

# Have your say on proposals for support to prevent homelessness



## Tell us how this might affect you

Online at [www.leicestershire.gov.uk/homelessness\\_prevention](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/homelessness_prevention)

For general enquiries or comments about this consultation  
phone 0116 305 4267 or email [PHconsultations@leics.gov.uk](mailto:PHconsultations@leics.gov.uk)

**Public consultation:** Please submit your views by midnight on  
Thursday 15 August

# Why change?

The county council has a statutory duty to take appropriate steps to improve the health of people living in Leicestershire. This includes the provision of health improvement information, advice and support services aimed at preventing illness and tackling risk factors for poor health.

Being homeless has significant negative impacts on both physical and mental health and so the health of homeless people is a priority area for Public Health. Without appropriate support for people at risk of homelessness there is likely to be pressure on the council's wider statutory services including Residential Care, Supporting Independence Services, and Home Care.

Leicestershire County Council does not bear the statutory responsibility for homelessness support. That responsibility lies with district councils under the Homelessness Act 2002 and latterly the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017, which came into effect from 3 April 2018. This places a new duty to prevent and relieve homelessness regardless of priority. The county council does, however, have a duty under the act to assist the district councils with formulating their strategies

and to take these into account when formulating its social service function.

We think that providing support for people at risk of homelessness who have contributory health and social issues (for example substance misuse, mental health disorders, domestic abuse or sexual violence), through an in-house community-based prevention model, will enable us to provide a range of support to individuals and families who need it the most. We believe this will complement the statutory responsibilities of district councils, as set out HRA. The in-house model would also provide a join up with district services and an element of wider support for debt and tenancy issues. This would ensure a cross over between the district responsibilities and that of public health within the county council.

The county council's budgets are under increasing pressure. As part of an Early Help and Prevention Review (EHAP) in 2016, savings were identified across a number of contracts. Expenditure on housing-related support was included in the Review and savings realised from altering the current offer will contribute to the savings target. By delivering our housing-related support differently we could save £200,000.

## Supporting Leicestershire residents at risk of homelessness

Being homeless has significant negative impacts on both physical and mental health. The average age of death for those who are rough sleeping or resident in homeless accommodation is 47 for men and 43 for women, therefore, the health of the homeless is a priority area for public health. In 2014, 80% of homeless people in England reported that they had mental health disorders, with 45% having been diagnosed with a mental health condition. The most prevalent health problems among homeless individuals are substance misuse (62.5%), and 42.6% report having both substance misuse and mental health issues. Given that these problems are causally linked with homelessness, they add significantly more costs to homelessness due to the need for health and social care support.

Leicestershire County Council commissions a range of services, across all departments, to support individuals' wellbeing and prevent homelessness. Examples include Mental Health Reablement, Local Area Co-ordination service (LAC), Supporting Leicestershire Families (SLF) team and First Contact Plus. Alongside ongoing access to these services, it is proposed that a future service model provides for those at risk of homelessness who require more intensive support with contributory health and social issues (for example substance misuse, mental health disorders, domestic abuse or sexual violence) where community centred support might help prevent people becoming homeless. This would move away from the current more general housing support service. The new model will work with families at risk of homelessness as well as single people.

# What's the current offer of support?

The county council has historically commissioned housing-related support for vulnerable people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. This service is currently provided by Nottingham Community Housing Association (NCHA) and the contract value is approximately £500,000 per annum.

## There are two components to the service: -

- An in-reach support service into the Falcon Centre Homeless Hostel in Loughborough.
- An outreach floating support service which is delivered by both NCHA and The Bridge. This includes a combination of telephone support, group work, specific issue surgeries, e.g. benefits advice, signposting and one-to-one contact where necessary. This aspect of the service is delivered by approximately ten whole time equivalent staff.

The current service aims to enable service users to develop or maintain their independence within the community. It does this by providing 'short term' accommodation and a floating support service, delivered through case workers, to both prevent homelessness and to support and enable homeless people to move back into secure accommodation appropriate to their needs. The contract for this service is due to expire at the end of March 2020.



## Homelessness prevention roles and responsibilities

District councils, under the Homelessness Act 2002 and latterly the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017, have responsibility to prevent and relieve homelessness regardless of priority. The HRA introduced measures whereby all eligible people who are found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness are entitled to more tailored support from the housing authority, regardless of priority need, intentionality, and local connection. The housing authority, in our local case, are district or borough councils.

### The key duties in the HRA 2017 are:

- Local housing authorities must assess anyone who is found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness and where appropriate, support the individual or family to develop a personalised housing plan.
- Under the prevention duty, local housing authorities must take 'reasonable steps' to help people avoid becoming homeless, with reference to their personal plan. This could include supporting them to either stay in their accommodation or helping them find somewhere to live. The intention behind this duty is households are helped before they reach a housing crisis situation.
- Under the relief duty, local housing authorities must take 'reasonable steps' to help the applicant into accommodation, with reference to their personal plan. This could be, for example, the provision of a rent deposit or debt advice. Where accommodation is provided, the housing authority must be satisfied that the housing will be available for at least six months.

# What are we consulting on?

It is proposed that the in-reach housing support element of the commissioned service (which is based at the Falcon Centre) remains unchanged, continuing to provide intensive support and accommodation in times of crisis, for those that find themselves homeless.

It is proposed that the outreach floating support element will be decommissioned. Instead, we are proposing to replace it with a model that supports early identification and focussed homelessness prevention concentrated on people with contributory health and social issues (for example substance misuse, mental health disorders, domestic abuse or sexual violence).

# What are we proposing?

## We are proposing a model that would support:

- Individuals and families at potential risk of homelessness but not 'covered' by the HRA 2017 duties (i.e. outside the 56 day 'window' for homelessness prevention support) with contributory health and social issues (for example substance misuse, mental health disorders, domestic abuse or sexual violence).
- District councils who are providing housing support to individuals and families at risk of homelessness and 'covered' by the HRA 2017 duties (i.e. within 56 day 'window' for homelessness prevention support) with more intensive community based support around defined contributory health and social issues such as alcohol, drugs, mental health, domestic violence, sexual violence as well as housing related support.
- Individuals and families at the end of the 56 day 'window' of homelessness prevention support where ongoing support may enable them to avoid becoming at risk of homelessness again (as per the HRA 2017 duties).

## The key principles:

- An integrated community co-ordination model
- A homelessness prevention focus
- Joined-up approach to tackling health and social issues that contribute towards reducing homelessness
- More intensive support targeted at individuals or families who are facing the most complex and significant challenges

# How would we deliver this?

## To deliver this proposed model of support, we are suggesting:

- Building the capability of all First Contact Plus staff and local area co-ordinators to be able to identify and provide advice for issues known to be linked to an increased risk of homelessness. This could include tenancy issues, debt management, neighbourhood disputes, alcohol and drug addiction and family breakdown.
- Additional training (see figure 1) would be delivered by new specialist homelessness prevention co-ordinators” to ensure these frontline staff members feel competent to spot and respond to contributory health and social issues would be delivered by new specialist homelessness prevention co-ordinators.
- Using the First Contact Plus service as a central referral hub for accessing advice and support relevant to issues linked to an increased risk of homelessness (see figure 2).
  - Individuals, families, professionals and partner agencies can access self-help information, advice and guidance online and over the phone.
  - Self-referral or professional referrals can be made to the First Contact Plus service and staff then facilitate an assessment of need and, where appropriate, provide onward signposting to homelessness prevention support services (including to housing teams at district councils) or referral to other county council services – tailored to the individual’s needs .

Utilising the existing team of local area co-ordinators to work across priority patches in Leicestershire and tackle the contributory health and social issues (for example substance misuse, mental health disorders, domestic abuse or sexual violence) that increase the risk of homelessness (see figure 3).

- Co-ordinators would identify individuals and families to prioritise support to, through introductions via other agencies or individuals.
- Local area co-ordinators receive additional mentoring and support from new specialist homelessness prevention co-ordinators to discuss complex cases and plan support.
- Enhancing existing community based interventions and statutory provision of housing support by district councils through the recruitment of specialist homelessness prevention co-ordinators.
  - Targeted information and enhanced support (for a smaller group of people who are within the 56 day ‘window’ for homelessness prevention support) could be accessed via referral from district council housing teams (or their HRA provider). This would be enabled through regular direct contact between specialist co-ordinators and/ or through district council teams making a professional referral via the First Contact Plus service.
  - New specialist prevention co-ordinators would collectively cover Leicestershire whilst having close working relationships with district council housing officers in their patch.

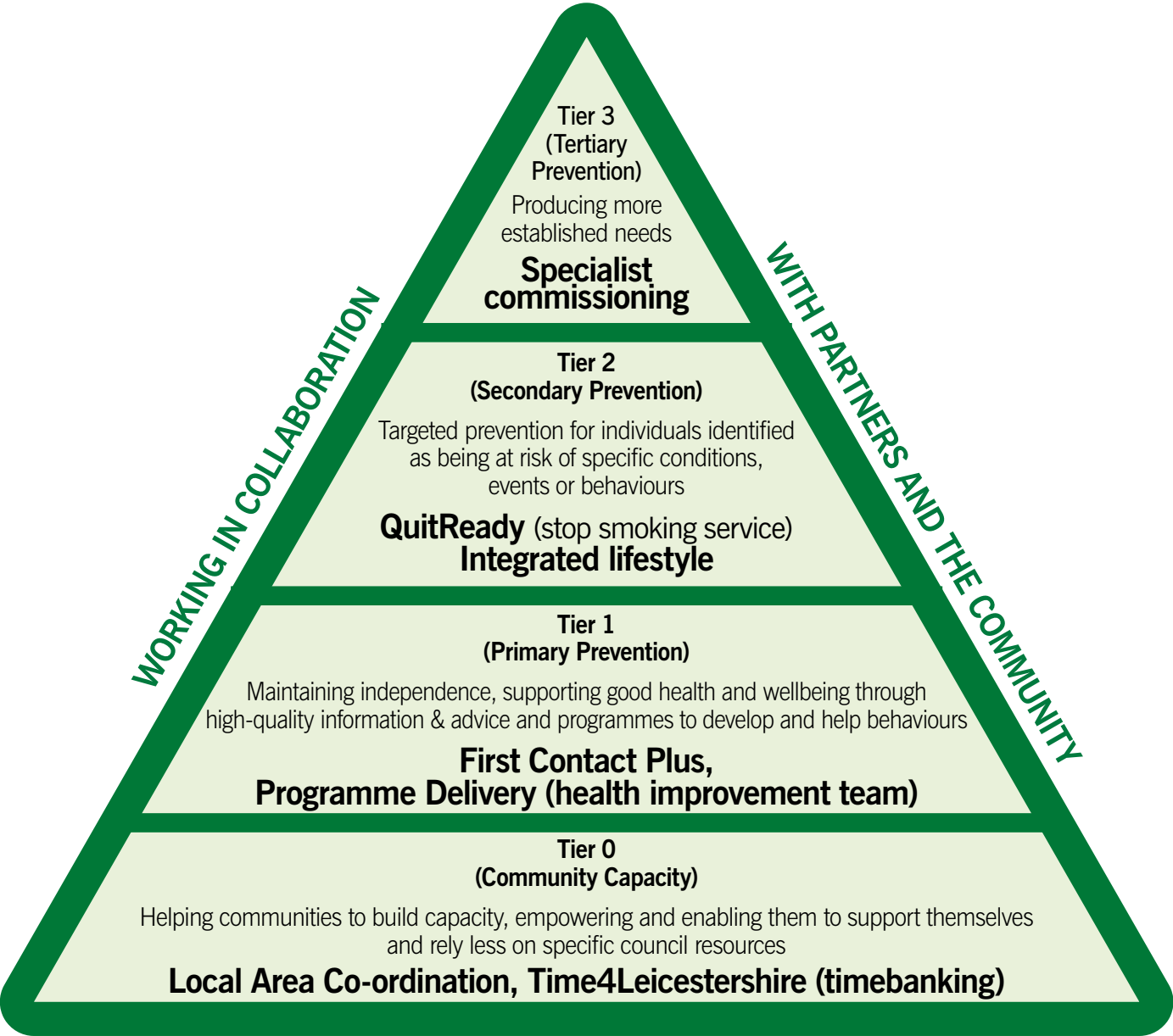


Figure 1  
Leicestershire County Council social model of Public Health

## The current First Contact Plus model

First Contact Plus helps adults in Leicestershire find information about a range of services all in one place. It is accessible online and over the phone.

The initiative allows residents who require help with one or a number of issues to access a catalogue of information, advice, help and support.

Information and resources on housing, health, living independently, money advice, work, security and other topics that assist the county's residents can be found on the website.

First Contact Plus is delivered by Leicestershire County Council in partnership with GPs, the police, health organisations, voluntary groups and social care departments, district & borough councils who are helping adults across the county by working together to make access to services much easier.



Figure 2  
Overview of First  
Contact plus service

- Step 1** Visit [www.FirstContactPlus.org.uk](http://www.FirstContactPlus.org.uk)
- Step 2** Find information and advice on improving your health and wellbeing
- Step 3** Contact a member of the team if you need more help - [click the 'self-referral' button](#)
- Step 4** Start your journey to a healthier future

## The current Leicestershire Local Area Co-ordination service (LAC) model

Leicestershire Local Area Co-ordination (LAC) is a complex community-based intervention, operationally delivered by a team of Co-ordinators. Also referred to as an Asset Based Community Development programme, LAC's fundamental aims are to increase individual and community capacity while reducing demand for costly primary and acute services, as well as other public services, by working directly with citizens who are vulnerable and often experiencing a range of multi-layer complex challenges.

Local Area Co-ordination is a place based preventative offer sitting at the Tier 0 of the Leicestershire County Council, Public Health prevention triangle (see figure 1). The model is designed around a set of national principles of inclusion, citizenship, community and asset-based thinking. The co-ordinators work with district, voluntary and community sector partners and are based within communities.

### Role of a Local Area Co-ordinator

- Normally works in outreach bases
- Works in partnership, develops effective networks
- Spends time to understand a person's strengths and aspirations
- Identifies community assets and resources which individuals can access
- Link individuals to sources of informal support
- Supports individuals to access other relevant services required
- Helps to create and support community groups



Figure 3  
Overview of  
Leicestershire Local  
Area Co-ordination  
service (LAC)



# Who would this change impact?

- Leicestershire residents who are currently service users or eligible for the service of housing-related support
- NCHA and their staff members
- The Bridge and their staff members
- Housing authorities in district councils who have a statutory responsibility to provide support to people at risk of homelessness

Prior to any changes being put in place, a comprehensive Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) will be completed to determine whether there will be a differential impact on a particular group in relation to equality, diversity and human rights. We will act on these findings.

# How will the consultation work?

## The consultation will run from 23 May to 15 August

We want to hear from a wide range of people including those who currently or have previously used housing-support services, plus partners, stakeholders and residents.

To provide your feedback, please complete the consultation questionnaire, available online at [leicestershire.gov.uk/homelessness\\_prevention](https://leicestershire.gov.uk/homelessness_prevention) and as hard copy on request.

As part of the consultation, current service providers or professionals are invited to attend an information and discussion meeting. We will also be holding two focus group sessions with current or previous housing-related support service users.

Please email [PHconsultations@leics.gov.uk](mailto:PHconsultations@leics.gov.uk) or call **0116 305 4267** to register your attendance. Please note, these are not drop in events, you must be registered in advance to attend.

Location and address	Format	Date & Time	Who should attend?
Loughborough Town Hall, Market Pl, Loughborough LE11 3EB	Focus group	31 May 13:00 – 15:00	Current or previous service users of housing-related support services*
The Salvation Army, Ladysmith Rd, Wigston, LE18 4UZ	Focus group	7 June 10:00 – 12:00	Current or previous service users of housing-related support services*
Room 902, Anstey Frith building, Leicestershire County Council, County Hall, Glenfield, Leicestershire, LE3 8RL	Meeting	10 June 14:00 – 16:00	Current service providers, partners and stakeholders

\*Service user attendees can be reimbursed for their travel if receipts are provided.

If you have any queries about this consultation or to request hard copies, please email **[PHconsultations@leics.gov.uk](mailto:PHconsultations@leics.gov.uk)** or call **0116 305 4267**.

The consultation results will be reported to the Council's Cabinet in October 2019.

If Cabinet decides to go ahead with the proposed service, further engagement would take place as part of the transition to the new service. A new service is expected to be in place by 1st April 2020.

## What happens next?

When the consultation closes, we will analyse the feedback and review the proposals.

The reviewed proposals and consultation findings will be presented to the council's cabinet in October where a decision will be made on how to proceed.



