

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: ALL
REPORT TITLE Update on the Homeless Scrutiny Panel actions: Voluntary Community Sector provision and Out of Hours provision to support service delivery	
REPORT OF Glendine Shepherd	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Housing Scrutiny Committee	DATE 24 th October 2024
SUMMARY OF REPORT This report provides updates on the progress of actions 9 and 11 in the initial Response to the Homelessness Scrutiny Panel recommendations to Housing Scrutiny Committee. These are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of Voluntary Community Sector provision to alleviate financial pressures and improve service delivery - Review of the Out of Hours service looking at the effectiveness of the current provision and our communication to residents on how to access this service Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information The following documents have been used in the preparation of this report: No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report Contact Officer: Simone Melia, Head of Housing Solutions, 5 Pancras Square, N1C 4AG Simone.melia@camden.gov.uk	
RECOMMENDATIONS This paper recommends that the Committee considers the updates on these actions and if relevant recommends further direction	

Signed: 

Date: 30th October 2024

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the Housing Scrutiny committee on the VCS partner relationships and the review of the out of hours provision following the initial officer response presented at the Homeless Scrutiny Panel on the 16th July 2024
- 1.2 This report will cover any progress on the actions outlined, as well as any current blockers, issues and risks

2. Action updates

2.1 Review Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) funding – recommendation

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Officers working in homelessness services have begun conversations with Community Partnerships colleagues on the review of wider VCS support available across Camden. Camden's Advice Network is currently in its 5th year of delivery. The Camden Advice Network (CAN) was launched in April 2020 and is funded at £1 million per year over 7 years. The Camden Advice Network includes 13 community providers that offer a range of advice and support services to Camden residents:

- Citizen Advice Camden
- Age UK Camden
- Camden People First
- Camden Community Law Centre
- Mary Ward Legal Centre
- Camden Disability Action
- Hopscotch
- West Hampstead Women's Centre
- London Irish Centre
- Somers Town Community Association
- Kosmos
- Camden Somali Cultural Centre
- New Horizon Youth Project

Camden has a high level of commitment in supporting the VCS sector and there has been significant investment in provision, however high demand for support and complex cases are also adversely affecting our VCS partners capacity and resources.

Delivery partners offer various areas of specialist support, within the Network we currently fund New Horizon Youth who focus on supporting youth homelessness in the borough.

In 2025-26, the Community Partnership Team will be reviewing the Camden Advice Network and proposing a new 7-year investment around independent Advice. This offers an opportunity to consider how we work collaboratively and think strategically

about resource and capacity in this space, and how we can focus wider VCS support services to work with our homeless households in borough to tackle increasing demands on the homelessness service and holistically support our residents. The review will include considering service specifications and will give an opportunity to set up key performance measures within contracts that focus on Council strategic priorities such as tackling homelessness.

Through the Money Advice Camden service a pro-active approach to debt prevention and welfare rights is being taken, using data to pro-actively engage with residents and prevent debt.

In the Debt and Financial Resilience team, the Council are also pro-actively supporting residents in the switch from legacy benefits to universal credit. This pro-active approach will support with mitigating rent arrears and money management. This will improve outcomes for residents, helping to prevent homelessness and crisis presentations both to the Council and VCS organisations.

Some other examples of working with the VCS in partnership:

- Officers will be focusing on improving access to VCS organisations with an expertise in mental health, as part of a review of the 'Reach Out' services commissioned by the council and NHS.
- New Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) roles in housing will work closely with the VCS in identifying and supporting victim survivors of DVA who may be faced with homelessness to improve referral and support routes, particularly at the point of crisis.
- Women's Rough Sleeping Census with Solace Women's Aid and youth rough sleeping project with New Horizons.

2.2 Out of Hours Provision

The homelessness service has been piloting an in-house out of hours provision with Contact Camden. This seeks to establish a single point of contact for residents to call in out of hours emergency housing situations.

The pilot has had an initial review, with the service closely monitoring delivery to ensure the correct decisions are being made out of hours and that a quality and statutorily-compliant service is being delivered. Initial review has found this way of working as beneficial and has provided improved service to residents by having a single point of contact. Contact Camden already act as first point of contact for other crisis council service such as social care and are used to linking people in crisis with the Police, Domestic Abuse support services, Mental Health services and Social Care services where needed. More work will be done as we move into implementation of the model to ensure join up with other services as necessary.

3. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

The Council has a duty to house eligible homeless households in temporary accommodation. Temporary accommodation should be a last resort as it often does not meet the housing needs of the household and can be very expensive for the Council. Demand for temporary accommodation within the borough has risen by

about 50% in the past 18 months and this is placing a major strain on the Council's finances. In this context, any services which can help to prevent homelessness play a valuable role in both improving housing outcomes and helping to keep the Council's expenditure under control.

4. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

The Borough Solicitor has been consulted and has no legal comments.

5. Environmental Implications

The proposals have no environmental impacts.

REPORT ENDS