



Portfolio Holder Report

The portfolio holder will make a decision on this item after seven days have elapsed (including the date of publication).

Report of:	Portfolio Holder	Date of publication
Marianne Hesketh, Corporate Director Communities	Councillor Roger Berry, Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder	12 March 2020

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

- 3.1 That a contribution of £25,000 in 2020/21 and 2021/22 to George Williams House is agreed to maintain the provision of the current nine family units and to ensure exclusive use of two of these 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 the 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, and following successful move on from the scheme the caseworkers also provide floating support to ensure necessary ongoing support needs are met.
- 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 limited.

5. Key issues and proposals

- 5.1** Lancashire County Council's SP budget was reviewed in 2017 and this led to a reduction in the funding of George Williams House. A staffing review was conducted by the Salvation Army and adjustments made but there remained a shortfall of £25,000 per year.
- 5.2** A report was approved in April 2018 to agree to contribute £25,000 per year for two years using funding from the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant. This two year period is now coming to an end and the funding position has not changed and there remains a shortfall of £25,000 per year.
- 5.3** A further staffing review has been undertaken by The Salvation Army but it is felt that it would not be possible to operate the scheme safely if any additional staffing cuts had to be made.
- 5.4** 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 was introduced on 1 April 2018 and placed additional duties on local authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness. This has resulted in further demand for suitable temporary accommodation for those people homeless/threatened with homelessness and there is often a significant waiting list to place families in George Williams House to ensure they receive appropriate support.

5.5 Over the past two years there have been 31 families placed in George Williams House with 22 families moving on to sustain secure tenancies. It is clear from presentations that many of these families who were homeless/at risk of homelessness have a range of complex needs. These have included significant rent arrears, debts, offending behaviours, domestic violence, social care involvement, teenage parents, ASB, young people at risk, mental health, substance misuse, learning difficulties, self-harm/suicide attempts and children not attending school.

5.6 The team at George Williams House have evidenced their ability to work with the families to provide tenancy training, money management skills, life skills, shopping and cooking on a budget, anger management, gambling support, confidence and self-esteem building, benefits advice, parenting support and employment guidance. Without the support provided by the team at George Williams House it is quite likely that many of these families would not have been able to sustain tenancies.

6. Delegated functions

6.1 The matters referred to in this report are considered under the following executive function delegated to the Neighborhood 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	Flexible Homelessness Support Grant of £145,233 was awarded for 2019/20 and £145,234 for 2020/21. There remains unallocated funding from these awards which can be used to meet the £50,000 contribution in total. 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 Bed and Breakfast 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
ICT	x
data protection	x

Processing Personal Data

In addition to considering data protection along with the other risks/ implications, the report author will need to decide if a 'privacy impact assessment (PIA)' is also required. If the decision(s) recommended in this report will result in the collection and processing of personal data for the first time (i.e. purchase of a new system, a new working arrangement with a third party) a PIA will need to have been completed and signed off by Data Protection Officer before the decision is taken in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

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

Dems/ph/ne/20/support funding GWH000320