



OPEN REPORT COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Community and Environment Committee 23rd March 2023

Supported Housing Improvement Programme

Report of the Director of Housing

Report Author and Contact Details

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Wards Affected

All

Report Summary

Derbyshire Dales District Council has been successful in a joint bid with all Derbyshire District and Borough Councils and Staffordshire Moorlands Council to take part in the Supported Housing Improvement Program. This report sets out the arrangements for delivering the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP). Supported housing is supposed to provide a roof to those that struggle to obtain and maintain independent living. However, since the demise of the Supporting People programme, the sector is largely unregulated. New unregistered providers of supported accommodation have set up schemes for which the councils are liable for a proportion of the rent paid by housing benefit. The cost in Derbyshire and Staffordshire Moorlands is £1.5m per year.

Recommendations

1. Members note DDDC's successful partnership bid to the Supported Housing Improvement Programme.
2. That Members approve the expenditure of the SHIP grant.
3. That Members receive a future report on the delivery of the SHIP programme

List of Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

Consideration of report by Council or other committee

Council Approval Required

Yes

Exempt from Press or Public

Yes

Report Title

1. Background

- 1.1 Members will be familiar with the various forms of social housing for rent provided by the council and housing associations. Some housing associations and charities provide supported housing for specific groups such as people fleeing domestic violence or those at risk of rough sleeping. Such organisations are typically Registered Providers i.e. they are registered with the Regulator of Social Housing and Homes England. This means they are subject to monitoring and standards. Registered Providers of supported accommodation charge a rent for the accommodation and a fee for the support, referred to as Intensive Housing Management. Both the rent and the intensive housing management fee are paid for by Housing Benefit which is administered by councils. The funding to pay the Housing Benefit comes from the government.
- 1.2 Since the demise of the Supporting People programme, there has been a rapid growth of unregistered providers of supported accommodation. These are typically charities, faith groups and small businesses that have acquired property and provide varying levels of support to vulnerable clients. This can be a lucrative business because the rents and intensive housing management fee can be significant. As with Registered Providers, the rent is paid in full and covered by the government. However Housing Benefit rules mean that only a proportion of the intensive housing management fee can be covered by the government with the rest falling on councils. As the numbers of unregistered providers has increased so has the cost to councils. With no formal regulation in place, Housing Benefit teams cannot resist new applications or impose standards of support that tenants should receive.
- 1.3 Whilst there are some providers work with councils and provide both a safe place to live and the support to help people with multiple needs, there are also some that do not. The level of support can be quite basic with poor accommodation standards. When people with high support needs are housed together with limited or basic support, they can impact on other residents, neighbours and businesses. Rent arrears and evictions often result making the individual even harder to accommodate in the future. Councils rely on supported housing providers to meet the needs of people that would struggle to maintain a tenancy in a standard social housing or private rented tenancy and so have a vested interest in ensuring quality of provision.
- 1.4 A collective piece of work undertaken on supported accommodation across Derbyshire in 2021/2022 evidenced that supported accommodation continued to grow in size and cost with little input or influence from Councils. The research also demonstrated that in many cases it is not managed in terms of quality of support or accommodation, and whilst the Regulator of Social Housing regulates certain aspects of provision it does not provide an in depth assessment of service provision or standards. As it presently stands housing benefit has taken on the role of assessing whether a service provider is providing adequate care and support and how much rent they are entitled to by navigating a complex set of outdated legislation with no additional resources following the end of the Supporting People Program.

- 1.5 The issues are not unique to Derbyshire and Staffordshire Moorlands and Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities introduced the first Supported Housing Improvement Pilot in 2020. The pilots were evaluated and demonstrated significant improvement in relation to support, accommodation standards and value for money. On the back of the success of the initial pilots DLUHC introduced a second round of pilots asking for expressions of interest for a £20m improvement program in August 2022.
- 1.6 On the basis of the work to understand the nature and extent of supported accommodation across Derbyshire and Staffordshire Moorlands a joint expression of interest was submitted.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 Supported accommodation provides a roof to those that struggle to obtain and maintain independent living. Often people who experience, mental health, drug, alcohol and or criminal behaviour. It provides safe accommodation and tailored support to address any issues and enables individuals to move-on into independent living.
- 2.2 It's important because it gives an opportunity for vulnerable individuals to achieve their full potential by concentrating on their specific (often multiple) issues rather than just one element. For example, debt, mental health and substance misuse can be addressed concurrently. Without supported accommodation there would be an increase in anti-social behaviour, crime, homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 2.3 The current position in Derbyshire and Staffordshire Moorlands is:
- 2,642 units of supported accommodation across Derbyshire & Staffordshire Moorlands
 - £500k weekly cost to the public purse (paid by HB each week)
 - £1.5m subsidy loss per year across 9 Councils
 - No coordination of type and location of supported accommodation, within LA areas or across Derbyshire and Staffordshire Moorlands
 - Support not contracted or scrutinized to any set standard
 - Loss of supported accommodation is the main reason for rough sleeping in Derbyshire
- 2.4 Headlines from the Supported Accommodation review findings and how Derbyshire Dales measures against the rest of Derbyshire
- Derbyshire Dales has the lowest number of supported accommodation units in the County with 99 compared to Chesterfield's 545, this is disproportionate to head of population.
 - Derbyshire Dales is the only Local Authority in Derbyshire to have a higher number of non-registered provider accommodation than registered provider accommodation.
 - Derbyshire Dales had a subsidy loss of £135k in 2020/21 (5th highest in Derbyshire) – this is money the Council has to pay towards the provision that is not covered under benefits.

Rank in Derbyshire	District /Borough	Total units	Subsidy loss 2020/2021
1	Chesterfield	545	£323,287
2	Erewash	382	£285,496
3	High Peak	266	£260,490
4	Amber Valley	390	£206,420
5	Derbyshire Dales	99	£135,990
6	South Derbyshire	450	£127,589
7	Bolsover	133	£101,612
8	North East Derbyshire	177	£63,082
9	Staffordshire Moorlands	200	£13,743

Table: Rank of subsidy loss by area

2.5 Supported Housing Improvement Program – Round 2 - Derbyshire and Staffordshire Moorlands Councils were successful in the bid to take part have been awarded a grant of £687,230 over the program period.

Year	DLUHC Allocation	Evaluation & training	Available	Per LA
2022/23	£ 176,580.00	£ 3,500.00	£173,080	£19,231.11
2023/24	£ 255,325.00	£ 3,800.00	£251,525	£27,947.22
2024/25	£ 255,325.00	£ 3,800.00	£251,525	£27,947.22
Total	£ 687,230.00			£75,125.56

2.6 The Supported Housing Improvement Program is a DLUHC funded pilot which will run from December 2022 to March 2025. The aim of the pilot is to implement a number of interventions that will improve the quality of support, the standard of accommodation and increase oversight and value for money. 26 local authorities are taking part. The interventions have been tried and tested previously in other local authority areas including Birmingham; Blackburn; Blackpool, Bristol and Hull during an earlier pilot in 2020 to 2021.

2.7 As one size doesn't fit all and, each area is different in terms of geography, the amount of supported accommodation, governance etc., Derbyshire and Staffordshire Moorlands have adopted a combined approach based on Blackburn with Darwen and Hull's findings. Key to the success across both pilots was a shared responsibility across a multi-disciplinary approach to improve supported accommodation. The pilots will be monitored independently and data will be collated regularly. The findings will inform the future of supported housing. The interventions will include but not be limited to:

- Assessing support needs and provision of support – by conducting visits to supported accommodation and talking to residents and staff
- Assessing quality of accommodation – by visiting accommodation and identifying Category 1 and Category 2 hazards under the relevant legislation

- Collating information on whether care, support and supervision is being provided and feeding this back to Housing Benefit who may decide to suspend or cancel claims for housing benefit.
- Using the evidence across Derbyshire and Staffs Moorlands to influence or reject new provision.
- Using the evidence to set equal standards across Derbyshire and allow Councils to reflect on provision in other areas when reviewing or setting rents and service charges.

2.8 The SHIP grant allocation will allow each LA to recruit a resource for the period of the program of which the main tasks are:

- Identify and coordinate Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDT's) consisting of Housing Benefit, Environmental Health, Community Safety, Planning and Housing Options
- Implement Supported Housing Improvement within existing departmental working regimes (HMO licence renewals, HB application assessments for example)
- Drive a County set standard for supported accommodation in each LA area.
- Encourage providers to take part and share good practice and deliver a program of improvement.
- Arrange visits to engage with residents to assess support and inspect accommodation.
- Produce comprehensive reports backed up by evidence for consideration by Housing Benefit

2.9 The Derbyshire and Staffordshire Moorlands SHIP has been developed through close collaboration between the Derbyshire Homelessness Officers Group (DHOG) & Derbyshire County Council.

2.10 The aim of the project is to deliver as standard good quality supported housing. This is vital: providing a safe, stable and supportive place to live can be the key to unlocking better outcomes for vulnerable people, from tackling poverty and disadvantage to managing crises, rehabilitation or maintaining people's independence.

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

3.1 Given the allocation of grant by DLUHC, the joint work across the district and borough councils and the need to improve the supported housing sector within the county and Staffordshire Moorlands, officers are recommending the SHIP is delivered.

3.2 The Derbyshire Homelessness Officers Group has put considerable time and effort in to the SHIP and believe there is a real opportunity to both improve standards within the sector and reduce the subsidy loss to all of the district and borough councils.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 At this stage consultation has taken place between the key agencies involved in the SHIP, including homelessness and housing advice agencies, the Housing teams and the Housing Benefit Teams of each council. Derbyshire County Council has also been involved the preparation of the work behind the project.

5. Timetable for Implementation

- 5.1 DLUHC announced the grant award in December 2022 and expect some expenditure of the grant in Q4 2022/23. As the host council for the project, this will involve Derbyshire Dales DC receiving the grant and passing on a proportion to each partner council at the end of Q4 2022/23. The SHIP will continue until the Q4 March 2024/25.
- 5.2 The majority of the funding will cover staff costs involved in the work outlined in para 2.8 so recruitment of staff will take place in Q1 2023/24. For the Derbyshire Dales it is proposed to use existing staff resources which have been involved in the original assessment of supported housing provision across the partner councils.

6. Policy Implications

- 6.1 The policy implications cross several council services and partner agencies. For the Housing team, the SHIP will improve the quality of the sector and ensure the vulnerable people that need both accommodation and support actually receive it. It will also reduce the homelessness approaches from people being evicted from supported accommodation. For Housing Benefit Teams the SHIP will help ensure public money is being used effectively and should over time help Housing Benefit officers assess the benefit claims.
- 6.2 The SHIP will also have a positive impact on partner agencies such as the Police, Probation and Social Services as a disproportionate number of service requests can come from unregistered accommodation.

7. Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 As set out in paragraph 2.5 of the report Derbyshire and Staffordshire Moorlands Councils were successful in the bid to take part in the SHIP and have been awarded a grant of £687,230 over the program period i.e. £176,580 for 2022/23, £255,325 for 2023/24 and £255,325 for 2024/25. Derbyshire Dales District Council is the accountable body for this grant and will be responsible for gathering information and evidence from partners and submitting grant claims.
- 7.2 Usually, a request would be made to Council for a supplementary revenue estimate to cover such additional expenditure, to be financed by grant. However, there isn't another Council meeting until after the election. Therefore, subject to this committee's approval of the recommendations of this report, the Director of Resources will use the delegated authority under Financial Regulation 2.14.2 to approve a supplementary budget, given that

the additional expenditure will be fully funded by a grant. This will mean that the scheme can commence without delay.

7.3 As set out in paragraph 2.4 of the report, one of the benefits of this work would be a reduction in lost housing benefit subsidy, which has amounted to over £100,000 a year for this authority.

7.4 Given the size of the grant and the need to work with other partners to deliver the scheme and to make claims, the financial risk would be assessed as low to medium, however this is mitigated by the reduction in lost housing benefit subsidy, reducing the overall financial risk to low.

7.5 The delivery of this scheme will have an impact on resources and workload in housing, benefits and financial services. However, it is considered that this can be accommodated within existing staffing structures.

8. Legal Advice and Implications

8.1 This report sets out the arrangements for delivering the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP). There are 3 recommended decisions to be taken as contained within this report.

8.2 The Legal Risk associated with these 3 decisions has been assessed as low.

9. Equalities Implications

9.1 Vulnerable people housed in supported accommodation will often be a reflection of the wider society whilst also having complex and multiple needs. Improving the sector and the support provided will have a positive impact on vulnerable people.

10. Climate Change Implications

10.1 At this stage it is not considered appropriate to provide a Climate Change Impact Assessment for the SHIP.

11. Risk Management

11.1 The Derbyshire Homelessness Officers Group will provide overall management of the project with the District Council's Housing Strategy Officer taking the lead within the Council. DLUHC require regular returns to be provided and will keep oversight throughout the life of the project.

11.2 Given the previous work to assess the extent and standards of supported housing provision within the partner councils and the existing officer resources that will deliver the work in the Dales, officers feel confident the project can be delivered.

Report Authorisation

Approvals obtained from:-

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive		
Director of Resources/ S.151 Officer (or Financial Services Manager)	Karen Henriksen	09/03/2023
Monitoring Officer (or Legal Services Manager)	Kerry France	16/03/2023