

## OLDHAM LOCAL HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

### PROJECT PROPOSALS FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL FUNDING 2006/07

#### **THE PROCESS**

The Housing Partnership wants to use some of the best practice from the Commissioning Framework and is contacting the wider Oldham Partnership to assess whether there are any delivery agents that could contribute to the delivery of the activities listed below either as delivery agents or by virtue of co-ordinating existing complementary activity.

If you are a delivery agent who feels that could:

- Contribute to the delivery of these projects
- Be a delivery agent for the whole or part of the project.

Please contact Virbai Kara, Housing Partnership Coordinator, Level 14, Civic Centre, West Street, Oldham, OL1 1XL. Tel: 0161 911 3274, e-mail: [virbai.kara@oldham.gov.uk](mailto:virbai.kara@oldham.gov.uk)

**Please submit your enquiries before Friday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2006**

The proposed project activity will then be taken to the Housing Partnership meeting on Wednesday 24th May 2006 to be assessed and endorsed by the Partnership. If the Partnership agree that the project activity will help deliver the outcomes from the Housing Block LAA and in particular the stretch target '**Reduce levels of Homelessness Acceptances**', the appraisal form will then be submitted to the NRF team for approval to receive Neighbourhood Renewal Funding. This process may take up to 2-3 weeks. You will then be notified of the outcome of the appraisal. If approved, your project activity will be able to begin. **Please note that, funding is only available from the date of project approval from the NRF team.**

You will be notified at all stages of the outcomes by Virbai Kara.

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An allocation of £150k has been made available to The Housing Partnership for projects that meet the targets within the Housing Block Local Area Agreement (LAA).

Listed below are brief descriptions of the project activities that the Housing Partnership collectively feel that are best placed to contribute to the Housing block LAA outcome '**To improve services and prevent homelessness**' and in particular the stretch target to '**Reduce levels of Homelessness Acceptances**'.

#### **Housing Partnership membership**

The Housing Partnership's membership comprises a range of external agencies i.e. First Choice Homes; Oldham Credit Union; Energy Efficiency Advice Centre; Selhal Housing Association; Gleeson's; Threshold Housing Association; Voluntary, Community & Faith Partnership; Private Sector Housing; Housing 21; Social Services; Lowick Properties (Accredited Landlord); Housing Market Renewal Core Team; Oldham Housing Investment Partnership; Housing Advice team of the Citizen's Advice Bureau; Alan Kirkhams Estate Agents; Anchor Staying Put; Wiggett Construction; Ryder & Dutton Estate Agents and Oldham Council.

#### **LIST OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES:**

1. Emerging Communities;
2. Oldham Bond Scheme;
3. BME Communities Support;
4. Step by Step Home Security;
5. Resident Support/Tenancy Support;
6. Hidden Homelessness Outreach Service.

## **1. EMERGING COMMUNITIES**

The Government has strengthened the rules on access to council housing and homelessness assistance in England for persons from abroad.

To help deliver the homelessness targets within the Housing Block LAA, the Housing Partnership have identified a need within the housing provision/services provided in Oldham for a co-ordinator to provide support to individuals from EU states and refugees granted leave to remain, who are experiencing difficulty navigating the employment and welfare systems. The worker will need to develop and build upon links between agencies to support people to move smoothly through the different services. Working with Asylum Support Services and Oldham Council to develop the emerging communities Forum. The aim of this forum is to ensure the experiences and opinions of the new communities within Oldham are listened to and understood, and that these experiences and opinions influence the provision of services accordingly.

The Emerging Communities Coordinator will provide some individual support to people but a key part of the role will be in the development of peer support from within the communities, and in the development of the Emerging Communities Forum.

It is anticipated that the Emerging Communities Forum will ensure that the views and opinions of the emerging communities are listened to and understood and that these experiences and opinions will influence the provision of services accordingly. It is also anticipated that the role will empower these communities and increase independence, whilst also reducing destitution and homelessness.

### **Contribution to LAA outcomes and indicators:**

*This project will contribute to deliver all the targets within the Housing Block LAA outcome 'To improve services and prevent homelessness' and directly contribute to the stretch target of 'Reduce levels of homelessness acceptances'.*

## **2. OLDHAM BOND SCHEME**

Oldham Bond Scheme is a project that will help people on low income or benefits access accommodation in the private rented sector. The project will provide landlords with a written guarantee on the client's behalf stating that if, at the end of the tenancy (subject to conditions), there is damage or theft for which the client is responsible, the project will reimburse the landlord up to the agreed amount. The maximum bond amount is £500 and will be valid for a period of 6 months. Bonds may be extended for a further 6 months.

The project will benefit both single people and families who are on a low income or benefits and who are entitled to housing benefit. Potential clients must be homeless or threatened with homelessness, be capable of living independently and be able to successfully maintain a tenancy.

The main outputs of the project are to prevent and reduce homelessness by enabling access to a permanent home. Improving property conditions by undertaking full inspections of all properties put forward for the project and issuing advice and guidance or taking enforcement action as necessary. Improving relationships between Oldham MBC and Private landlords and increasing the number of accredited landlords by providing legislative and tenancy relations advice to landlords, accredited landlords whose properties are up to standard and providing access to the benefits of the accreditation scheme.

### **Contribution to LAA outcomes and indicators:**

*This project will contribute to deliver all the targets within the Housing Block LAA outcome 'To improve services and prevent homelessness' and directly contribute to the stretch target of 'Reduce levels of homelessness acceptances'.*

## **3. BME COMMUNITIES SUPPORT**

The Project aims to enable and support families to fully participate in their community and to ensure families are able to maintain their tenancies and sustain a positive lifestyle without being the cause of anti social behaviour.

The project needs to both research the needs for services within BME communities in Oldham and to provide support to the families identified as needing support. The project will need to work closely with housing providers, community safety unit and youth offending teams to identify households in need of the support provided by the project. The focus of the BME communities support project will be researching needs, building contact and promoting the project to BME communities and then preventing tenancy breakdown and homelessness for families referred to the project.

The project will need to offer practical assistance, and emotional support, and by challenging anti-social behaviour, to enable families to maintain secure tenancies and to positively contribute in their communities. Practical assistance offered to service users as part of the project include helping young people to re-engage in school, encouraging families to identify activities that enable young people to make positive use of leisure time, applying for benefits, organise debt repayment plans, access to specialist support for adults e.g. drug and alcohol services. Emotional support addresses issues e.g. low self esteem, helping families to recognise their strengths and look at positive lifestyle choices. In challenging ASB the project will need to work with the families in looking at the consequences of ASB, its impacts and explain eviction processes and challenge misconceptions.

#### **Contribution to LAA outcomes and indicators**

*This project will contribute to deliver all the targets within the Housing Block LAA outcome 'To improve services and prevent homelessness' and directly contribute to the stretch target of 'Reduce levels of homelessness acceptances'. The project addresses the overarching objectives under Community Cohesion & Engagement with strategic links to the Respect Agenda.*

#### **4.STEP BY STEP HOME SECURITY**

The project looks to provide a Sanctuary Scheme; this is a recommended key method of preventing homelessness. Domestic abuse is a significant cause of homelessness in Oldham and elsewhere. Target hardening provides an option for women or men and their children to remain in their own home once a violent or abusive partner has been excluded. Applicants who are referred for this service can choose from a range of security measures. The Sanctuary scheme prevents homelessness by enabling households to sustain their existing accommodation in safety.

A pilot sanctuary scheme was run during 2005/06, due to limited funding the scheme mainly accepted referrals from the police and did not offer the full range of options recommended by the ODPM. 15 of the 22 referrals were received from the police with other referrers, including Oldham Family Crisis Group, Social Services and FCHO. After review of the pilot it is now intended to change the menu of measures available and broaden the range of agencies that can refer.

The scheme will need to be promoted to a range of agencies that women or men may approach when wishing to leave an abusive partner. Referrals will be taken from these agencies. The referral will be appraised and risk assessed by the Community Safety Unit. Applicants will be able to select appropriate security measures and support from a menu of possible options. This may include the offer of a safe room as part of the package of security measures. For some the police may also fund additional complementary measures to further improve security.

It is hoped the scheme will enable its beneficiaries to remain in their home, continue to receive support from their community, any children can remain at the same school and generally the household will benefit from not having to relocate.

#### **Contribution to LAA outcomes and indicators:**

*This project will contribute to deliver all the targets within the Housing Block LAA outcomes 'To improve services and prevent homelessness', 'To increase the overall provision and effectiveness of Local Authority services to help those who have experienced Domestic Abuse and prevent further DV' and directly contribute to the stretch target of 'Reduce levels of homelessness acceptances'. The project will*

also contribute to deliver the cross cutting target with the Safer & Stronger Communities LAA Block to reduce the 'Number of incidences of violence against the person'.

## **5. RESIDENT SUPPORT/TENANCY SUPPORT**

The successful implementation of the HMR programme has brought with it demands for affordable housing across the borough. Residents who have sold their homes by negotiation and those tenants whose landlords have sold, have been very keen to access new homes in the area of their choice. For many, a move has required them to look at areas they had not originally considered and, if the implementation of the HMR programme is to be successfully undertaken, residents must be encouraged to look as widely as possible for suitable accommodation. As one of the barriers to considering certain areas is that they are to be considered unwelcoming and potentially dangerous, the aim of this project is to minimise the perceived risk to residents so that all areas of the borough can be considered.

The project will need to support individuals who choose to move to what are termed "non-traditional" areas.

Although support is linked to individuals who move, there is a corresponding piece of work that needs to be done with those communities who "receive" newcomers whom they see as different from themselves. Whilst there may be some resistance based on ingrained attitudes which are unlikely to change, experience in this kind of work has shown that, as concerns are acknowledged and discussed, this can produce a much more measured response and a good foundation for the integration of people from different backgrounds. It also allows those individuals within a community who have less difficulty in embracing diversity to feel more confident about expressing their more positive opinions about change.

The service will be offered to all residents regardless of tenure or landlord. Work with receiving communities will be undertaken across tenure and ownership.

Very specific outputs will be needed to be identified in the project plan to ensure that it does not become an unfocused piece of community development work.

These will include: –

- Specified number of Community Declarations or statements
- Specified number of Bridge building initiatives
- Use of mediation practitioners (training funded previously through NRF Building Good Relations programme) where appropriate
- Evidence of inter-agency working (Area Committees/Area Action Teams; HMR Neighbourhood Teams, Community Links; housing providers; youth services and relevant voluntary and community sector organisations)

### **Contribution to LAA outcomes and indicators:**

*This project will contribute to deliver all the targets within the Housing Block LAA outcome 'To improve services and prevent homelessness' and to the overarching theme of Community Cohesion and Engagement. It will also have an impact on anti-social behaviour and crimes against the person.*

*This project forms part of a larger project, providing support for individuals affected by HMR. Funding for other parts of the project will come from HMR, ERDF and OHIP.*

## **6. HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS OUTREACH SERVICE**

In 2004 Crisis estimated that nationally 380,000 households met the definition of hidden homelessness. Hidden homeless people regularly sleep on friend's sofas, moving from friend to friend, relying on peer support and occasionally sleeping rough. They often find accessing the services that they need bureaucratic and confusing, made worse by having no permanent address. A multi agency working group has been established to investigate these issues further and inform the Rough Sleepers Count planned for Summer 06.

Hidden homeless households tend to be single homeless, often with multiple needs, and regularly falling between gaps in eligibility for services. Given negative experiences of trying to access services, some

become disengaged from statutory services and more frequently contact is made with voluntary sector agencies.

The working group have identified the need for a 'service navigator' to undertake outreach work with 'hidden' homeless people with multiple needs who are experiencing difficulties accessing mainstream public services to meet their needs. The service navigator will draw together services for the homeless person across agencies and budgets, securing packages of support and ensuring effective inter-agency working. The worker will also provide a drop-in service at voluntary sector and other services for those having difficulty accessing mainstream services or understanding what services they may be eligible for. Part of the worker's role would be to provide information and training on the problems faced by the hidden homeless to service providers including health service providers.

A pilot service navigator role would assist vulnerable homeless people to get appropriate support for the multiple problems they face in a person centred way, which addresses individual needs. The pilot project will therefore provide a mix of outreach support and service navigation to individuals with complex and multiple needs, advice at drop in centres for more potential services users who may be currently disengaged, and awareness raising about the issues faced by hidden homeless people to agencies providing services especially including those whom their service users have difficulties accessing.

**Contribution to LAA outcomes and indicators:**

*This project will contribute to deliver all the targets within the Housing Block LAA outcome 'To improve services and prevent homelessness' and directly help to deliver the target on 'Increase numbers of cases where Housing Advice prevents homelessness'*

