

Cabinet – 10 September 2014

Tackling Youth Homelessness and Group Funding to Prevent Homelessness

Portfolio: Councillor D Coughlan, Social care

Related portfolios: Councillor Chambers, Personnel and business support
Councillor Cassidy, Children's Services and education

Service: Housing

Wards: All

Key decisions: Yes

Forward Plan: Yes

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report shares the findings of a review of existing homeless provision, informed by consultation with young homeless people, and providers of accommodation, and recommends to Cabinet the commissioning of up to 60 units of temporary accommodation (for young people aged 16 to 25 years who are homeless) to replace 97 units of supported housing. A tender has already been advertised to provide up to 15 bed spaces of supported lodgings, for homeless young people who need accommodation in a supportive family environment.
- 1.2 In accordance with the Council's Grant Manual the report also updates Cabinet on the Council's role as Accountable Body for the management and delivery of an award of £1.074 million from the Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG) to assist with the prevention of homelessness for the West Midlands and Warwickshire local authority grouping.
- 1.3 The report also highlights the Department of Health's proposed funding programme for England for improvements to hostels and shared accommodation. Due to the expected short timescale for bidding prior authority is sought from cabinet to bid for funds, if appropriate, for facilities in the borough.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the commissioning of up to 60 units of accommodation to be used to temporarily accommodate young people (aged 16-25) who are homeless pending permanent re-housing, and delegates authority to award the contract(s) for this to the Executive Director of Resources.

- 2.2 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director of Resources to sign or authorise the sealing of contracts, deeds or other documents in relation to the provision of accommodation for young people at risk of homelessness so that the new service can commence as soon as practicable.
- 2.3 That Cabinet note, in line with the council's Grant Manual, the significant progress in the development of a range of initiatives (listed in **Appendix 2**) to help prevent homelessness for the West Midlands and Warwickshire area funded by a grant of £1.074 million from the Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG).
- 2.4 That cabinet note the largest award of £170,940 for the *No Second Night Out* initiative supporting rough sleepers in nine council areas, including Walsall, at a cost of under £19,000 per council area for 18 months.
- 2.5 That cabinet approve future bidding for capital funds to the Department of Health, for improvements to hostels and shared accommodation in the borough where any such bid is in excess of £100,001 in line with the council's Grant Manual (Appendix E) .

2 Report detail

Young Persons Accommodation

- 2.1 Cabinet agreed in June 2013 to the procurement of accommodation for young people at risk of homelessness. Following this, detailed work has been undertaken with young people to review existing services and consider new models of delivery.
- 2.2 Consultation with young people has been key to the work and has included discussions since summer 2013 with a range of young people including those;
 - living in supported accommodation because they are homeless
 - who have previously lived in supported accommodation
 - approaching the council for help with their housing situation for the first time
 - those who have been 'through' supported housing at least once and are again seeking help with their housing situation.
- 3.3 When the Money Home Jobs team looked into the reasons why young people were coming for help from the council they identified a system that often works poorly from a young person's point of view. In many cases it was observed that young people asking for the council's help had often been through the system previously i.e. they had been given help before and been involved in multiple transactions with lots of agencies, generating high levels (54%) of failure demand. 'Switching off' this failure demand by giving young people facing homelessness the right help, at the right time, in the right way, releases capacity and saves money to do better things for some of Walsall's most vulnerable young people, including helping them to avoid entering temporary accommodation.

- 3.4 Some young people ended up 'worse off' as a result of the combined 'help' e.g. the supported housing scheme they were moved into to help prevent them from becoming homeless, had evicted them, and their future housing prospects and life chances were significantly reduced as a result.
- 3.5 The feedback from young people and overarching purpose in the young people's words is
'Give me the help I need when I need it so that I don't end up homeless'
- 3.6 The key factors in service delivery that the young people want is:
- *"Give me or help me to get the help that I need*
 - *Get it right first time*
 - *Keep me safe and*
 - *Don't pass me about"*
- 3.7 **Appendix 1** contains more details about what was found about homelessness for young people and how services need to change to improve outcomes and life chances for some of Walsall's most vulnerable young people.
- 3.8 Existing providers of supported accommodation and floating support for young people were advised of the above and consulted on the work being undertaken with young people. They were additionally asked to work with the council to seek to do things differently for young people.
- 3.9 These approaches did not lead to significant improvements in outputs for some young people and ;
- Acceptances to accommodate in supported housing continued to be delayed or refused
 - Evictions and abandonments of supported accommodation remained high
- 3.10 Regular consultation with young people has also occurred at the point when they approach the supported housing service. It is estimated that in the last 6 months 300 young people 16 to 25 have contacted the service either direct or through other agencies such as at regular;
- sessions with the West Midlands and Staffordshire Probation Trusts and young people they support and
 - Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences, meetings relating to domestic abuse and enforced marriages.
- 3.11 Each young person is asked what help they need as an individual and officers work with them to help them meet this need. The new way of working with young people developed between housing and children's services has helped these young people, depending upon their individual circumstances, to be:
- supported to return home
 - supported to access supported lodgings
 - or to move directly into either social housing or private rented accommodation.
- 3.12 Additional consultation with young people in existing supported accommodation has also taken place. It is estimated that a total of an

additional 80 young people have been asked to comment on the proposals. A further period for consultation has been made available up to 28th August 2018.

3.13 In addition to consultation with young people and providers consultation has taken place with a range of others including:

- portfolio holders for Regeneration and Transport, Children's and Social Care; and
- other relevant professionals including the;
 - Teenage Pregnancy Team, Walsall NHS
 - Family Nurse Partnership Walsall, NHS
 - Children's Commissioning Service, Walsall Council
 - Vulnerable Children Initial Response Service, Walsall Council
 - Child Poverty Officer, Walsall Council
 - Joint NHS / Social Care SEND Commissioning Manager
 - Early Help and Strengthening Families Service, Walsall Council
 - Transitional Leaving Care Team, Walsall Council
 - IYPSS Strategic Lead - YOT/TYS, Walsall Council
 - Youth Offender Managers, Youth Justice Service, Walsall Council.

3.14 Consultation feedback has highlighted the key issues of:

- Reduction in overall number of units resulting from increased multi-agency preventative work with young people and their carers to prevent homelessness.
- A need to ensure sufficient units are available and therefore a request for increase from 50 to 60 units with an additional 15 spaces in supported lodgings.
- The need to seek to obtain accommodation in a range of locations in the borough rather than in high concentrations in individual buildings and or neighbourhoods;
- The need to enable same day access to temporary accommodation where a young person asking for help can't return home
- Change from supported accommodation to accommodation only
- Removal of the current 'specialist accommodation criteria' for acceptance to particular services so that young people across the age range 16 to 25 have access to accommodation whether they are pregnant, have more than one child, or are single.
- To expand the successful supported lodging scheme which provides positive outputs for young people accommodated.

3.15 Based on the results of the consultation it is proposed to commission a new service to provide up to sixty (60) units of accommodation across the borough of Walsall for young people, 16 to 25 years of age facing homelessness.

3.16 Fundamental to the commissioning will be seeking provider(s) who will work flexibly with the council initially for 12 months, and then dependent upon their success in improving the lives and life chances of young people facing homelessness, and the changing needs of young people, for a future 2 periods of 12 months. For example, if demand for units during year 1 reduces (as all partners become more effective at preventing homelessness) in

subsequent years less units (perhaps 55 and then 50) might be commissioned.

- 3.17 The specification for the accommodation includes 10 units in a single location and 50 dispersed units. Low density dispersed accommodation will provide young homeless people with a broader choice of areas and avoids the potential stigmatisation associated with living in young people's accommodation. The furnished units being sought are either single bed flats or shared houses to a maximum size of 3 people in a single house and are reflective of the type of affordable accommodation accessed by most young people when they live independently for the first time.
- 3.18 Where circumstances permit it is expected that successful providers will be able to let a young person remain in the same property from temporary accommodation through to their permanent home (rather than having to experience the disruption of moving again including re-applying for relevant benefits etc).
- 3.19 The existing providers of supported accommodation have been issued contract extensions which take their service to the end of September 2014. Originally it was anticipated that the new service would be in place by October 2014.
- 3.20 Given the anticipated timescales for procuring the new service it is expected that an alternative arrangement will be required for a period of 3 to 4 months to enable young people to be accommodated prior to the new contract becoming fully operational. To provide for this, interim spot purchasing of accommodation will be undertaken.
- 3.21 Tenders are also being sought for an increase in supported lodgings to a total of 15 by the end of the first 12 month of contract. Supported lodgings are where host families or individuals are supported by an organisation to provide a home for young people to stay with them in a 'family' setting. The outcomes for young people have been shown to be significantly better in these circumstances than in other forms of temporary accommodation. This service is expected to cost less than £50,000 per annum and has been advertised in line with previous consent from Cabinet obtained in June 2013.

Accountable body for Homelessness Funding

- 3.22 Cabinet agreed in February 2012 to be the Accountable Body for an estimated £1.1 million of funding to be allocated from the Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG) for the West Midlands and Warwickshire local authority grouping to assist with the prevention of homelessness.
- 3.23 Subsequent to Cabinet agreement DCLG awarded a grant of £1.074 million. The funds have been managed in line with the Accountable Body Protocol by the Housing Service (formerly within the Regeneration Directorate and now in the Resources Directorate) where delegated authority for consideration and approval of these projects now rests. The Partnership authorities for this initiative are:

Birmingham
Dudley
Nuneaton and Bedworth
Sandwell
Stratford Upon Avon
Warwick

Coventry
North Warwickshire
Rugby
Solihull
Walsall
Wolverhampton

3.24 **Appendix 2** has a list of the projects that have been approved / proposed to date. The projects include so far:

- a) Schemes for Walsall and the wider region: £306,590
- b) Schemes for Walsall only: £28,600
- c) Schemes for councils other than Walsall: £117,000

4 Council Priorities

Communities and Neighbourhoods

- 4.1 Activities and interventions linked to preventing and tackling homelessness support Council priorities and contribute to the Council's shared vision for the Borough.

5 Risk Management

Young Persons Accommodation

- 5.1 The main risk is that insufficient interest is shown in the tender process for the accommodation service for young people and no providers are appointed. Prior to this report a tender based on the proposed specification was issued which over 25 organisations (local, regional and national) expressed interest in. Based on this it is expected that when the tender is re-issued there will remain significant interest in the opportunity and the council will be able to appoint appropriate providers of accommodation. If there is insufficient interest from providers to supply the preferred amount of 1 bedroom self-contained accommodation, the risk will be mitigated by procuring more larger accommodation suitable for young people to share.
- 5.2 An additional risk is possible lack of accommodation for young people between the period between the end of the existing contract and the new contract starting. This is being mitigated by interim spot purchasing of accommodation for this period. The housing support team has also identified a number of larger properties already contained within the Council's temporary housing stock that could be shared by young people should the need arise.

Accountable body for Homelessness Funding

- 5.3 The main risk is that the funder, DCLG, will seek to 'clawback' any funds that they consider have not been used in accordance with their criteria. This is being mitigated by:
 - a) ensuring all projects are in line with their criteria
 - b) keeping DCLG regularly updated on progress on activities being considered and approved and
 - c) auditing of the overall grant by the council's internal audit and adherence to the council's grant manual.

- 5.4 DCLG have been complementary about the work that the Partnership has been developing and delivering and there are no indications of any scheme being proposed that doesn't meet their criteria.

6 Financial Implications

Young Persons Accommodation

- 6.1 The council has an approved revenue allocation for young persons homeless prevention and accommodation. In line with Cabinet and Council's previous budget proposals this budget has been reduced by £200,000 to £517,000 per annum.
- 6.2 The cost impact of failed supported accommodation for young people can be significant for both a young person, the Council and related agencies. For example, the young person can develop:
- debts that they struggle to clear and result in greater financial or housing problems as they are unable to secure alternative tenancies;
 - issues that require costly intervention from youth justice and or substance misuse services and for those under 18 become 'children in need' with duty placed on the Council's children's services team to assist.
- 6.3 The tenders are proposed to have maximum sums available for services as follows;
- Young peoples accommodation (60 units) £251,000 per year
 - Supported lodgings (15 units) £50,000 per year.
- 6.4 The balance of funds (circa £216,000) is to be available for;
- interventions specific to the needs of each young person for example, where a young persons needs are unable to be met by standard forms of accommodation for example but not limited to work with those under 25 year olds subject to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA);
 - bespoke specialist family mediation services to help a young person remain or return home in a sustainable manner;
 - expansion of the Council's statutory homelessness prevention service.

Accountable body for Homelessness Funding

- 6.5 The Council is the Accountable Body and the grant allocation is on the Council's grant register. Figure 1 below shows a summary of the current funding position as at 30th June 2014:

Grant	£1,074,000
Expenditure to date	£45,044
Balance of commitments (i.e. on approved schemes)	<u>£426,481</u>
Balance to commit	<u>£602,475.</u>

- 6.6 There is no requirement for Walsall Council, or other council's to provide match funding for any of the projects under this initiative. The costs of administering the grant are also being funded directly from the grant allocation

and are not met by Walsall Council.

- 6.7 It is also noted that as well as awarding £170,940 commissioning of Midland Heart for the *No Second Night Out initiative*, Midland Heart has also secured an additional £170,940 to support this project from the homeless transition fund. This will be administered by Midland Heart however Walsall and neighbouring councils will benefit from this additional fund.
- 6.8 DCLG have confirmed their support for the schemes undertaken and proposed, and have supported the carry forward of un-spent budget from 2013/14 into 2014/15. New and additional projects will continue to be developed by the Partnership of councils for the remaining balance of the funding.

Department of Health capital grant opportunity

- 6.9 The Council's Grant Manual (Appendix E) requires that bids for funding over £100,001 are notified to cabinet. The council has been informed that the Department of Health (DoH) during summer / early autumn 2014 are proposing to invite bids towards a national £40 million fund for homelessness hostel refurbishment and shared accommodation for vulnerable young. It is anticipated that the timescales between announcing the funding criteria and deadline for application submissions will not permit a report being submitted back to cabinet before bids are due.

7 Legal Implications

Young Persons Accommodation

- 7.1 Existing providers have been given the appropriate notice of contract termination and are aware of the new proposed specification and will be able to bid for the services should they wish to.

Accountable body for Homelessness Funding

- 7.2 The Council is Accountable Body for the fund and a Collaboration Agreement signed in September 2012 by all 12 partner councils is in place for the consideration and delivery of the funding.

8 Property Implications

None.

9 Health and wellbeing implications

- 9.1 The work detailed in this report is in line with the Marmot Review 'Fair Society Healthy Lives' and as such should improve the health and well being of vulnerable households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness by reducing the incidence of homelessness and increasing stability of neighbourhoods and communities.
- 9.2 The recent move of funding for hostels improvements from the DCLG to the DoH from recognises that homelessness and housing are tightly bound to issues of healthy living, primary care and hospital admission.

10 Staffing implications

- 10.1 The proposed specification for young persons temporary accommodation is significantly different from the contract for supported housing that has been commissioned by the council and extended previously and will end on 30th September 2014.
- 10.2 It is for the successful bidder(s), if different from the existing providers, to agree their position with outgoing providers (if relevant) relating to the Transfer of Undertakings (TUPE) for staff. It is the position of the Council that TUPE will not apply, as the services sought under the proposed specification are significantly, and demonstrably, different from the original contractual services.
- 10.3 Staff resources, from the directorate, have been identified to support the evaluation criteria of the procurement process.

11. Equality Implications

An EQIA has been completed for both the Young Peoples Accommodation and for the Council's role as Accountable body for Homelessness Funding and no mitigating actions are required.

12. Consultation

- 12.1 As indicated in 3.2 to 3.13 detailed consultation has been undertaken with young people, providers and professionals on the future shape of help for young people faced with homelessness and this has shaped the specification for the new accommodation service and supported lodgings. This has included extending the period of consultation to 28 August 2014.
- 12.2 Officers from West Midlands and Warwickshire local authorities, and the chair of the West Midlands Regional Homeless Forum are consulted on any proposal for funding under the homelessness grant allocation.

Background papers

1. Marmot Review - 'Fair Society Healthy Lives', 2010

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R D B

Rory Borealis
Executive Director (Resources)
21 August 2014



Councillor D Coughlan
Cabinet Member for Social Care
21 August 2014

Appendix 1: **Background Information – What we know about youth homelessness**

Demand

During 2013 we looked at the demands of a selection of young people that came into the Council's First Stop Shop (FSS) in the Civic Centre asking for help to solve their housing problems.

When we looked into why these young people were coming for help we identified a system that often works poorly from a young person's point of view. In many cases we observed young people asking for our help that had 'been through the system' previously'/ asked and been given help before/ involved in multiple transactions with multiple agencies, generating high levels (54%) of **failure demand**.

Some young people ended up worse off as a result of our 'help' e.g. the supported housing scheme they were moved into to help prevent homelessness, evicted them and their future housing prospects were significantly reduced as a result.

When we 'switch off failure demand we can release this capacity to do things better.

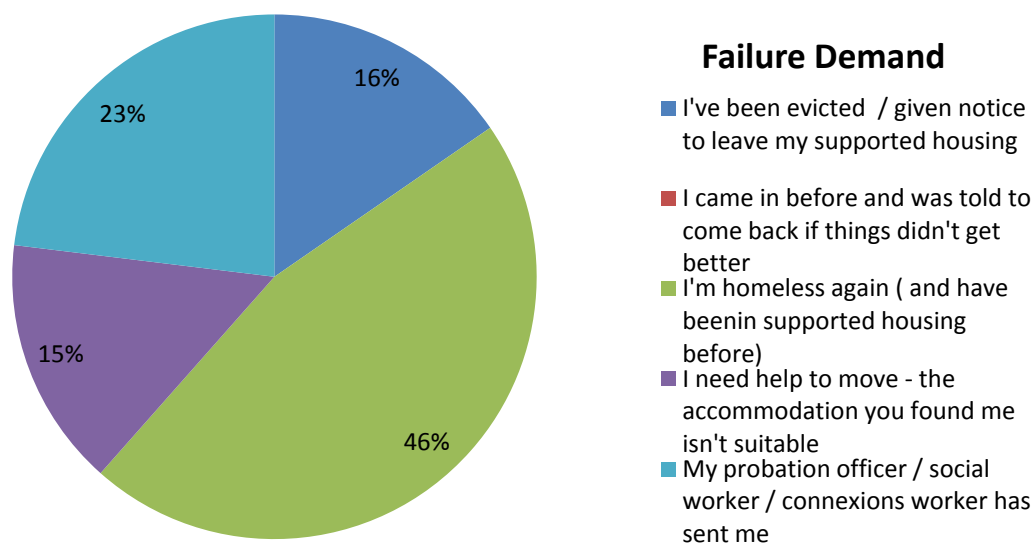
A key way to improve the service and 'switch off failure demand' is to identify predictable failure.

Terminology

Failure demand – *a failure of the system to do something or do something right for the customer e.g. I came in a couple of weeks ago...; I've been evicted from my supported housing; my probation officer sent me*

Value demand – *the demand we want, why we are here (from the customers point of view) e.g. need somewhere to live because it's not safe for me to go home; things are difficult at home and my mum wants me to leave; I'd like a place of my own*

Type and Frequency – Failure Demand (54% of all demand)



Our work showed that blockages in 'system' leading to failure and no positive outcome for young people.

These include with how some of our providers have worked with us and the young people;

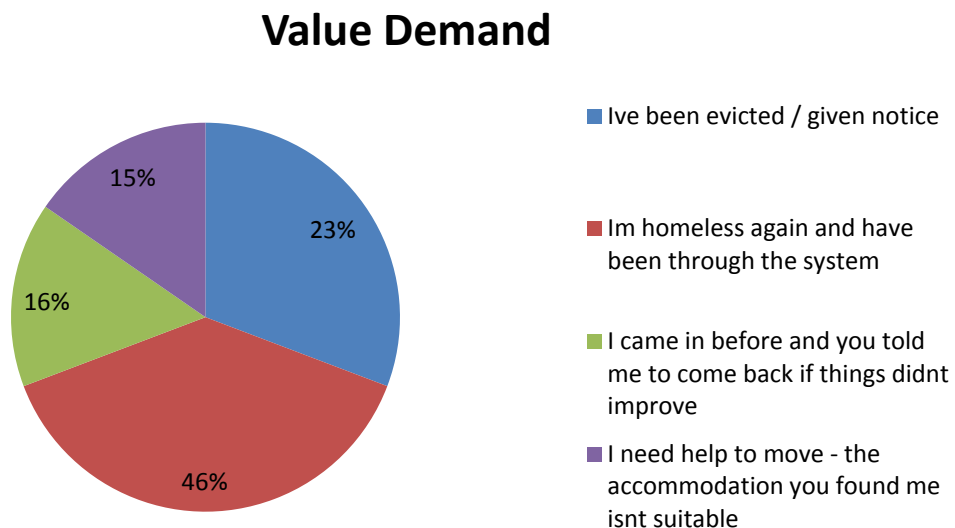
- The contractual relationship between the Council and supported housing providers sometimes gets in the way of us helping young people;
- A plethora of measures, returns and targets that supported housing providers have to do and meet as part of the historical SP funding regime are significant factors in inhibiting our ability to help young people
- The 'gateway' – intended as a single point of access and a means of better helping young people in need of help to get vacant supported housing units is anything but ! No value to young people – only providers who use it as a tool to exclude.
- A range of previous supported housing providers have become pre-occupied with the 'risk' and the 'complexity' of a young person's needs and the subjective assessments they make works to keep people out.
- The policies and procedures of providers and their information demands constrain delaying our ability to get young people housed.
- The 'provisioning' system of interviews operated by some housing providers prior to agreeing to house a young person is delaying the re-housing of some vulnerable young people and stopping the re-housing of others.

We also identified that some of the processes / systems that we operated created blockages;

- We had a pre-occupation with data entry / recording / checking - 'in case customer comes back in', 'for future reference';
- If young person does come back in, historical records frame the help we give going forward;
- Standardised services and processes – stop us from delivering customer shaped services that focus on what matters to young people;
- Young people asking for our help are known (often) to others e.g. children's services , probation , police, schools – well before their homelessness
- Different young people have different levels of need and the help they want isn't all the same. The help we give is determined by the priority (or non priority) or the young person.
- It is usually the most vulnerable and disadvantaged who leave the family home earliest and with no support or option to return home.

- Attempts at preventing homelessness (a phone call to parents / a home visit) on the day of crisis fail because we don't identify and try to help with the underlying cause of the family tension / breakdown

Type and frequency - Value Demand (46%)



What does the evidence tell us about interventions that work?

Youth homelessness is a complex issue encompassing health, education, offending, finance, relationships and families. Effectively dealing with homelessness requires a whole system, multi agency approach. In the current fiscal climate it also requires a fresh commitment to collaborative working and to doing things differently.

Our current 'deficit' approach to youth homelessness, framed around imminent or actual homelessness being the trigger to getting a response / help is focussed on the single issue of homelessness and solving the 'accommodation problem'.

It's creating lots of failure demand and not solving the underlying cause of much of the problem – family tension/ breakdown / dysfunction.

Trying to fix housing alone, at the point of crisis is futile - it will not maximise the opportunities to reduce the incidence of youth homelessness nor will it, in isolation, support successful transition to adulthood for most young people who have to leave their family home at an early age

If we want to lift vulnerable young and disadvantaged people out of the kinds of social exclusion associated with homelessness, avoiding a downward spiral into further difficulties, we need a positive transition pathway – one that starts by recognising young people at risk of homelessness and intervenes much earlier in the family setting to addresses the primary root cause of the failure demand –family relationships / family dysfunction.

It is usually the most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people who leave the family home earliest and with no support and option to return home. Local Authorities and

schools already know which young people are at risk of homelessness before they reach the age of 16.

It is possible to develop services and practices which invest in early intervention rather than reacting to crisis home

What we did in response to this.

We did some more detailed experimenting with some of our existing supported housing providers to see if we could address blockages and do things differently for more

Our experiments with housing providers have demonstrated that:

1. We can help young people more quickly to secure emergency accommodation without the need for:
 - a. detailed referrals,
 - b. risk assessments and
 - c. interviews

Young people have been successfully housed with limited and sometimes no upfront paperwork.

We have met with providers on the day of crisis, talked about the help the young person needs and agreed how to provide that help.

2. If when things “go wrong” e.g. “he’s not engaging” housing providers have pulled on Council colleagues for help. We have responded quickly and focussed on face to face resolution.

Young people ‘do’ and ‘will’ ‘mess up’ because they are young and that’s what some young people do. They need access to staff that can act as a ‘pseudo’ parent not a historic housing officer role and certainly not in an enforcement role.

Appendix 2: Initiatives supported under the Group Funding to Prevent Homelessness Budget.

Council supporting / bidding	Name of project	Value	Number of council areas benefitting
Bids supported by Walsall on behalf of the Group			
Walsall	Project administration and co-ordination work	£30,000	12
Walsall	Midland Heart <i>No Second Night Out</i> support for Rough Sleepers	£170,940	9
Walsall	West Midlands Private Rented Support (Localpad)	£46,150	8
Walsall	Innovation – ‘Offender in reach’ providing advice to offenders in prison on their future housing options	£4,500	12
Walsall	Shared Tenancies	10,000	4
Bids supported by others on behalf of Walsall and broader area			
Wolverhampton for Black Country	Support to single homeless EU nationals with no recourse to other public funds	£45,000	4
Bids supported by Walsall for Walsall only			
Walsall	Innovation bid – buy it, cook it, eat it	£3,600	1
Walsall	Former Rough Sleepers Resettlement service	£25,000	1
Bids supported by other councils for areas outside Walsall			
Solihull	Innovation scheme – Link for single homeless to a Credit Union	£5,000	1
Nuneaton & Bedworth	Bond scheme	£52,000	2
Stratford	Innovation – single homeless & welfare reform	£5,000	1
Birmingham	Birmingham Social Lettings – Options and assessment of scheme	£10,000	1
Stratford	Warwickshire Social Lettings	£10,000	1
Dudley & Sandwell	Innovation – Apprentice for local charity providing furniture and similar for single homeless people moving into own home	£5,000	2
Coventry	Private Rented Sector Early Prevention Project	£25,000	1
Coventry	Innovation - Pre court action to prevent evictions	£5,000	1