

Scottish Housing & Support Conference

Re-Tendering Homelessness Services – The North Lanarkshire Council Experience

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Why are we re-designing our services?

- To respond to the wishes of Service Users
- To improve the experience of people who have to use services
- To get better and more sustainable outcomes
- To make more effective use of services
- To cut out waste and improve efficiency (BV)

The Issues

- Dissatisfaction of Service Users with aspects of the existing services (e.g. location and style of temporary accommodation available)
- In-house services had become fragmented
- Purchased services lacking coherence (developed opportunistically as 'bolt-on' aspects, when funding allowed)
- Focus of services increasingly dominated by process and there was a reducing lack of 'fit' with strategic aims

The Opportunity

- Wholesale review of Housing and Homelessness Services 2007/2008
- Major internal change programme
- Development of Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2007/2008
- Further development of housing support and homelessness strategies within the Interim LHS
- Changes in Procurement legislation and practice

The Change Process

- Decentralised some aspects of homelessness and housing support services to localities
- Shifted focus to Housing Options and Outcomes
- Swapping larger scale homeless units for smaller more localised accommodation choices
- Revised emphasis on more targeted support services to prevent homelessness/sustain tenancies
- Engaged with Procurement to ensure good practice and compliance with Regs (but aims were compatible)
- Housing experience may vary from that of Social Work in this regard due to duty to offer Direct Payments

The Journey so far....

- Approval from Committee to re-tender 'floating support' within two x 3-year Part B contracts
- Adverts on Public Procurement portal
- Comprehensive services for 16-25s
- Comprehensive services for over 25s
- Attracted high levels of interest
- Currently re-designing Supported/Interim Accommodation services
- Emphasis on more personalised services

Conclusion

- Recognition that we are not buying paper clips
- Element of competition can uncover new ideas
- Evaluation of tenders weighted heavily towards quality
- Service specifications more focused on outcomes than processes
- Efficiencies can be gained through innovation, reduced overheads and improved practice – rather than cuts in the budget
- Ultimately, it has to be about providing the best we can with limited resources