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To: Supporting People Commissioning Body, 2 April 2014

Subject: Homelessness Commissioning

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary

The following paper sets out the intentions for commissioning an Integrated Homelessness Service in Kent, with a preliminary timeline for the commissioning process.

Recommendation

The Commissioning Body is asked to note the report.

1 Introduction

- (1) In January 2014 the Kent Supporting People Commissioning Body approved the proposed Commissioning Plan for Housing Related Support in Kent, which set out the reconfiguration and re-commissioning of housing related support services across the County.
- (2) This report presents the intentions for commissioning Homelessness services which are in 'Phase Two', and proposes initial timescales.

2 Context

- (1) Services for vulnerable homeless people in Kent are currently delivered by nine different providers, with a total number of 32 contracts in place across the County. These services are a mix of hostels, shared houses and outreach services, and are currently split into three client groups; 'Single Homeless with Support Needs', 'Homeless Families with Support Needs' and 'Rough Sleepers', as well as the 'Generic' client group which supports homeless households and those threatened with homelessness.
- (2) Homelessness continues to be a challenge to services in Kent. In the period June – September 2013, 471 homeless applications were accepted by authorities in Kent, and at the end of September 2013 there were 550 households in temporary accommodation, with 158 of these in Bed & Breakfast accommodation.
- (3) The current provider of Rough Sleeper services estimates that there are approximately 146 people currently rough sleeping across the County.

- (4) These figures do not account for the 'hidden homeless', which may include people sofa surfing and those in unstable or unsuitable housing.
- (5) As such, it has been recognised that the current model of homelessness provision needs to be reviewed to deliver greater positive outcomes through a more integrated approach to flexible services which reduce in line with client's increasing independence.

3 Relevant priority outcomes

- (1) Improved capacity to establish and maintain independent living amongst homeless families and individuals.
- (2) A reduction in homelessness/repeat homelessness and placements in temporary/ emergency accommodation.
- (3) A promotion of wider choice in housing opportunities.
- (4) The ability to access and sustain suitable accommodation.
- (5) A reduction in drug and alcohol related deaths.
- (6) Well protected and supported children and parents and a reduction in the need for interventions by Families and Social Care Services.

4 Overview of Homelessness Commissioning

- (1) It is proposed that a new model is introduced where a holistic, integrated homelessness service is tendered for East Kent (Thanet, Canterbury, Dover, Shepway, Swale and Ashford districts), and the same model is tendered in West Kent (Dartford, Gravesend, Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge & Malling and Maidstone districts).
- (2) A competitive tendering exercise will be undertaken to commission with a prime provider of homelessness services in each area. The provider will be commissioned to deliver or sub-contract a range of services and will be encouraged to work with local organisations and charities.
- (3) The service specification will be subject to extensive consultation and market testing, but preliminary information indicates that it will include provision of the following elements:
 - a. Hostel Accommodation
 - b. Emergency short term bed spaces
 - c. Shared Housing for lower needs service users
 - d. Outreach services
 - e. A Rent Deposit Scheme
- (4) There is also likely to be a requirement for the successful provider to have identified practical solutions to securing sustainable independent move on accommodation, for example by forming a social lettings agency.

- (5) Service performance will be measured by a series of key performance indicators (KPIs) relating to service activity, quality and outcomes.
- (6) Key aspects of the tendering exercise are:
- a. An integrated contract to deliver consistent services across the county
 - b. One prime provider for each contract (East Kent and West Kent) to facilitate greater flexibility in provision through better use of sub-contracting and consortia arrangements
 - c. A coordinated approach to commissioning services, pooling budgets where possible to offer economies of scale and seamless service provision
- (7) The tendering process will take account of the lessons learnt through previous experiences, namely the commissioning of Home Improvement Agency Services in 2012. Some of the key lessons from this process, as identified in the Commissioning Body Report of 28th January 2014 include:
- a. Robust mechanisms of communicating intentions and progress with the Core Strategy Group and Commissioning Body through clear commissioning plans and progress reports.
 - b. A clear communication strategy which encompasses partners, stakeholders and bidders.
 - c. An appropriately formulated evaluation panel which includes professionals with specialist knowledge.

5 Delivery timescales

- (1) The table below summarises the proposed delivery timescales for the Homelessness tenders and provides an update on each stage.

Timescale	Stage	Status
September 2014 – May 2015	Identification of commissioning streams, work with partners to integrate service provision, and align commissioning.	
	Initial scoping of priorities and required outcomes to formulate draft specification.	
June 2015	Draft Integrated Homelessness Service Specification and Equality Impact Assessment ready for public consultation	

July 2015 – August 2015	Undertake public consultations, market engagement event and publicise consultation report	
September 2015 – December 2015	Competitive tendering and tender evaluation	
1 January 2016	Contract award	
January 2016 – March 2016	Service transition and mobilisation	
April 2016 onwards	East Kent and West Kent Integrated Homeless Service fully operational	

6 Consultation

- (1) A full consultation will be undertaken to incorporate a range of service users, including those from hard to reach groups, stakeholders and partner agencies.
- (2) There will also a robust market engagement process to test the market's appetite for the proposed procurement, and identify any required changes to the service model.

7 Financial Implications

- (1) Work will be undertaken to engage with partner agencies and commissioning organisations to look at opportunities to pool funding streams to deliver cohesive services, and possible efficiencies.
- (2) The final budget for each contract will be confirmed at a later date following the outcome of these discussions and configuration of each contract.

8 Risks

- (1) A risk register is being developed and will be maintained throughout the project.

9 Legal Implications

- (1) The competitive tendering process will ensure that contracts are tendered in a fair, open and transparent manner in line with Kent Commissioned Services commissioning framework.

10 Equality Impact Assessments

- (1) An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is underway, and work is being done to ensure that the service commissioned does not disadvantage any particular group.

11 Sustainability Implications

- (1) Commissioned Services remains committed to ensuring environmental sustainability of the services it commissions. The service specification for the Kent Integrated Homelessness Services will include a requirement for the provider to minimise the adverse environmental impact of the services it delivers.

12 Conclusion

- (1) Kent Commissioned Services will be undertaking a robust commissioning and procurement process to enter into a contract with a single provider in each area to deliver a cohesive and integrated homelessness service. There will be two contracts awarded – one in East Kent and one in West Kent.

13 Recommendations

The Commissioning Body is asked to note the report.

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