
REPORT 3
(1215/52/IM)

REVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY: SCOPING PAPER

1. Purpose of Report

This report outlines the current status of homelessness in the City and seeks the Committee's support for an action-orientated review of the Homelessness Strategy.

2. Executive Summary

A combination of a challenging economic climate, withdrawal of central government support for a number of activities, the imminent closure of some community-based support organisations, and the emergence of some innovative local approaches means it is timely for the Council to review its Homelessness Strategy. Given that there is a wide consensus about the strategic drivers for the review, it is proposed the Council use the review of the strategy as an implementation initiative in its own right so that the Council take the opportunity to engage with key stakeholders to develop a coordinated and collaborative approach to ending homelessness in Wellington. In practice, this means collapsing the process of seeking input on a draft strategy then releasing it for comment into a single step meaning the Council will receive a final strategy for adoption coupled with a stakeholder accord, possibly in the shape of a draft memorandum of understanding.

3. Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Strategy and Policy Committee:

- 1. Receive the information.*
- 2. Notes that the addressing homelessness in Wellington is becoming increasingly challenging and that there is a need for the Council to facilitate a co-ordinated response to ending homelessness in the City.*
- 3. Agree the review of the Homelessness Strategy be action-orientated with the new strategy emerging from a day-long practitioner lock-in with all relevant stakeholders.*

4. *That officers work with Social Portfolio Leader and the Community Engagement Portfolio Leader on an engagement plan for the practitioner lock-in.*

4. Background

The Council's Homelessness Strategy was adopted in August 2004. It has since become a key component of the Social and Recreation Strategy working towards the aims of the long term plan (more liveable, more inclusive, more actively engaged, better connected, healthier, safer)

The Homelessness Strategy has been used across Council (City Housing, City Safety and City Communities) to address the needs of the homeless and those threatened with homelessness. Since 2004 the strategy has led to the strengthening of the partnership between Council and the Downtown Community Ministry as well as a number of other organisations working with Wellington's homeless population.

The current strategy was groundbreaking, being the first strategy at a local authority level to address homelessness. It became the template for other councils to prepare their own strategies but over time, the strategic approach to homelessness has been refined and improved – the Auckland strategy being the most recent and innovative approach. Officers carried out a stock take of the current agencies working with Wellington's homeless population over the last six months. This process highlighted the need to review the current strategy and develop a joint response to end homelessness.

5. Discussion

5.1 Current Environment/Critical Issues

A challenging economic climate coupled with central government funding cuts is placing increased pressure on vulnerable residents' ability to secure and sustain appropriate and affordable accommodation. This includes:

- Housing New Zealand's removal of its tenancy and community support services and transfer of this responsibility to MSD.
- Capital and Coast District Health Board (CCDHB) moving away from the provision of supported accommodation for mental health service users to supported landlord schemes and independent living arrangements (increasing demand for single unit accommodation)
- The CCDHB is reviewing its funding and is stepping aside from funding non-core community activities including outreach services for alcohol and drug addiction, mental health initiatives, and "coal face" delivery of primary health initiatives.
- MSD is changing the way it funds and will review contracts with social service agencies - this work has yet to be completed in Wellington and at

the moment the Community Response Fund fills some of the gaps but future support for social service agencies is not guaranteed

- Department of Corrections new reintegration teams move towards intensive pre-release work with prisoners to secure accommodation (increasing demand for single unit accommodation)
- The establishment of the Special Circumstances Court to reduce the reappearance of low level offenders who are homeless is likely to increase the numbers seeking appropriate accommodation
- An increase in those vulnerable to homelessness as demonstrated by higher levels of reliance on budgeting services / food banks etc.
- The upgrade programme for City Housing stock has reduced the availability of properties available for waiting list allocations.
- The reduced 'churn' in available City Housing tenancies diminishes opportunities to address homelessness.
- High costs in Wellington make it financially difficult for single beneficiaries to pay market level rents after the accommodation supplement and other benefits have been paid.
- Maori are overrepresented in the homeless population and other areas that make people vulnerable to homelessness (Criminal Justice System, Mental Health and Addictions)
- The lack of affordable accommodation options resulting in people spending longer periods in temporary accommodation (night shelter, boarding houses, sleeping rough etc)
- Increasing frustration from support providers about the inability to move people into stable accommodation (Women's Refuge, DCM, WellHealth, Inner City Project etc)
- The reduction in the number of boarding houses that will accept beneficiaries in addition to the imminent closure of Riddiford House which has been used as boarding house for a number of vulnerable and low income residents.

Other factors to consider:

- The Social Housing Unit has been tasked to develop the third sector to increase the numbers of affordable accommodation options in New Zealand.
- Productivity Commission's report into Housing Affordability has recommended increasing the Social Housing Fund to better meet the needs of future social housing provision and the integration of social housing and social services (the opposite direction taken by HNZC).
- The opportunities presented by any moves to establish a regional approach to the provision of social housing in Wellington.
- Accommodation supplement payments have increased from \$691 million in 1994 to \$1.2 billion in 2011. In addition, applications for Temporary Additional Support have increased to \$182 million in 2009 with 50% being used to pay for accommodation.
- Wellington City Council and NGO's providing support that is best provided by Health Boards and MSD is unsustainable.

- Continuing media and public interest in homeless service provision following Ben Hana's death and the Occupy group.

5.2 Key Players

The Council has played an active role in facilitating the response to homelessness since 2004. These responses include initiatives such as Project Margin, Trawl and the proposed Wet Home.

Currently there is a core group of agencies addressing homelessness that have developed collaborative working practises in an attempt to achieve better outcome for their clients. The group includes DCM, Te Aro Health, Night Shelter and the Soup Kitchen. While the group has had some success working collaboratively, such as a joint funding application for an outreach worker at the Night Shelter, there remain a number of obstacles to overcome. These include information sharing, funding, and differing views on best practise.

The Council has informal relationships with government departments that have an impact on the homeless or those threatened with homelessness. These departments include WINZ, Dept of Corrections, Capital and Coast District Health, Housing New Zealand, and MSD. In order for the City to have a long term impact on homelessness these departments should be engaged at a senior level so that a shared strategic response is agreed backed by an ongoing commitment to integrated responses.

During the stocktake carried out by officers a key message was that the city needed a clear strategic direction rather than the current approach that is shaped by the passion and energy of a small number of individuals. A summary of the stocktake can be found in Appendix C. The views of the key players are that Council should facilitate the development of a joint response to homelessness. Through the adoption of a shared strategic direction there will be the opportunity to strengthen existing and develop new partnerships with organisation such as Inner City Project, Newtown Union Health, Wellington City Mission, St Vincent De Pauls, Presbyterian Support, Wesley Community Action and Salvation Army.

The Council funds a number of organisations working with the city's homeless population or those threatened with homelessness. Through the development of a new Homelessness Strategy, the Council can use the grants process to encourage the development of best practice amongst its key community partners.

5.3 Reviews of homelessness and stakeholder perspectives

There have been three reviews of homelessness in Wellington in the last seven years – Slipping Through the Cracks in 2005, Exploring the Establishment of a Housing Facilitation Service in Wellington in 2009 and Homelessness: A Snap Shot in May 2010. Their conclusions were remarkably similar:

- The Council was best placed to provide a strategic leadership role on homelessness;
- The need for reliable data;
- The impact of allocations to City Housing properties on homelessness;
- The need for a coordinated service system that moves people out of homelessness and addresses their support needs; and
- A review of the Homelessness Strategy to include key players including CCDHB, Corrections, HNZC, Downtown Community Ministry, and MSD.

These sentiments were echoed in officers' discussions with stakeholders in the preparation of this report. There is a strong appetite for greater coordination and collaboration in addressing homelessness. The Council was seen as being best placed to bring stakeholders together to develop shared understanding of the issues and agreement on best practise for Wellington.

5.4 Drivers of Homeless Strategy review

Ending homelessness would be a significant step in contributing to the people-centred city and dynamic central city outcomes of the *Towards Wellington 2040: Smart Capital* strategy. A review of the current strategy's aims and outcomes and summary of future opportunities can be found in Appendix B.

A collaborative and cooperative partnership between central government, local government, and NGO's is recognised best practise in the prevention and reduction of homelessness. Through the adoption of a shared homeless strategy each party will become accountable for their roles and responsibilities. The aims of the strategy should therefore include:

- A whole of city approach to ending homelessness in Wellington.
- The response to homelessness is supported by reliable data.
- The entry points to homelessness are closed.
- A focus on building capacity and resilience in individuals.
- Service provision is flexible and meets the needs of the client (need to break down funding silos)
- Service provision is outcome-focused.
- Appropriate levels of support are provided and funded for the individual's time of need.
- Agreed information sharing between organisations.
- Development of joint assessment process's and appropriate training so that staff can complete these to an agreed standard.
- Investigation of the feasibility of a central application and allocation service for all affordable accommodation options in the City.

5.5 Action-orientated review

The strategic drivers in the current Homelessness Strategy are still relevant. For this reason, it is proposed that the review be action-orientated rather than first principles-orientated. In practice, this means collapsing the process of seeking

input on a draft strategy then releasing it for comment into a single step meaning the Council will receive a final strategy for adoption coupled with a stakeholder accord, possibly in the shape of a draft memorandum of understanding.

This approach also picks up on the feedback we've received from key stakeholders who are looking to the Council to lead a process to coordinate support for homeless people. It is recommended that the review be centred around a day-long practitioner lock-in where key stakeholders work together with the goal of leaving the lock-in with agreed commitments on working together to address homelessness in the city.

For the lock-in technique to work, participants need to have the ability to contribute to establishing best practice. It means more work upfront to prepare participants for the lock-in but the payback is the rapid transition from identifying agreed strategic outcomes to building a coalition of stakeholders committed to addressing homelessness in Wellington in a coordinated and systemic manner.

A similar approach was successfully deployed in Auckland which led to a Memorandum of Understanding being developed between a host of government agencies and community organisations for ending rough sleeping. Given that Wellington City has been a leader in addressing homelessness for many years, the lock-in technique is expected to generate similarly tangible outputs. The output from the lock-in would then be brought back to the Council for ratification as the new Homelessness Strategy.

Moreover, all would not be lost in the unlikely event a practitioner lock-in is unsuccessful. It would be a signal for the Council to revisit the underpinning assumptions in the current strategy about the willingness of stakeholders to collaborate. The review would then be about establishing the building blocks for a coordinated response to homelessness.

5.5.1 Establishing what the Council could bring to a practitioner lock-in

While the Council's primary role is as a strategic leader, it also undertakes operational activities that contribute to addressing homelessness in the City. As such, the Council would be both the host and a participant at a practitioner lock-in and these two roles would need to be separated for the lock-in to be successful. The following are examples of undertakings the Council may be asked to consider emerging from the lock-in as a participant:

- Ongoing stakeholder co-ordination:
 - Strategic direction
 - Emerging social housing initiatives with community sector
 - Operational working groups
- Review of homeless data collection and information sharing
- Support for a Friendly landlords Scheme

- Renewed commitment to the City Housing allocations policy.

5.6 Consultation and Engagement

Twenty organisations were visited during the stock take carried out by officers over the last six months. The visits were supplemented by two brainstorming sessions focusing on the key homeless services provided in the City. The brainstorming sessions included input from people who were homeless or had experienced homelessness.

An engagement plan is pivotal to the success of the practitioner lock-in. It is recommended that officers work with the Social Portfolio Leader and the Community Engagement Portfolio Leader on an engagement plan that ensures the right stakeholders are at the lock-in and that they are well-equipped to participate purposively towards achieving a coordinated response to ending homelessness in the city.

5.7 Financial Considerations

There are no immediate financial implications emerging from this report.

5.8 Climate Change Impacts and Considerations

There are no direct climate change impacts.

5.9 Long-Term Plan Considerations

There are no immediate implications for the draft long term plan. The successful implementation of the Homelessness Strategy rests on the extent to which key stakeholders provide services to homeless people in a coordinated manner. The Council can reprioritise resources in the current homelessness programme and the grants pool to support these endeavours and the broader objectives of the reviewed strategy.

6. Conclusion

A combination of a challenging economic climate, withdrawal of central government support, the imminent closure of some community-based support organisations, and the emergence of some innovative local approaches means it is timely for the Council to review its Homelessness Strategy. It is recommended that Council use the review of the strategy as an implementation initiative in its own right to engage with key stakeholders to develop a coordinated and collaborative approach to ending homelessness in Wellington.

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Supporting Information

1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome

*The review of the Homelessness Strategy contributes to the people-centred city and dynamic central city outcomes of the *Towards Wellington 2040: Smart Capital* strategy*

2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact

There are no immediate implications for the draft long-term plan.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

There are no Treaty of Waitangi implications emerging from this report.

4) Decision-Making

This is not a significant decision.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

There has been a significant amount of stakeholder engagement that has contributed to the preparation of the report.

b) Consultation with Maori

There has been no consultation with Maori in preparing this report.

6) Legal Implications

There are no legal implications emerging from this report.

7) Consistency with existing policy

The review of the 2004 Homelessness Strategy will ensure the Council's approach to homelessness aligns with its new strategic direction.

APPENDIX A

Appendix A – Grants funding during 2011 from the Social and Accommodation pools.

Organisations	Project Description	Amount
Aspire (Courtney's)	Accommodation assistance	\$9,800
Catacombs	Accommodation assistance	\$6,270
	3 year service contract	\$17,000
DCM	Project Margin	\$130,000
	Night Shelter outreach program	\$18,000
Salvation Army	Transitional youth housing	\$22,000
Suzanne Aubert Compassion Centre	Community preparedness project	\$2,386
	Story telling workshop	\$3,000
	Contribution to assistant managers and volunteer coordinators salaries	\$10,000
Te Whare Rokiropi	Contribution to social workers salary	\$20,000
Wellington City Mission	Mayoral relief fund	\$20,000
	3 year service contract	\$12,000
	Mission for Youth	\$7,500
	Transition to Work	\$5,000
Wellington Night Shelter	3 year service contract	\$35,000
Wellington Women's Refuge	3 year service contract	\$20,000
	Accommodation assistance	\$10,000
Wellington Women's Night Shelter Trust	Scoping project	\$9,800
	Total	\$358,000

Organisations that have been previously funded include:

Operation Restore Newtown
 Te Aro Health Centre
 Wellington Peoples Centre
 Wellington Prisoners Aid and Rehabilitation Society

APPENDIX B

Appendix B - Keys aims of the 2004 strategy, what has been achieved and opportunities for the future.

Aims of 2004 Strategy	Outcomes	Opportunities for 2012
Facilitating the provision of services including exploring the options for an outreach worker	<p>Range of services supported by WCC via grants and officer time.</p> <p>WCC grants for the period 2011-12 with a focus on homeless = \$348,000</p> <p>Range of services supported but a lack of coordination between these services.</p> <p>Project Margin supplemented by a range of services provided by DCM (advocacy, budgeting, food bank).</p> <p>Increased collaborative work in the sector (outreach services at Nightshelter, Compassion House, Soup Kitchen etc) but a need for further coordination and information sharing</p>	<p>Current social service mapping project will allow Council to identify gaps in service provision and direct funding to organisation that can help achieve the goals of the homeless strategy</p> <p>Ongoing advocacy role for Council to influence appropriate provision of services from government departments (CCDHB, Correction, MSD)</p> <p>Review of Project Margin and development of the partnership between DCM and WCC</p> <p>Development / expansion of the core parties to achieve the aims of the new homeless strategy.</p>
Continuing its role as a key housing provider	<p>Commitment to social housing for the next 20 years</p> <p>Upgrade to housing stock</p> <p>Introduction of Community Action project / Tenancy Sustainment Officer</p> <p>Partnerships to provide a range of housing options (Easy Access Housing / Mahora House etc)</p>	<p>Support the development of third sector housing.</p> <p>Support initiatives that increase the supply of affordable accommodation options.</p> <p>Ongoing development of relationships with support providers</p>
Strengthening partnerships and supporting community providers – enhancing coordination	<p>Informal relationships developed with government agencies</p> <p>Grants to organisations working with vulnerable residents</p> <p>Introduction of joint agency meetings re homeless clients (TRAWL, DCM, Te Aro, Nightshelter etc)</p>	<p>Development of MOU's</p> <p>Review of existing contracts to assess if they meet the objectives of the new strategy</p> <p>Development of a single point of entry to access services (joint assessment / application process)</p> <p>Development of information sharing / data collection system</p>
Advocacy, taking account of service provision gaps	Grants to advocacy providers	To review the current provision to assess if need is being met (in light of possible funding cut to Courtney's)

APPENDIX C

Appendix C - Homelessness Brain Storming Session November 2011

Participants were asked to spend up to 5 minutes writing down what positive changes they would make to improve homeless service provision in the City.

Attendees: 2 service users, 2 x DCM street workers, 2 x Te Aro Health street workers, St Vincent de Pauls Social Worker, Night Shelter Manager, Manager Suzanne Aubert Compassion Centre, WCC Community Resilience Adviser

Service Users Comments	General Comments
Need to move away from charity model, if you provide things for free it allows people to feed their addictions	Shared information – Solid data Housing allocation quota
Longer opening hours at Night Shelter	Shared goals and outcomes across the sector
Cannot afford descent shoes but spend all day walking this causes foot problems	Break down previous conflicts in the sector
What about the people with health problems that have to spend all day outside from 7.30am	Recording system of info sharing a must between all services working around homelessness
No violence drink or drugs at Night Shelter, clear rules when this is broken	Who else can help e.g. development of social housing
Need support when permanent housing is found	Joint advocacy
Need to link to activities when living in temporary and permanent accommodation, training, work, community activities	Interagency training
Think Homeless info card is a great idea	Friendly Landlords scheme x 2
Would sign agreement that info can be shared between agreed agencies	Day centres, tighten up work with the homeless folk
People to unfit / badly behaved should not be allowed into the Night Shelter.....dangerous for the other residents	Clear defined stage progression
Night Shelter stay should be no more than 6 months, if they refuse to engage they should move on	One stop shop well co-ordinated
1:1 Counselling should be provided at the Night Shelter	Strengthen links / communication that feed into development of extra services support
Need for Cultural services to homeless people	Open access to predetermined accommodation / specialist accommodation
Health care at the Night Shelter a great service, would not access otherwise due to cost / wait for appointments	Coordination / awareness of other regions
Want their views to be heard	Prevent competition / defensiveness between agencies
	Collaboration between landlords WCC, HNZA, YWCA etc
	Better links, communication at client level
	A clear vision

APPENDIX C

Street Response (to homeless person on the street)	Night Shelter
Homeless information card / map	No kick out time
Better information from Walkwise	More trained workers available to Night Shelter clients
Closer Community mental health liaison	1 st night no questions 2 nd night needs to engage with an agency
Continue to improve Walkwise DCM communication	In house one stop shop
One stop shop	Increased opening hours 6 comments
Networked with agencies service providers	Case coordination – planned move on
Shared inter-agency client information system	More support advocacy for users
Risk assessments	Services for women
Outreach from mental health / AOD workers	Emergency housing for women
Better connections to services + follow through	Co-work wit CADS, TACT etc at Night Shelter
Street based outreach early and late shifts	Employment / training advocates on site
Collaboration between DCM, TAHC, NUHS, ICP etc	Planned movement out
Wet Hostel	Safe culture, no drinking / drugs
Excellent communication	All rooms no dormitory
Clarity between service providers	Social Worker based at Night Shelter for 10+ hours per week
Better social work engagement	Support workers employed to work from Night Shelter
Sharing of information	
Night time engagement	
Better information provided to people on the street	
Outreach service beyond office hours not just central City	

APPENDIX C

Soup Kitchen	DCM
<p>Increased opportunity to engage with agencies</p> <p>Café by day run by service users</p> <p>Used as a hub for training activities</p> <p>Training, skills workshops</p> <p>Community open during the day</p> <p>Literacy classes</p> <p>Link users to agencies</p> <p>Track users</p> <p>Keep Soup Kitchen a safe place</p> <p>Clients names on database</p> <p>Co-work with CADS, TACT etc</p> <p>Daytime activities</p> <p>More client identification processes</p> <p>Safe culture</p> <p>Access to services</p> <p>Better understanding of guests needs and movement on</p> <p>1st point of contact for those off the streets brought in by street outreach response</p>	<p>One stop shop within Night Shelter</p> <p>More natural daylight?</p> <p>Specialised outreach mental health, AOD</p> <p>Proactive research vs actions</p> <p>Fulltime CADS worker</p> <p>Improve ability to refer onto other agencies for home support- care coordination etc</p> <p>One stop shop including medical and dentist</p> <p>More people at Ukes ;0)</p> <p>Stronger links with Newtown agencies</p> <p>Role of TM's once someone is housed</p> <p>Bigger team for tenancy sustainment – differing from outreach</p> <p>Development of relationships with other agencies in the City</p> <p>Use of the whole Home of Compassion building</p> <p>Working outside office hours</p> <p>Info sharing / collaborative work</p> <p>Defining pathways in conjunction with Te Aro Health, Soup Kitchen, Night Shelter etc</p> <p>Client safety enhancements</p> <p>Ability to proactively support tenancies / overstretched at present</p> <p>Increased staff to provide tenancy support</p>

APPENDIX C

Te Aro Health	WCC
Links to other areas of the City NUHS etc	Housing – leadership in developing / expanding accessibility
Domestic violence screening	End homelessness by?
Staff vaccinations funded by Te Aro	Coordinated vision
Staff timeliness	Two way feedback in information gathering
Mobile health clinics	Councillor by in
Providing increased services at One Stop Shop	Relevant homeless strategy shared across Council and the City (key players need to be involved CCDHB, Correction etc)
More staff for coverage when sick on leave	Funded outreach workers
Less staff turnover	Housing interview protocols improved
More off site outreach	Homeless housing quota
Fit with other e.g. Newtown Union	Ring fencing for staged housing especially from YWCA and Women's refuge
More hours from Night Shelter	Facilitation of discussion / engagement with stakeholders
Outreach rooms utilised above DCM	Leadership in strategic thinking / City Wide
Outreach rooms staffed 5 days per week	Back to Area policies for those with good links to services in other Areas (local connection / honey pot policies)
Shared info with other core agencies	Funding for logging / recording system Wellington City wide
Doctors x 2	Clearer definition of roles, outreach, PH, MH, Tenancy Sustainment etc
Mobile clinics specific i.e. feet, diabetes	More directives for agencies from Council level
Drop in appointments	Intentional housing allocation of Council stock to homeless
Infectious disease control	Regional Housing strategy
Increased outreach capacity	Transparent housing allocation process
Referring to other services – care coordination etc takes pressure of outreach	Increased presence of TM's at City Housing properties
Pneumococcal vaccine free for homeless	