

Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Meeting Date: 25/3/10

Report No: DS. 17/10

Supplementary Statistics and Information

Homelessness

In order to give a contextual understanding of homelessness applications some national data (Communities and Local Government Statistical Report) and local data has been compared for the 3rd quarter of the financial year 09/10 covering the period 1/10/09 – 31/12/10.

Nationally 9,430 applicants were accepted as owed a main homelessness duty during this period. This is 22 per cent lower than during the same period in 2008. In Carlisle, 22 applicants were accepted as owed a main homelessness duty during this period. This is 18 per cent lower than the same period in 2008.

Out of the 22 acceptances 12 were aged between 16-24 (54%).

The Homelessness team made 91 decisions which can be broken down as follows;

Eligible, unintentionally homeless, priority need	22	24%
Eligible, homeless, priority need but intentional	4	5%
Eligible, homeless but not in priority need	27	29%
Eligible but not homeless	38	42%
Total	91	100%

In comparing this to the national data for the same period where 21,200 applications were made the decision percentages are as follows;

Decision	Carlisle	National
Eligible, unintentionally homeless, priority need	24%	44%
Eligible, homeless, priority need but intentional	5%	7%
Eligible, homeless but not in priority need	29%	18%
Eligible but not homeless	42%	30%
Total	100%	100%

The team also dealt with 175 cases of housing aid and advice and 31 cases where homelessness has been prevented.

Government policy on Homelessness has focused over recent years on developing the approaches towards resettling and re-integration as well as prevention. This includes emphasis on aid, advice and looking at different housing options for people as part of the process. As such, to view the number of acceptances reducing as a mark of reducing demand would be incorrect as the nature of demand needs to be looked at over a number of indicators impacting on homelessness.

In response to the recession and threats to home owners facing repossession the Government has launched the following initiatives last year;

- Repossessions Prevention fund
- Home-Owner Mortgage Support
- Mortgage rescue Scheme
- Enhancements to Support Mortgage Interest
- Court Desk Help

Some of the above has been through the benefits system and with mortgage companies direct. In Carlisle we are a 'fast track' authority under the Mortgage Rescue Scheme and work with CAB and Riverside Carlisle. An enhanced court desk service has been set up using the Law Centre and Shelter. These schemes are all aimed at preventing homelessness and can be time intensive. In terms of repossession of properties defaulting on mortgages the number of court orders awarded is an indicator of increasing demand. In a falling housing market lenders awarded possession orders are unlikely to act on these but as soon as the market will start to increase they are more likely to enact the orders. It is at this stage in the cycle that the number of homeless presentations will increase. In the years 05/06 and 07/08 to increase in court orders granted through the court in Carlisle was 39%.

As of 31/12/09 Carlisle City Council had 31 households in temporary accommodation. On a national basis London has the highest number of households in temporary accommodation, at 41,190 on 31/12/09, accounting for over three quarters of the England total. In terms of length of time spent in temporary accommodation of the 10,880 households who left temporary accommodation during the quarter 56% had been in that accommodation for less than 6 months while 20 had been in for 2 years or more. In Carlisle the lengths of time spent in temporary accommodation as of 31/12/10 was as follows;

	B&B	Hostel/Other
Under 1 week	3	0
1-6 weeks	7	4
6 weeks – 3 months	2	9
3-6 months	0	4

6 months – 1 year	0	1
1 year plus	0	1
Total	12	19

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)

Keeping older people independent at home for as long as possible is one of the key priorities for Cumbria. The growing older people population and people retiring into the area is placing more demand on services such as providing adaptations under Disabled Facilities Grants. Carlisle has seen the cost of providing these much needed services grow fourfold in the last five years. Carlisle has met this challenge and is actively working to improve the service. Cumbria was selected by Government as one of the four Pilot areas for testing ‘unringfencing’ of budgets and to take forward new ways of working as part of steps to modernise the way adaptations are provided. This has attracted additional funding of £227,000 into Cumbria to support innovation. Carlisle led a delegation in November to lobby Lord McKenzie, Minister with responsibility for DFGs, for increased funding and is due to meet Ministers again after Government’s allocations to authorities for 2010-11 are announced shortly. As part of Cumbria’s LAA, a Stretch Target was agreed, to measure the waiting time for delivering DFGs in Housing Services across the County. In 2006, it took on average 44 weeks to approve a DFG and this has now reduced in Carlisle to 9 weeks. A Coordinator was appointed in 2008, hosted by Carlisle, to drive through the changes needed to make the improvements in delivery. Cumbria is on track to achieve the Stretch Target at the end of March 2010, which will result in a Reward grant being paid to the County in 2010-11.

Health Pilot

As part of our proposals to CLG for work under the Disabled Facilities Grant ‘Unringfenced Pilot’, we are conducting a study to look at better ways of working with GPs and Health Professionals, and to target those at most risk of events like unscheduled hospital admissions. This project is being funded directly from additional monies we secured from CLG. We will be working closely with a Carlisle GP practice, using a predictive tool to identify individuals, who would be most helped by interventions such as an adaptation to their home. It is hoped that this study will demonstrate how housing interventions such as DFGs help keep people safe at home and as independent as possible. This project is hoping to demonstrate both locally and nationally how adapting someone’s home reduces the risks of unplanned hospital admissions and results in them being less likely to need residential care. We will look at how an adaptation affect them in terms of both their physical and mental well-being as well as whether an adaptation reduces the support they need both formally and informally. It is a key priority for Cumbria NHS and for Adult Social Care to keep people at home for as long as possible, so we will also try to demonstrate if the

adaptation makes people more independent. The Cumbria NHS 'Closer to Home' strategy will increasingly mean that individuals will need to be supported at home, as this is to become the main setting in which health care is to be provided. The study will help inform how best to achieve this and keep NHS services sustainable; given the growing older people population and the fact that this age group use the majority of resources in health and social care. This study coupled with work we are doing in partnership with colleagues in health and social care will help us all to take a more joined up approach to services for older people.

Empty Property

Additional statistics for the period 16th January 2010 to 16th March 2010.

Number of properties inspected externally	32
Number of first empty properties letters sent	17
Number of second empty property letters sent with questionnaire	15
Number of third empty property letters sent with questionnaire	1
Number of advisory visits undertaken	2
Number of grant inspections and schedules	7
Number of grant approvals	5
Number of properties bought back into use through advice and guidance	39
Number of properties currently subject to enforcement action (no change)	4
Number of properties which will be subject to further action in the next 2 months	25

So far we have been concentrating on inspecting empty properties in the City Centre and rural areas. The reason for this is there will be more demand in these areas and it will be more feasible to be brought back into use.