

Portfolio Holder Report

The portfolio holder will not make a decision on this item before 15 May 2018

Report of:	Portfolio Holder	Date of publication
Mark Broadhurst, Service Director Health and Wellbeing	Cllr Roger Berry, Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder	3 May 2018

Support Funding for George Williams House, Fleetwood

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek approval to contribute £25,000 per year for two years from the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant to maintain provision of George Williams House. The contribution would form part of the scheme's contract with Lancashire County Council.

2. Outcomes

- 2.1 To maintain the current provision of nine family units at George Williams House, Fleetwood.
- 2.2 To ensure two units of family accommodation are available exclusively for Wyre Council as interim/temporary accommodation.

3. Recommendation/s

- 3.1 That a contribution of £25,000 per year to George Williams House is agreed to maintain the provision of the current family units, and to ensure exclusive use of two units for Wyre Council. The contribution would form part of the scheme's contract with Lancashire County Council and would be paid to Lancashire County Council from the flexible homelessness support grant.

4. Background

- 4.1 George Williams House, Broomfield Road, Fleetwood is a housing scheme owned by the Regenda Group and currently leased to The Salvation Army. The scheme has been operating since 2004. The building is effectively split in two and provides six single units of accommodation for young people and nine family units of accommodation. The scheme is funded through the Supporting People (SP) budget at Lancashire County Council.

4.2 The scheme is an invaluable resource and provides temporary accommodation to a wide range of service users who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Wyre Council has established an excellent relationship with Salvation Army. In addition to the accommodation provision, George Williams House is regularly used by Wyre's Housing Options Team as a neutral venue to conduct homeless interviews with local service users who may not easily be able to attend the Civic Centre.

4.3 The Salvation Army are also currently running a tenancy training and accommodation finding service funded by Wyre Council, as well as providing casework support for the Syrian Resettlement Programme with both programmes operating out of George Williams House.

4.4 Whilst service users are staying at George Williams House the caseworkers ensure that adequate support is in place, including maximising benefits, registrations with GPs/dentists, identifying and arranging additional support needs (e.g. substance misuse services). The caseworker's role ultimately provides the skills necessary for service users to maintain their own tenancy. Following successful move on from the scheme, the caseworkers will also provide floating support to ensure further help is available if required.

4.5 Supporting families fleeing domestic violence has also become a significant part of the caseworker's role with the scheme regularly used to support victims of domestic abuse, as local women's refuge provision is very limited.

5. Key issues and proposals

5.1 Funding cuts to Lancashire County Council's Supporting People (SP) budget has led to a comprehensive review of current provision in preparation for the re-tendering of contracts. The review was carried out in conjunction with the Lancashire District Councils, and Wyre has lobbied successfully to retain the majority of our SP funded housing.

5.2 However, whilst the young persons provision is unaffected, the family units at George Williams House are at risk and the funding available through SP is not able to sustain the scheme. A staffing review has been conducted by The Salvation Army and adjustments to staffing has reduced the budget required but there remains a shortfall of £25,000.

5.3 Wyre heavily relies on the family units at George Williams House as it is the only supported housing scheme for families in the area. The Homelessness Act 2017 came into force on 1 April 2018 and placed additional duties on local authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness. The expectation is that more temporary accommodation will be needed for those people homeless or threatened with homelessness from April 2018.

5.4 Prior to George Williams House being built the council relied on bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation for families, the majority of which was provided out of area. Without George Williams House it is easily conceivable that B&B costs could once again escalate. The original 2018/19 budget stands at £6,710.

6. Delegated functions

- 6.1 The matters referred to in this report are considered under the following executive function delegated to the Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder (as set out in Part 3 of the council's constitution): "To consider matters relating to homeless people and vulnerable people in the Borough."

Financial and legal implications	
Finance	Wyre have been notified of additional funding to support councils in readiness for the introduction of the Homelessness Act 2017. This flexible homelessness support grant has been awarded for 2017/18 (£94,615), 2018/19 (£105,331) and 2019/20 (£145,233). Utilising some of this support grant would ensure continued supported housing provision in Wyre for family units in particular and reduce the potential for increased B&B costs.
Legal	The availability of the supported housing scheme assists with the Council's legal duties under homelessness legislation, including the additional relief duties required under the Homelessness Act 2017.

Other risks/implications: checklist

If there are significant implications arising from this report on any issues marked with a ✓ below, the report author will have consulted with the appropriate specialist officers on those implications and addressed them in the body of the report. There are no significant implications arising directly from this report, for those issues marked with a x.

risks/implications	✓ / x
community safety	✓
equality and diversity	x
sustainability	x
health and safety	x

risks/implications	✓ / x
asset management	x
climate change	x
data protection	x

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List of background papers:		
name of document	date	where available for inspection
N/A		