

MAYOR AND CABINET			
Report Title	Response to Healthier Communities Select Committee on the Campaign in Lewisham for Autism Spectrum Housing		
Key Decision	No	Item No.	
Ward	All		
Contributors	Executive Director for Community Services Executive Director for Customer Services		
Class	Part 1	Date:	18 February 2015

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an initial response to the recommendations made by the Healthier Communities Select Committee arising from discussions held on the officer report entitled *Implementing the National Autism Strategy in Lewisham*, considered at its meeting on 2 December 2014.

2 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Mayor:

- 2.1 Notes the information contained in this report in response to Healthier Communities Select Committee recommendations.
- 2.2 Agrees for the response to be forwarded to the Healthier Communities Select Committee.

3 Policy Context

- 3.1 The contents of this report are consistent with the Council's policy framework. It supports the achievements of the Sustainable Community Strategy policy objectives:
- Ambitious and achieving: where people are inspired and supported to fulfil their potential.
 - Empowered and responsible: where people can be actively involved in their local area and contribute to tolerant, caring and supportive local communities.
 - Healthy, active and enjoyable: where people can actively participate in maintaining and improving their health and well-being, supported by high quality health and care services, leisure, culture and recreational activities.

3.2 The content is also in line with the Council policy priorities:

- Strengthening the local economy – gaining resources to regenerate key localities, strengthen employment skills and promote public transport.
- Clean, green and liveable – improving environmental management , the cleanliness and care for roads and pavements and promoting a sustainable environment.

4 Background

4.1 At its meeting on 2 December 2014 the Healthier Communities Select Committee, received an address from the Chair of the Campaign in Lewisham for Autism Spectrum Housing (CLASH). The Committee requested that the Mayor considered urgently, provision to meet the housing needs of adults diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder living in Lewisham.

4.2 This paper contains an officer response to that referral, setting out the activity that is already underway, in partnership with CLASH, in order to meet those housing needs.

5 Housing and Autism Group

5.1 A Housing & Autism group has been in existence for more than two years, with the objective of identifying deliverable options to meet the housing needs of adults diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder living in Lewisham.

5.2 Members of the project group include officers from the Council's housing, adult social care, public health and, joint commissioning teams, alongside representatives of CLASH and the Burgess Autistic Trust. The objectives of the project group are to:

- Establish a better understanding the level and nature of autism in the Borough
- Investigate existing housing services and placements for autistic children and adults
- Investigate potential sources of funding both current and future, revenue and capital
- Investigate options for the provision of an autism-specific housing scheme for local adults either within existing stock or new supply

5.3 The meeting is chaired by the Housing Strategy and Programme Manager, meetings are held bi-monthly and are usually well attended. Discussions have concentrated on two main areas, the provision of housing units for autistic adults and how the services required to support these clients to live independently would be commissioned and funded.

6 What options are currently available to those who are eligible for housing support?

- 6.1 Under certain circumstances people with autism may qualify for the Councils' housing register. Band 3 of the Council's housing register includes medical priority, which is awarded by the Council's medical advisor if they are satisfied that current accommodation is aggravating the person's health issues and if the person or their household is not moved to alternative accommodation, it would result in that person suffering a significant deterioration in their health.
- 6.2 There are circumstances in which this could apply to people with autism. For example, the housing circumstances of a person with autism may make that person particularly anxious, in a way that would not be the case for somebody who did not have autism.
- 6.3 Mayor and Cabinet will be aware from a range of other reports that have been presented over the past two years, that the pressure the Council is experiencing in making accommodation available to those who need it – even those who qualify for housing – is extreme and at present there is no indication that it will relent. There are currently more than 8,500 households on the housing register, of whom 2,080 households are on bands 1 and 2, and so would be considered to have a greater housing priority than the client group in question. Furthermore, there are nearly 600 households who are homeless and housed in bed and breakfast accommodation, a situation that is so severe that now 80% of 2 and 3 bed properties that become available are let directly to homeless households.
- 6.4 In short, the pressure on available housing is great, and the number of units that become available for this client group is few.

7 What options are currently available to those who are eligible for social care support?

- 7.1 If following a Community Care Assessment an adult with autism is found to have eligible needs using the Fair Access to Care Services (FACs) they may be eligible for support services in their own home or a residential/supported living placement.
- 7.2 The estimated prevalence for autism in adults has been variable due to differences in the way autism was diagnosed and defined³. Relatively newer reports suggest a prevalence of 400,00-500,00 adults in the UK have autism, or 116 per 10,000⁴. (*Dr Ratna Ganguly, Autism In Lewisham 2013*)
- 7.3 It is not possible to give a totally accurate number of people with autism living in Lewisham, as the current social care recording systems do not have Autism as a category for Support Reasons or Service User Group.

- 7.4 For those Lewisham residents with a Learning Disability as a primary support reason it is estimated that 20% are on the autistic spectrum and of those approximately 50% are living in their own/family homes and 50% are in supported living, residential care or residential college.
- 7.5 There are also a number of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder who do not have a Learning Disability who are FACS eligible and in receipt of support from Social Care.

8 What is the gap?

- 8.1 The housing needs of adults with autism are extremely varied. For some FACS eligible people there will be the option of residential care or packages of care. At the other end of the spectrum some adults with autism may be able to live independently.
- 8.2 For those autistic adults who are not “FACS eligible”, NHS Lewisham Clinical Commissioning Group has commissioned Burgess Autistic Trust to provide information and support services in areas such as benefits, accommodation, training and employment and education.
- 8.3 The ‘gap’ that has been of particular concern to CLASH, and which has been the focus of the project group, is the lack of options that are available to those adults with autism who are neither FACS eligible nor able to live independently. This gap covers a range of needs but might broadly be described as supported housing, and
- 8.4 There is currently no supported housing provision in Lewisham that is specific to adults with autism, and the group has been working over the past year to develop a new service model to address that gap.

9 Future Service Model

- 9.1 The basis of a new model to fill this gap would be the provision of a small scheme, potentially within an empty Housing Association property (or a property that could be decanted to become empty), upon which a specialist autism provider would enter into a lease and offer a support service to the tenants. This type of accommodation would be suitable for adults with low level support needs, with support workers funded by an element of service charge covered by Housing Benefit.
- 9.2 Such provision would cater for a handful of people and the selection of residents would to a large degree be dependent on the nature of the accommodation, since, for example, issues of compatibility can easily arise when sharing is involved.

- 9.3 In theory this model could also be achieved by developing new build accommodation, on a similar approach to that used to create new extra care housing, but with a different target client group. In practice however housing associations tend to be reluctant to invest significant capital in new supported accommodation without also securing long term contractual commitments relating to the revenue-funded services which would be delivered in the new developments. Given the current and expected long term financial situation, it is difficult for the Council to provide sufficient guarantees around revenue funding for a group that may not be FACS eligible, and as such this approach is less likely to lead to a solution than the conversion of an existing property.
- 9.4 This proposal could be delivered by the Burgess Autistic Trust (BAT), which is already the specialist provider for this client group in the borough. As such Council housing officers and the BAT have been in discussion with a number of Housing Associations to determine if any are willing and able to help meet this need.

10 Next Steps and Conclusion

- 10.1 The Chief Executive of BAT is meeting with a range of housing associations over the coming months, with a view to identifying a suitable property from which to pilot the proposed approach to providing supported housing for this client group. This therefore is a genuine opportunity to increase housing provision for people with autism in Lewisham, and address the concerns raised in the referral.

11 Financial Implications

- 11.1 There are no specific financial implications at this stage. Financial analysis of any new developments will be undertaken once specific proposals emerge.

12 Legal Implications

- 11.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this response, save for noting that the Council's Constitution provides that the Executive may respond to reports and recommendations by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

13 Crime and Disorder Implications

- 13.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

14 Equalities Implications

- 14.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this response report.

Background Documents

None

If you have any queries relating to this report please Jeff Endean, Housing Strategy and Programmes Manager, on 020 8314 6213