

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)	Date of Meeting:	19 September 2023
Subject:	Riverside Dispersed Accommodation Programme		
Report of:	Assistant Director of Place (Economic Growth and Housing)	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Communities & Housing		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

In June 2022 this committee considered a paper relating to the Riverside Dispersed Accommodation Project Pilot. A request was made for a follow up report on the project and this paper provides an update for committee on work which has taken place since June 2022.

Recommendation(s):

That the contents of this report be noted and the approach which is being taken be endorsed.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

Cabinet Member for Communities & Housing has recommended that the successful outcomes of this project be presented to this Committee for scrutiny.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)
N/A

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The current pilot is being funded primarily via Flexible Homeless Support Grant.

There are no additional revenue costs associated with the recommendations in this report.

(B) Capital Costs

There are no direct capital costs associated with the recommendations in this report.

Implications of the Proposals:

<p>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): If this model were to be mainstreamed this would require a budget to be identified in order to fund the delivery of it.</p>								
<p>Legal Implications: None</p>								
<p>Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.</p>								
<p>Impact on Children and Young People: Yes</p> <p>The impact on children and young people is a positive one as the project looks to provide and sustain housing for a complex family, with various agencies and services linked into that support the children of these parents housed by Riverside.</p>								
<p>Climate Emergency Implications:</p> <p>The recommendations within this report will</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Have a positive impact</td> <td>N</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Have a neutral impact</td> <td>Y</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Have a negative impact</td> <td>N</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors</td> <td>Y</td> </tr> </table> <p>The project has a neutral impact on the climate through the use of Riverside's existing stock rather than new build.</p>	Have a positive impact	N	Have a neutral impact	Y	Have a negative impact	N	The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Y
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Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

<p>Protect the most vulnerable: Those who are homeless, and those at risk of becoming homeless are among the most vulnerable in society.</p>
<p>Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Through the intervention by the Council and its partners at the most critical moment when residents are homeless or at the risk of becoming homeless in order to prevent further reliance on public sector support in the future.</p>
<p>Commission, broker and provide core services: The delivery of a service which is based on the needs of some of the most vulnerable in society.</p>
<p>Place – leadership and influencer: Through the creation of settled sustainable communities</p>
<p>Drivers of change and reform: Through the understanding of the needs of the most vulnerable in society and change and reform of services in order to meet those needs.</p>
<p>Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Help to relieve rough sleeping and homelessness in Sefton has a wide-ranging positive impact for those most vulnerable in society by providing residents with the most basic form of need; housing.</p>
<p>Greater income for social investment:</p>

The initial pilot was partly been funded from social investment funding but this contract is now fully funded through the Flexible Homeless Support Fund.

Cleaner Greener

N/A

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD7330) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5530/23) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

Cabinet Member - Communities & Housing has been briefed continually regarding both the pilot and contract award.

(B) External Consultations

Riverside have consulted with Officers of the Council and a consultation with the families involved in this pilot was undertaken as part of the pilot's Evaluation Report

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Appendices:

No Appendices

Background Papers:

The following background papers are available:

[Decision - Dispersed Temporary Accommodation pilot project with Riverside HA](#)

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 One of the actions within Sefton's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-23, is to undertake a strategic review of temporary accommodation in Sefton to ensure that the provision is suitable. At present Sefton's temporary accommodation for families is based in one location, Lonsdale Hostel. However, the provision of just hostel type accommodation for this purpose is now considered out of date, with many councils attempting to provide dispersed supported temporary accommodation models as well as or instead of hostel provision.
- 1.2 On 26th July 2019, Cabinet Member approved the delivery of a service to provide dispersed temporary accommodation and support services for vulnerable households, particularly for those who struggle to access tenancies. The service proposal was for an initial 2-year pilot and was to be funded through the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant up to a maximum cost of £150,000. The scheme went live on 2nd December 2019.

- 1.3 The pilot project a Housing First-style approach to preventing homelessness by providing person-centred support for families to help them sustain a tenancy and prevent them from falling into temporary accommodation or shelters.
- 1.4 The pilot was initially part funded by the Riverside Impact Fund – which aims to provide opportunities to test outcomes-based commissioning models – its mission was to find a new approach to protect and support some of the most vulnerable families in the borough, whilst reducing council expenditure on costly bed and breakfast and other private rented sector accommodation.
- 1.5 The service targeted families with a history of failed tenancies who would benefit from intensive homelessness prevention support.
- 1.6 Families taking part in the pilot were matched with a suitable 2-3 bed roomed home in Sefton, initially on a supported licence agreement (a type of contractual tenancy) with Riverside Housing.
- 1.7 If the family successfully met the conditions of their temporary supported licence agreement, they were able to transition to a regular social housing tenancy with Riverside, at the same property, 12 months later.
- 1.8 As part of the pilot, each family also received twelve months of intensive support from a specialist Riverside support worker. With a minimum of weekly contact including doorstep visits, the support worker helped families to develop the skills they needed to sustain their tenancy, including support around benefits, debt, rent arrears, utilities, health, domestic abuse, hate crime and anti-social behaviour.

2. Evaluation Report

- 2.1 An evaluation of the pilot was carried out by an independent company, Impact Limited, to assess the impact of the pilot.
- 2.2 The Evaluation concluded that without this service, customers' progression to living in independent accommodation would have been much slower. This could have consequences relating to health, wellbeing, family cohesion, etc. The Council believe that customers would, eventually, have secured private rented accommodation if the service had not been available, however, the relative insecurity of the private sector would not have provided the kind of stability families with complex needs require in order to live productive and independent lives. In addition, the relative higher rental costs in the private sector would have created additional challenges for these families because of the cost of living crisis.
- 2.3 The evaluation of the pilot project concluded that it had a profound effect on the stability, wellbeing, and independence of the families taking part.
- 2.4 Of the 37 families involved, only one failed to successfully progress to a regular social housing tenancy with Riverside in Sefton, due to a preference for being housed in a different borough.
- 2.5 Among the 36 families who completed the pilot, all have successfully maintained their tenancies, and there have been no repeat homeless presentations.

2.6 The Evaluation also concluded that the return on investment for every £1 which Sefton Council spent was £3.36. This represents potential public spending costs savings associated with homeless families of £24,394 per family. These reasons were the main drivers for the Council wanting to commission the project for a period of two years.

3. 2-Year Commissioned Service

3.1 Following the successful completion of the project pilot the Council commissioned the Riverside Dispersed Accommodation Project for a further two years from September 2022.

3.2 The Housing Options Team continue to see their Temporary Accommodation costs increase yearly, so a project which represents a positive return on investment, as this does, and also potentially help reduce budgetary spend would be welcomed. As the previous evaluation of the pilot stated, the vulnerable client group that this project helps to rehouse and support, would have experienced an extended stay in temporary accommodation and would not have received the intensive support that has been so transformational.

3.3 The project would see twenty 2/3 bed properties as temporary accommodation with support for 6-12 months, as an alternative to B&B. The service is designed to be a 'step down' from hostel accommodation by providing dispersed accommodation within the community.

3.4 The service supports families with a variety of needs including those who may be considered to have complex needs. These needs may include those who have a chaotic lifestyle, a history of offending, substance misuse problems and mental health problems. The service works in partnership with other agencies, including; Social Services, local landlords and other local statutory and non-statutory services, ensures the family receives the tailored support needed to meet the needs of each family member, making resettlement more achievable and providing a more stable future for the children and entire family unit.

3.5 Ten families would be supported within the first year, with a further ten supported in Year 2 of the contract.

Family	Move In date
Family 1	3.2.2022
Family 2	11.11.2022
Family 3	1.12.2022
Family 4	21.12.2022
Family 5	21.12.2022
Family 6	16.1.2023
Family 7	28.2.2023
Family 8	28.2.2023
Family 9	17.4.2023
Family 10	26.5.2023

Second 10 properties

- Bibby's Lane L20 – family moved in

- Kilburn Street L21 – family moved in
- Ash Grove L21 – family moved in
- Knowsley Road L20
- Riverside Close L20
- Bibby's Lane L20
- Jubilee Road L23
- Falconer Street L20

Two more to be identified as soon as they become available.

3.6 Ongoing support is put in place, where needed, to ensure the family's needs are met even when a family has been transferred to a general needs tenancy. This is another factor making the project so successful. Ongoing support can include:

- Money advice
- Affordable warmth
- Employment and training
- Sefton's Floating Support Service and other local partners
- Riverside Intensive Intervention Service (under 30's)
- Riverside's Keeping in Touch service.

4. Northern Housing Awards 2023

4.1 Following a very successful pilot and recommissioning of the service the project was put forward for the Northern Housing Awards 2023 in the Best Initiative for Tackling Homelessness category.

4.2 The Northern Housing Awards is a prestigious event supported by the Northern Housing Consortium, and sees entries from a range of housing organisations operating in the north of England, primarily from Local Authorities and Housing Associations.



4.3 We are pleased to report to committee that Sefton Council won the Best Initiative for Tackling Homelessness category at this year's Northern Housing Awards for its Riverside Dispersed Accommodation Service and received the award at a ceremony at Old Trafford Cricket Ground on 2nd May 2023.

4.4 The Northern Housing Awards judges said:

“The success of this scheme is unquestionable, with a 100% success rate in terms of families remaining in homes.

“The well-thought-through approach to resolving outmoded practices is impressive...

...A super example and well evidenced throughout.”

4.5 Cllr Trish Hardy, Sefton Council's Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing said: “I am delighted that our Sefton Families Service has won this award, it is a

tribute to everyone who has been involved in its development and ongoing management.

“But I am even more delighted that the scheme is having such a positive impact on the day-to-day lives of nearly 40 Sefton families who before they were part of it were facing a range of issues, including homelessness. And demonstrating financial value to the Borough.



“We set up the Sefton Families Service in late 2019, as part of our Homelessness Strategy, when there was only temporary hostel accommodation available for families. People were having to move away from their existing support networks and could face several moves before stable accommodation was offered.

“Now, thanks to the Service, those families can be settled into a potentially permanent home with the support they need around them. This results in a range of tangible benefits, including in terms of health, and provides a stability that helps them put down roots.”

5. Case Studies

5.1 The case studies for a selection of six families supported by the Support Worker through this initiative detailing the types of work and support provided are highlighted below:

Family A –

XX and her children moved into our dispersed accommodation on the 3/10/22. XX returned to the UK from Poland after a relationship breakdown with her ex-partner. Since moving in, I have supported with finding suitable schools for the children and successfully applied to Sefton Welfare Team for school uniforms. XX has been in and out of part time work, I referred her to Sefton at work and she is actively looking for work. Whilst she has been out of work, I have supported with applying for fuel vouchers, foodbank parcels and also delivered donations from Farm foods. Also applied for funding from radio city cash for kids, Family Action and a Christmas food hamper. This enabled the family to get food, clothing, and household items. I have been doing budgeting sessions with XX and she is starting to manage her finances better.

Family B -

XX and her 4 children moved into our accommodation on the 11/11/22. The family fled their One Vision property due to ASB. XX has high mental health needs and being anywhere near the property can trigger her PTSD. Children’s Services were involved and said it was unsafe for her to live in the property. I have supported with resettling into a new area- finding new

schools for the children and applying for new school uniforms. XX needed support with applying for benefits for her disability and she is now in receipt of the correct amount. There are some rent arrears with One Vision, I am working with the housing options team to access funding to reduce these, once reduced by 50%, One Vision will write off the arrears. XX left all of her belongings in the previous property as she felt it was too distressing to return for them. I have secured funding for clothing, toys and household items for them, through the Family Action Fund. Also applied for presents from Radio City cash for Christmas fund. XX still needs budgeting support, and we are working on this at my fortnightly visits.

Family C –

XX and her 2 children moved in on the 1/12/22. XX fled DV from her ex-husband. XX has needed a lot of support due to always relying on her ex-husband and also a language barrier. I have supported with registering for utility bills, foodbank vouchers, supermarket vouchers and presents for the children at Christmas, through funding from Radio City. The whole process has been overwhelming for XX and she still needs weekly budgeting support. I have referred her to Asylum Link and will be attending the appointment with her for advice on her visa, extra ESOL classes and activities for her to meet new people. Her daughter has mental health issues, so I have been working closely with the school and social worker on how best to support her.

Family D –

XX and her 2 children moved in on the 21/12/22, after living in temporary accommodation for 8 months. The children are on child in need plans due to previous neglect issues. XX has worked well with children's services and the improvement in her daughters has been praised by professionals. XX is vulnerable due to mental health and has never had her own property before. She needs a lot of support with budgeting and managing a property. I have been visiting weekly, we have set up all her utility bills and applied for a reception place for her daughter for September. I have accessed funding from Radio City Christmas appeal, Radio City cost of living grant and delivered a Christmas food hamper off for the family. I have also given the children toys/clothing from donations to our service.

Family E –

XX and his son moved into our dispersed accommodation on the 21/12/22. XX only got full access to his son 8 months ago, as the child was removed from his mother. This has been overwhelming for XX and he has had to change his lifestyle as a result of this. Knowsley Children's Services are still involved. XX has lived in and out of hostels and supported accommodation in Liverpool and Sefton for most of his adult life. He requires a lot of support due to never paying utility bills and managing a property. When he moved in, he was on a benefit sanction and was relying on a hardship payment and lending money from friends. At sign up, our service topped up his gas/electric meter and provided him with supermarket vouchers to buy food. I also delivered a Christmas food hamper. Due to XX not receiving his UC payment until mid-Jan, I applied

for fuel vouchers from Energy Projects Plus and gave him foodbank vouchers, as well as delivering donations from Farm Foods. I have supported with registering him for utilities, a GP and advising on managing the property (keeping property to a good standard, emptying bins, health and safety within the home). I will continue to monitor this at weekly visits. I have accessed funding from Family Action Fund for household items and toys/clothing for his son. I have completed a budgeting plan for XX to follow when he receives his monthly UC payment.

Family F –

XX and her 2 children moved in on the 16/01/23. The family were evicted from their private rented accommodation due to the landlord selling the property. So far, I have supported with setting up utility bills and finding a suitable school for her son. XX works part time and has a non-dependant son who works, she is aware there may be a deduction in housing benefit. I will be visiting weekly for the first 6 weeks and monitoring her budgeting.

6. Summary

- 6.1 The learning gained from commissioning the pilot with a model of dispersed supported accommodation has been a valuable lesson as Sefton looks to find better ways of assisting the most vulnerable families approaching its Housing Options Team for assistance.
- 6.2 The commissioned project continues to assist both Sefton's Housing Options Team by being able to place a family who they would struggle to accommodate into a property close to their support networks that has the support that the family requires in order to make the placement a success and being offered the property as a general needs tenancy after the 12 months has passed.
- 6.3 Of the first ten families placed into service since September 2022, none of them have left the service showing the ongoing success of this service to those families and the wider homelessness and wider services.