

Summary of Recommendations from the Neil Morland & Co. Independent Review of Homeless Services in Flintshire

Recommendation One

The Council should develop a clear, costed, two-to-three-year model which balances increased use of emergency accommodation against the mitigation measures it intends to adopt to reduce the use of emergency accommodation.

This should include scenarios where demand continues to increase, stays the same or reduces.

It should also include the range of agreed measures as outlined in the Housing Pressures Option Paper (1a to 5d) with a clear timetable for implementation of each measure and the expected contribution which each one can make to reducing the use of emergency accommodation.

The costs associated with implementing each measure should be compared to the avoided costs of hotels.

This will allow a planned approach to reducing the use of emergency accommodation. This can be adapted as time goes on depending on actual demand and actual progress in implementing the different measures.

Recommendation Two

The Council should calculate to what extent 1-bed self-contained accommodation could be available to meet single homelessness demand in best- and worst-case scenarios.

If there is not enough one-bed accommodation available to meet expected demand then it should plan to increase the use of shared accommodation for single person households to meet the gap, whether in social housing or leased PRS accommodation or HMOs.

Recommendation Three

The Council should examine the potential to make greater use of supported accommodation to meet homelessness demand and the possibilities of claiming enhanced rates of housing benefit associated with supported housing to contribute to the costs. This may be especially relevant where it is necessary to use shared accommodation due to a lack of one-bed supply as described in recommendation two.

The housing benefit regulations allowing under 35s to claim the one-bed LHA rate after a period of three months in supported housing should form part of this consideration.

Recommendation Four

The Council should expedite the sheltered housing review, so that it can be clear how many extra properties will be able to let to homeless households over a defined time period and include these in the model.

Recommendation Five

The Council should implement the planned restructure of the homelessness service with as little further delay as possible.

Recommendation Six

The Council should consolidate the various plans for the homelessness service including the RRTP into one plan, with a clear timetable and clearly allocated resources to achieve each objective. The implementation of this plan should be monitored closely by the ending homelessness board.

Recommendation Seven

The Council should consider opportunities for better joint working across departments and with external agencies to work with key client groups such as young people leaving care and service users with complex needs.

This should include creating integrated teams where this would be beneficial and avoid the potential for silo working

Recommendation Eight

The Council should review and update its online and other communications related to homelessness and housing advice with the objectives of:

1. Improving accessibility for services users with limited literacy
2. Tailoring communications to different groups with different ways of accessing information
3. Making greater use of social media
4. Providing greater opportunities for self help
5. Encouraging those at risk of homelessness to come forward earlier, when homelessness can still be prevented
6. Managing expectations to reflect the current acute shortage of affordable accommodation compared to local housing need

Recommendation Nine

The Council should consider how it can develop greater collaboration with neighbouring local authorities on homelessness.

Areas of cooperation could include:

1. benchmarking key parameters such as costs of TA, operational caseloads, staffing costs and performance of homelessness prevention and relief
2. joint commissioning of services where beneficial
3. joint training and secondments
4. co-development of policies and procedures
5. lobbying of the Welsh government

Recommendation Ten

The Council should develop mechanisms to include the views and feedback of people with lived experience in its processes for appraisal and development of the

service, especially where these involve changes to customer facing processes and procedures.

This could include periodic user satisfaction surveys and the establishment of one or more service user focus groups.

The Council could also consider ways to recruit more people with lived experience of homelessness and receiving support into employed roles within the service.

Recommendation Eleven

The Council should consider increasing its strategic and commissioning capacity beyond what is already planned, given the increasing changes from the Welsh government, the large number of actions in the RRTP, the need to increase TA and other accommodation supply, and the need for policy and IT development.