within the building, most likely on the second floor.

In addition, the business itself will serve as a training project, working with homeless people, developing and strengthening trainees administrative and technical abilities around arts management. On the basis of the initial business planning work, both Crisis and Aspire are interested in potentially running this Social Enterprise Hire Business. They are jointly commissioning a full feasibility study on this Social Enterprise Hire Business, to develop the detailed model that is deliverable.

Initial business planning on this hire business has been carried out, with income and expenditure forecasts detailed below. An experienced arts development consultant has carried out an initial review of the business plan and has reported he believes this is a viable model.

Social Enterprise Café – Further Details

Introduction

The Skylight Café will be part of a larger project in Oxford: Crisis Skylight, housed in the Old Fire Station in central Oxford. Crisis Skylight is a learning and activity centre, where homeless and non homeless people can take part in practical and creative workshops together. Its objectives are:

- To offer homeless people hope and purpose in their lives
- To build skills and learning
- To build social capital

These objectives are achieved through three programmes of workshops: engagement (open access sessions in around 40 different subjects), education (accredited courses leading to around 10 different qualifications) and employment (a combination of vocational training courses, one-off workshops and action planning leading to qualifications, work, and placements in social enterprises).

Social enterprises will form a very important part of the employment programme, developed through a partnership between Crisis and Aspire. Aspire have successfully operated social enterprises in the Oxford area and bring both a range of established partnerships and local market knowledge. Crisis bring the learning from operating their successful Skylight Cafés in London and Newcastle, which will be adapted to suit the local market in Oxford.

Why Social Enterprise?

In July 2002, the Government published its first Social Enterprise Strategy, sharpening the focus on the social enterprise component within its wider regeneration policy. This publication recognises the contribution that the social economy can make to job creation, the social inclusion agenda, delivery of local services and local wealth creation.

Social enterprises offer a positive external face in their neighbourhoods, encouraging interaction between homeless and non-homeless people. Together, we understand the importance of social businesses bringing people and communities together for economic development and social gain. The social enterprises Crisis and Aspire develop will be flourishing, energetic catalysts for social and economic regeneration in their local communities.

At the heart of Crisis and Aspire's work is the desire to empower homeless people to develop the skills and capacity to reintegrate into society and leave homelessness behind for good. Work is an important part of most people's lives, giving a sense of purpose, allowing people to make a contribution to society and providing people with the money they need to maintain a basic standard of living and ultimately lead full and satisfying lives.

A recent research report commissioned by Crisis with Opinion Leader Research, 'Homeless people and learning & skills: participation, barriers and progression,' has some very useful findings to guide our work in this area.

'Only one in six (15 per cent) homeless people were in employment of any description.'

This compares with 74.6% of the working age population as a whole. Whilst, of course, many homeless people described themselves as on benefits, over half self-described as unemployed. The figures for the length of unemployment are also concerning:

- Nearly six in ten (57 per cent) homeless people have been unemployed for more than three years.
- Over a quarter (27 per cent) of homeless people had been unemployed for more than ten years.

Social enterprises can be used to provide supported personalised training in a real work environment. This is important for our client group for several reasons, which are outlined below.

Work experience is important for anyone trying to enter or re-enter the employment market, it allows people to provide references for jobs, build up a convincing curriculum vitae, use real examples for evidence based questions in interviews, have confidence in their abilities and develop the skills needed for work. It is particularly important to our client group, many of whom, as shown by the statistics from the research above, have been out of the labour market for a significant amount of time. We know that homelessness de-skills people and causes them to lose self-confidence. Many homeless people also lead fairly chaotic lives and need time to get used to structures and patterns of behaviour that are considered 'normal' in the workplace.

Both Crisis and Aspire strongly believe in progression as an aim for all. Our definition of progression is broad and we recognise that for some they start their individual journey a long way from being work ready. However, it should be possible for people to follow a route through our learning based programmes towards an employment outcome. Providing people with tangible goals, such as employment, as a focus can be extremely motivating; the OLR research also highlighted the importance of this. It cites one of the three key reasons that some people were not interested in training/educational activities as a lack of perceived useful outcomes. It also states:

The main benefit homeless people felt would result from taking part in an educational / training course was being able to get work. Qualitative findings reveal that many homeless people perceive getting work as a key stepping stone on the road to getting out of homelessness.

In order to achieve vocational qualifications, people need to demonstrate practical evidence of their skills from work experience. Social enterprises allow us to provide a greater choice of types of work for people.

Finally, the OLR research showed that the voluntary sector is the preferred deliverer of training for homeless people, with 87% of people rating training provided by this sector as good compared with only 63% for Jobcentre Plus. The reasons for this were as follows:

- They understand what courses homeless people want/need
- They have staff who are supportive and understand the issues facing homeless people
- The learning environment is more informal and less rigid than other providers

In conclusion, social enterprise has an important role to play in the provision of training and employment opportunities for homeless people. It should not, of course, been seen in isolation, but rather provided as part of a continuum of programmes on offer to people in order for them to develop their skills and move into work. We recognise that for social enterprise to be successful, the underlying business needs to be successful – the ‘enterprise’ part is as important as the ‘social’ aspect in delivering sustainable outcomes.

Lessons learned from Skylight Café London and Skylight Café Newcastle

Background

The first Skylight Café opening in London on August 9th 2004 with the twin aims of being both a successful business and a training project providing a route into employment for people who have experienced homelessness. After an initial false start in the form of a partnership with the Camden Society that was terminated after clear differences in ethos were identified, the Café built on sizable input from Prêt à Manger to develop its operational and training models along Prêt lines. This ensured a commitment to quality of product and service as well as a hands-on approach to coaching and trainee development.

The Skylight Café in London has been a commercial success, moving quickly to breakeven and achieving its social objectives. The Skylight Café in Newcastle opened in July 2007, and is fast on the way to replicating that success. It is currently ahead of its business targets for the first year, and it is establishing itself as a firm favourite of the office workers in the surrounding area.

Lesson 1: Success of the training package

The Skylight Café London has tried several different approaches to training over the last three years and has now developed its own training programme, which combines person-centred soft skills development with vocational on-the-job training. There is accreditation available for both elements. In a recent external review of the Café by KPMG, the training programme was highlighted as a particular strength, particularly in its ability to progress homeless people on, especially into employment. In 2006 twenty-three homeless people had moved on from the Café into paid employment and over fifty others had worked in the Café, improving their basic skills and employability, with several going on to further education and training. This successful training package should be replicated in future Skylight Cafés.

Lesson 2: Trainees need lots of support

This was a lesson learnt quickly, and is the key reason for the success of the training package. Staffing levels were changed in the Skylight Café London in order to provide the support needed to trainees to help them progress, with an assistant manager taken on to allow the manager more time to work with trainees on their development needs. This additional support puts a strain on the business, and means staffing costs are higher than a ‘standard’ café. In response the Skylight Cafés in both London and Newcastle now split out their financial data to allow analysis of the true costs of proving the training and of running the business.

Lesson 3: Broader menus work better

The Pret model with which the Skylight Café was established worked well, but the Skylight Café in London only truly started to thrive when hot food was introduced and developed. Given the high quality space, customers appreciate being able to sit and enjoy a hot meal, rather than simply quickly eating a sandwich or having a rushed coffee and leaving.

Helpfully, preparing and serving hot food also provides a more rounded training experience for the homeless people serving as trainees.

Consequently, the Skylight Café in Newcastle has served a range of hot food from inception, with waiter service further adding to the feel that it is more than just a sandwich and coffee shop.

Outcomes

The outcomes this project will deliver for homeless people are:

- Progression into employment
 - The café manager will deal with local employers and negotiate confirmed interview opportunities for our trainees
 - Trainees will be supported as they take up this employment
- Improve vocational skills, with accredited awards
 - Trainees will be supported in the preparation for and achievement of a qualification – depending on which qualification is relevant this will include either building a portfolio and/or undergoing a formal assessment.
- Improved soft skills (confidence, motivation and self-esteem), provided by:
 - The application procedure - every member is individually interviewed by the café manager to check that they are suitable for the opportunity and that it's suitable for them - good experience in itself
 - The volunteering element – every member will experience working as part of a team, dealing with and communicating with the general public and gain a taste of a real working environment.
 - The learning experience itself, as well as the topics covered - customer service, organisational & communication skills, food preparation.

Objectives

To deliver these outcomes, the Skylight Café in Oxford will have two core objectives in the first 3 years:

- 1) Develop a sustainable business that breaks even
- 2) Develop a high quality accredited training programme that is integrated with the overall Skylight model, offering a good progression pathway for Skylight members

To support these, the financial reporting of the business will split out the business and training costs, allowing a true reflection of the underlying profitability of the business, and the contribution this can make to the reasonably substantial training costs. It also allows Crisis and Aspire to fundraise specifically towards the training costs, to allow the enhanced level of support required.

Appendix 4. Enhanced Options Performance Measures

Indicators will be reviewed quarterly and amended as necessary in light of changes to the economic and operational environment.

A. Local Performance Indicators

1. Reduction in households in temporary accommodation (also LAA2)
 - a. Baseline 31/12/08 - 405
 - b. Target 31/03/10 – 300
 - c. Target 31/03/11 - 194
2. Reduction in homelessness acceptances
 - a. Baseline 2007/08 – 196
 - b. Target 2008/09 – 180 (Q3 = 117)
 - c. Target 2009/10 - 156
3. Reduction in rough sleeping
 - a. Baseline 2007/08 – 13
 - b. Target 2008/09 – 8 or less (Q3 = 5)
 - c. Target 2009/10 – 8 or less.
4. Homelessness prevention (BV 213)
 - a. Baseline 2007/09 – 7.15
 - b. Target 2008/09 – 8 (Q3 = 3.8)
 - c. Target 2009/10 = 6+

B. New indicators:

1. Reduction in under 25 homelessness acceptances
 - a. Baseline 2007/08 – 64.3% (126)
 - b. YTD / Q3 2008/09 – 53.8% (63)
 - c. Proposed target 2009/10 – 50% or less
2. Reduction in main causes of homelessness – exclusions:
 - a. Baseline 2007/08 – 41.8% (82)
 - b. YTD / Q3 2008/09 – 33.3% (39)
 - c. Proposed target 2009/10 – 30% or less
3. Reduction in main causes of homelessness – care leavers:
 - a. Baseline 2007/08 – 12.2% (24)
 - b. YTD / Q3 2008/09 – 15.4% (18)
 - c. Proposed target 2009/10 – 12% or less
4. Service user satisfaction with options service
 - a. Baseline 0% – rolling monthly survey now commenced March 2009.
 - b. Target 2009/10 – to be determined once baseline set for March 2009.
 - c. Target 2010/11 - to be determined once baseline set for March 2009.

C. LAA2 Indicators (remembering these are countywide figures):

1. NI 117 – 16-18 year olds who are NEET (PSA 14)
 - a. Baseline 2007/08 – 4.2%
 - b. Target 2009/10 – 4%
 - c. Target 2010/11 – 3.6%
2. NI 40 – Drug users in effective treatment
 - a. Baseline 2007/08 – 1581
 - b. Target 2009/10 – 1644 (4%+ on baseline)
 - c. Target 2010/11 – 1660 (5%+ on baseline)
3. NI 141 – Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living
 - a. Baseline 2007/08 – 55.9%
 - b. Target 2009/10 – 60%
 - c. Target 2010/11 – 63%
4. NI 152– Working age people on out of work benefits
 - a. Baseline 2007/08 – 5.9%
 - b. Target 2009/10 – 5.9%
 - c. Target 2010/11 – 4.9%
5. NI 156 – Number of households living in temporary accommodation (Countywide figures)
 - a. Baseline Dec 2008 – 818
 - b. Target 2009/10 – 577
 - c. Target 2010/11 - 526
6. NI 163 – Working age population qualified to at least Level 2 or higher
 - a. Baseline 2006 – 73.8%
 - b. Target 2009/10 – 77.5%
 - c. Target 2010/11 - 79%
7. NI 164 - Working age population qualified to at least Level 3 or higher
 - a. Baseline 2006 – 56.8%
 - b. Target 2009/10 – 59.5%
 - c. Target 2010/11 – 61%