

Appendix 5

Proposed terms of reference for a Homelessness Strategy Steering Group (or a Homelessness Reduction Board)

This Terms of Reference defines how the [insert local housing authority name] multiagency Homelessness Strategy Steering Group will operate in practice. Members of the Group agree to abide by its terms.

Definition of homelessness

Homelessness is referred to here in its broadest sense to encompass anyone who is roofless or without decent, safe, affordable and settled accommodation, who considers themselves to be homeless.

Purpose of the Steering Group

The Purpose of the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group (HSSG) is to oversee the delivery of the local Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan, ensuring it achieves its stated aims and outcomes through the delivery of high quality, appropriate and consistent services which meet the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness across the local housing authority area. In order to achieve this the HSSG will support and monitor the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan (HSAP). The overarching aims and objectives within the terms of reference for this steering groups are as follows:

1. To provide a governance structure to monitor the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan to ensure they are delivered effectively and within timescale and budget,
2. To improve services through sharing knowledge and best practise
3. To create better services and efficiencies through joint working wherever possible
4. Identify gaps in service provision and

work to ensure these are addressed

5. Support bids for funding to provide additional assistance wherever possible
6. Develop a greater understanding of housing demand, needs and conditions across (LA area) and regionally, to understanding of how this impacts wider strategic issues affecting homelessness and homelessness prevention activities.
7. Responsible for updating a homelessness strategy action plan, to ensure it remains relevant.

Strategic links

The following documents are strategically linked to the Homelessness Strategy and should be considered in any decisions recommended by the HSSG: [List all local authority strategies and plans linked with, impacting or impacted by the Homelessness Strategy].

- Corporate Plan
- Community Safety Plan
- Empty Homes Strategy
- Housing Allocation Scheme
- Housing Strategy
- Local Plan
- Private Sector Housing Strategy
- Tenancy Strategy

Steering Group structure

Steering Group Chair

The steering group will be chaired by [insert title of officer/elected member], whose responsibilities include homelessness. In the absence of the Chair for a meeting, [insert title of officer] will chair the meeting. The chair will be responsible for the provision of a meeting venue, agenda setting, minute taking and other administration that may be required.

Steering Group Members

Primary Membership of the HSSG will include chief or principle officers from bodies that have statutory obligation to assist with delivering the homelessness strategy and undertaking homelessness duties, including:

- Local housing authority
- Adult social care
- Child social care

Private registered providers of social housing (especially those formed to receive a voluntary transfer of social rented housing from a local housing authority).

Additional Membership will include senior officers for the following public policy matters, as these bodies have duties to make referrals of cases homelessness, and/or are responsible for setting local policy for people who are more at risk of homelessness:

- prisons (whenever located in a local authority area)
- youth offender institutions, secure training centres and secure colleges (whenever located in a local authority area)
- National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies
- Jobcentre Plus
- NHS Trusts and NHS Foundations Trusts
- Ministry of Defence armed forces advice and resettlement service (whenever located in a local authority area)
- Community safety partnerships

- Public health.

Each member will have a genuine commitment to joint working and improving services used by homeless people and people at risk of becoming homeless.

Non-members

From time to time other individuals or organisations may be invited to represent issues of organisations not usually present, such as:

- other public authorities
- voluntary organisations (or a representative body on behalf of the sector)
- National and local experts on homelessness
- Any other interested persons (including those with experience of homelessness)

Homelessness Strategy Steering Group Members agree to:

- Support and promote the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan, through the coordination of the cross-sector work carried out by statutory and voluntary agencies and private sector organisations, to tackle and prevent homelessness.
- Contribute to the reduction of homelessness through the member's service or organisation by helping to address homelessness and related issues on a sector wide basis.
- Ensure that the Homelessness Strategy informs policy and strategy development within the member's own service/organisation.
- Monitor the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy within their own service or organisation, where appropriate, and report on progress and impact to the HSSG.
- Act as 'champions' for the homelessness strategy within the members' own service or organisation raising awareness and understanding of housing and homelessness issues through internal and external communication.

- Work in collaboration with steering group members where appropriate regarding the implementation of the HSAP, recognising the constraints within which each service or organisation operates.
- Establish such working groups as required, including short life task and finish groups, to oversee implementation of HSAP activities.
- Positively communicate and engage with stakeholders and partners about the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan and its implementation.
- Provide advice to the HSSG as required.
- Provide any requested information within agreed timescales and meet any agreed other commitments.
- Take a lead on key actions and activities of the HSAP as required by the group.
- Support any local or national government scrutiny review as required.

Meetings

Meeting agendas, supporting papers and minutes will be provided through the Chair, unless otherwise agreed. Meetings will be held at a frequency decided by the members, but no less frequently than every three months. Meetings will be hosted at [insert name of host organisation]

Agenda

The agenda for each meeting will normally include:

Minutes of the previous meeting for approval and signing

Reports seeking a decision from the HSSG

Any item which a member of the HSSG wishes included on the agenda, provided it is relevant to the terms of reference of the HSSG and notice has been given to the Chair at least ten working days before the meeting.

Governance and Reporting structure (see Graphic 1)

Accountability and decisions

The Steering Group will report through the Chair to the (Cabinet Member/ Executive Lead) [delete as applicable] for Homelessness, Scrutiny Committee Chair and Chief Officer for Homelessness of the (insert local housing authority name), updating the Council's Cabinet/Committee, Scrutiny Committee and Full Council as required [delete as applicable].

Individual HSSG members are responsible for reporting back to their own organisations/ services as required by their own reporting structure and mechanisms.

Key decisions will be taken by the (insert local housing authority name) Cabinet/Executive [delete as applicable] or Full Council as required, following recommendations from the HSSG through the Chair or delegated member.

The HSSG will normally recommend decisions by unanimous or majority agreement of members present, providing that the meeting is quorate. Quorate is (e.g., 5 members, or half of members plus one) member organisations.

Modifications to the strategy or action plan will be made as required due to new research or evidence, new national or local political priorities for tackling homelessness, or the commencement of new legislation that might impact on homelessness levels, causes or activities.

Short life groups

From time to time short life task & finish groups will be created as required to accomplish specific action(s) from the homelessness strategy. Membership of these groups will vary according to requirements. Any such group will be chaired by a member of the HSSG and the Chair of each group will be responsible for ensuring accountability and deliverability, plus will be required to update the HSSG quarterly meetings.

Homelessness Forum

A homelessness forum organised and promoted by the HSSG Members will take place twice a year, to present progress towards achieving homelessness strategy objectives and encourage engagement.

The forum will be chaired by the HSSG Chair. Attendance at the forum will be open to everyone with an interest in tackling homelessness.

Other Groups

Other Groups will be agreed by the HSSG as required. These may include:

- Multiagency casework action groups
- Service user panel
- Policy officer group
- Each group will be designated a mentor from the main HSSG. The Chair of each group will be required to attend and update the HSSG quarterly meetings.

Information sharing and Confidentiality

Matters raised at the HSSG should not be regarding individual homelessness cases, whether clients or potential clients, however it is prudent that in the event of such information being shared the [insert name of local housing authority] Information Sharing Protocol and Confidentiality Policy will apply. These documents will also apply to the homelessness forum, and any other groups as defined by these terms of reference. The protocol and policy are available from the Chair on request.

Reviewing the terms of reference

The effectiveness and membership of the HSSG will be reviewed at least every 12 months, at which time this Terms of Reference may be amended by agreement of the HSSG members.