
Project title: Project Margin
Strategy area: Social

1. The Proposal

In the 2004/05 Annual Plan, Council agreed to funding of \$130,000 each year for two years to Downtown Community Ministry (DCM) for a pilot programme which would be reviewed to determine its future. The programme – Project Margin – allowed for the employment of two full time staff to establish and maintain contact with the target group, to facilitate access to housing and other critical services and to develop further services to reduce homelessness in the city.

Following 16 months of operation, Project Margin has been reviewed. That review concluded the pilot has been successful in providing concrete assistance to a significant number of people (at least 150), contributing to greater coordination and to capacity building within the city. There is increased commitment from other agencies in supporting a group of people with complex needs who are “hard to house”.

Initially it was anticipated that the estimated 20-30 homeless in Wellington City would be housed within 2 years. Project Margin has highlighted the scale of the issue which is broader than that initially anticipated and demonstrated the need for an ongoing programme dealing with the challenges associated with homeless people. Three yearly reviews will ensure that the aims and objectives of the Project continue to reflect any changes in the sector.

It is proposed to continue funding DCM at a level of \$130,000 per annum for ten years (with three yearly reviews) to allow for that work to continue albeit with amended aims and objectives. It is also proposed to cease funding a salary grant to DCM (in 2005/06 that grant was \$14,508). In addition the Council has awarded grant funding to DCM’s Street People Project (in the last three years those grants have been for between \$5,000 and \$10,000). It is recommended that unless there are special circumstances, further grants are not paid to that Project, but rather greater advocacy work is done in collaboration with DCM to secure funding through the Ministry of Social Development.

Although, on the face of it, the Council seems to be funding Project Margin at the same level as in the past, it is anticipated that the Grants Pool will benefit by about \$25,000 by reducing grants funding to DCM. In addition the general level of services available to the target group (chronic street drinkers and those with complex needs that mean they are “hard to house”) is significantly higher than the service level even a year ago. For example CCDHB is:

- funding a nurse attached to a health centre to do outreach work with the homeless
- funding a new inner city youth health service which provides services to young people who are sleeping rough.

- working collaboratively with other DHBs to develop a range of regional drug and alcohol addiction services and in Wellington city this will result in a five bed time limited residential service, and intensive evening programme and an alcohol and drugs community support worker.

The South East and City PHO has funded a weekly evening clinic at the Soup Kitchen.

It had been envisaged that Project Margin would deliver outreach work and although some outreach work is carried out, the major focus of Project Margin has been in securing housing and ensuring its sustainability. This is highly challenging work and there has been a high level of success in its delivery. For example in its first year of operation Project Margin secured accommodation for 77 people, far exceeding expectations given the client group is by definition hard to house. A further 76 people were assisted with serious accommodation related issues. The work of Project Margin has undoubtedly contributed to the positive changes in the sector in relation to collaboration, commitment and capacity.

2. Strategic Fit

This project supports achievement of the Council’s strategic priority of building community capacity and capability. It is also aligned with draft outcomes associated with health, safety, inclusive and more liveable. Project Margin has a significant impact on the quality of life of the target group, their access to services, their health and wellbeing.

3. Relationship to Existing Activities

This project supports Council’s effective management of its social housing portfolio and demonstrates Council’s commitment to community wellbeing.

4. Proposal Costs

<i>Outline project costs per year</i>												
Project Component	Operating expenses \$000											
	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
<i>Project Margin</i>	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	130
<i>Other grants</i>	29	17.5	0	0	0							
<i>Total</i>			130	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	130

5. Project Outline

Council’s Homelessness Strategy identifies the Council’s role is to:

1. Contribute to the provision of housing for people in need
2. Advocate for and facilitate the provision of services to vulnerable people
3. Ensure the safety of both homeless people and other member of the public
4. Protect the environment

In support of that role, Project Margin was established to:

5. develop and maintain relationships with the homeless and facilitate access to existing services especially housing, health and social support
6. gather information and data on trends and availability of services; and
7. identify gaps and advocate for improved services where gaps exist.

Some 60 – 70% of the work of Project Margin has been directly related to provision of accommodation and support to tenants so that the housing solution is sustainable.

Project Margin carried out extensive interviews with 30 homeless people and those interviews were a key resource for a major study by the Wellington School of Medicine and Health Sciences. That study led to a report – Slipping Through the Cracks, A study of Homelessness in Wellington - which has been valuable for developing approaches for addressing the needs of homeless people.

Since its establishment there have been significant changes in inter-agency relationships including those with the Council (which have improved considerably). There is increased capacity within the sector. There seems to be greater commitment from central government agencies to the plight of the target group. In addition to the example given above of CCDHB involvement, Regional Public Health are leading an inter-agency group to develop a preventative strategy and have established working groups to address issues associated with recently released prisoners and to explore options for a wet centre. Gaps in service provision continue to be identified and it is a lengthy process to advocate or facilitate service provision to meet the gaps.

It is proposed to review Project Margin on a three yearly basis with ongoing monitoring and accountability arrangements.

5.1 2006/07 Actions

Project Margin's brief needs to be adapted to respond to the changes in the sector and the reality of its work in the past 18 months. That adapted brief will continue to focus on supporting housing and contribution to inter-agency coordination and collaboration, reflecting DCM's particular expertise, skills and experience in this challenging area. Specific actions and performance measures will be developed in collaboration with DCM.

6. Conclusion

Challenges continue to emerge in addressing the needs of a group of people who are traditionally hard to house and have multiple and complex needs often associated with drugs and alcohol. To date the Council has taken a lead role in addressing this issue. The pilot programme has focussed on the development of a more integrated response to the needs of this group and the identification of service gaps. This work will inform the development of future strategies and involvement of additional funding partners. It is envisaged that Council will continue to play a lead role.