

Organisational Change Assessment Consultation Paper

HELP team consolidation

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Table of Contents

	Section	Page
Executive Summary	1	
Headlines of Proposal	2	
Background	3	
Options Analysis	4	
Scope of the proposal	5	
Benefits of the proposal	6	
Risks	7	
Staffing Implications	8	
Financial Implications	9	
Consultation and Timeline	10	
Timetable for Consultation and Implementation Activities	10	
Support Resources	11	

1 Executive Summary

The HELP team has provided a collaborative pilot providing employment, housing and welfare support to families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness for the last 2 years following innovation funding from EaSI (The EU department for Employment and Social Innovation).

With the completion of the EaSI pilot, Westminster City Council's Housing Department has agreed to fund the HELP project for a further 18 months using their flexible homelessness grant allocated by central Government.

The project will be to provide employment support alongside the extensive commissioned homelessness prevention services to prevent families from requiring temporary accommodation.

The delivery of the service will sit within Westminster Employment Service and will report to the Head of Prevention in the Housing Department - both are within Growth Planning and Housing in Westminster City Council. The Service will work closely with all of the Council's commissioned and provided housing prevention teams including Shelter, The Passage, Places for People and Trailblazers. The team will work with any tenants to prevent homelessness including private and social tenants, and with excluded occupiers (people living with family and friends) to enable them to access employment and secure private rented housing.

There are several key drivers for this change:

- 1) The Homelessness Reduction Act places a duty on local authorities to collaborate and provide services at an earlier stage (56 days) to prevent homelessness. The Council's would like to ensure greater resources are being allocated to prevent homelessness to meet their prevention duties.
- 2) The Council has already made a significant investment in commissioning homelessness prevention services, so the new HELP service will include employment coaching and financial capability only and will work alongside existing housing services.
- 3) The Council has made a decision to bring the HELP team into the Council to deliver the service as part of Westminster Employment Service.

This document outlines the organisational change that is proposed to take effect from **5th April 2019**.

2. Background

The Homelessness, Employment and Learning Project (HELP) was run for more than 10 years by a charity set up by the Council called Vital Regeneration. HELP formerly provided employment support to households living in temporary accommodation and in particular those impacted by welfare reform, working alongside the RMG Welfare Reform Team.

In 2016 Vital Regeneration, Westminster City Council and FEANTSA were successful in a partnership bid for the EU programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI). The EaSI funding was to run a One Stop Shop, delivering an integrated employment and housing offer to prevent homelessness and provide support those in temporary accommodation. The collaboration included new Westminster City Council staff who provided roles such as the HELP Project Manager and Financial Capability Officer,

Senior Evaluation and Performance Officer and Social Worker. There was also a DWP employment coach (Troubled Families Employment Adviser) working with the team.

During mobilisation of the new contract, in April 2017, the Vital Regeneration staff working on EaSI HELP became a subsidiary of a larger charity called Thamesreach. Thamesreach has informed the Council that at the end of the EaSI contract, Vital Regeneration will cease to exist. The Council has informed Thamesreach that it is seeking agreement on a proposal to bring the HELP team into Westminster Employment Service as Westminster City Council staff.

For the last 2 years, HELP has piloted a collaborative way of working between the charity, the DWP and different WCC Council departments including Economy, Children's and Housing to provide a holistic offer.

A number of aspects of the pilot were very successful and we want to continue these in the new service:

- A person-centred approach: The team is highly skilled in working with people with multiple barriers and take a non-judgemental approach and find solutions for people.
- A holistic offer looking at employment, housing, welfare benefits, health and the needs of whole families.
- The HELP 'round table' as a way of working brings professionals together to work across departments to resolve barriers for people.
- The financial capability role has added immense value for families in preventing homelessness.
- Joint work with the Discretionary Housing Policy team has moved more people towards work and fewer remain reliant on repeat discretionary payments.
- Joint work with Housing Solutions Service, Shelter and Trailblazers to provide landlord negotiation where people are threatened with homelessness and to provide moves into private rented housing has worked well.
- Collaboration with the Department for Work and Pensions has enabled both partners to access greater services, share knowledge and achieve outcomes for families.
- Co-location with housing services that our clients use, has led to increased referrals and better joined up working with Housing Solutions Service.
- Family engagement events with families has benefited those families.
- The HELP café model has been very effective at engaging and supporting people with children into work.

Some aspects of the pilot could be improved, and this new model seeks to resolve these:

Matching holistic working with statutory duties:

- Working alongside statutory housing functions, in particular the Private Rented Sector Offer (statutory discharge of duty offers) were not easy to co-ordinate alongside employment work. The proposal is therefore that the future HELP service will work with the Housing Solutions Service in the prevention and relief stages only - supporting people with voluntary moves into private rented housing and preventing people from all tenures from losing their existing home.
- There were limitations to the social work role as the allocated social worker could only conduct children's assessments, but many HELP families already had an allocated social worker in a specialist team - including in Adult Social Care. Going forward, the team will not have a dedicated social worker but will work alongside any specialist social worker already involved with the household.

All new referrals will be screened by the WES triage and referrals officer to identify if social services are involved.

Lines of accountability

- The personal caseworkers have 4 managers, two Vital Regeneration Senior Caseworkers, a Thamesreach line manager and the HELP Project Manager. They are employed on Vital Regeneration terms and conditions, access support from Thamesreach and training from the Westminster Adviser Academy. They work on Westminster IT and some have dual SIM phones. This has added a layer of unnecessary complexity to service delivery. Bringing the team into direct line management of the Council will provide effective lines of accountability.

Finances

- Managing small payments to support clients has been limiting as Vital Regeneration Staff may not access WCC finances. Therefore, petty cash has had to be brought over frequently by bus from South London. There are not proper facilities to store petty cash as WCC does not deal with petty cash. In future the whole team will be WCC employees on one finance system.

Reasons for change

1) The **Homelessness Reduction Act** requires Local Authorities to work collaboratively and intervene early to prevent homelessness. Currently the HELP team works both on prevention and with those where a duty has been accepted to provide temporary accommodation.

Being in temporary accommodation creates additional pressures for families who live with uncertainty, often moving address at short notice. Their children need to adjust to changing schools. Frequent moves can create additional financial pressures with the cost of the actual move, and each time they need to reapply for benefits which may result in gaps in payment. These are all reasons to find solutions early on to prevent families from entering the temporary accommodation system - either by helping them to keep their existing tenancy- or by finding an alternative housing solution that they can afford. There is a need to focus the Council's limited resources on prevention services to avoid the long-term impacts homelessness can have on families.

HELP is effectively able to support people at risk of homeless, both around social issues where they need support, and structural issues where financial support is a factor in their ability to find or sustain a home. HELP will continue to provide an integrated offer incorporating housing, employment and health can help to find joined up solutions before the family enters into the homelessness system.

2) Westminster City Council has invested significantly in homelessness prevention services, floating support and street homelessness services, consequently, there is no demand for additional housing services to be provided. Therefore the new team will no longer include housing solutions staff, it will continue to include employment and welfare support only and continue to work alongside existing commissioned housing services including Trailblazer, Shelter, the Passage and Housing Solutions Service.

3) Due to the number of large services being brought in house at this time such as City West Homes, we are proposing to simply lift and drop the entire team into WES on their existing terms and conditions.

4. Options Analysis

A review of existing arrangements has identified three possible options for the HELP structure as it currently stands.

(i) Do Nothing Option

The EU funding is due to end, and Vital Regeneration is due to end:

One option is to just let the programme end.

This is not the preferred option as the programme has delivered significant positive outcomes for families, as well as being a finalist in the ERSA employability awards and the Westminster Economy Team won 'City for All, Outstanding Achievement Award' in which HELP was noted as a key achievement. The project has been delivering great outcomes for Westminster residents.

To conclude the project would mean once again no significant and directed support for these families. With the implementation of the Housing Reduction Act, there will be even greater need for programmes such as HELP to provide early intervention to reduce demand on statutory services by preventing homelessness.

The Current Structure is attached at **Appendix 1**.

(ii) Minor Changes to the Current Structure

The second option is to continue the project with a new provider. Vital Regeneration will end at the end of the EaSI funding. The Council could hold a competitive tender for a Charity to provide the service, and Vital Regeneration staff would need to be transferred to the successful bidder.

Throughout the project there has been a complex arrangement for the Vital Regeneration staff team with both Thamesreach and Westminster Council providing management. For staff to be moved into another provider would require further change and lose momentum in continuing to deliver a high performing service.

In addition, we would retain the currently inconsistent lines of accountability which is a barrier to delivery.

(iii) Restructured Fit-for-Purpose HELP programme – Preferred Option

The third option is the **preferred option**. This option seeks to transfer the existing Vital Regeneration team staff into the Westminster City Council Employment Service. The proposal is to ensure a stable and cost-effective team structure with clear lines of accountability, building on existing successes and joining an existing high performing team that they are already working alongside.

The Proposed Structure is attached at **Appendix 2**.

5. Scope of the Restructure

There are 15 roles within the HELP project, not all funded by EASI.

Role	Organisation	EASI funded
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Personal Caseworker x3	Vital Regeneration	3
Senior Personal Caseworker* x 2	Vital Regeneration	2
Financial Capability Officer	WCC	1
Project Manager x1	WCC	1
Senior Evaluation and Performance Officer	WCC	1
Social Worker x 1	WCC	0
PRS officer x 3	RMG	2
TFEA x 1	DWP	0
Admin work placement	WCC	0
Project Officer x 2	FEANTSA	2

*Currently one of the Senior Caseworkers is on maternity leave and is replaced with a temporary personal case officer.

(i) Exclusions from Current Structure

The scope of this restructure is not the entirety of the current arrangements. For these purposes the restructure **excludes** the following roles who are employed in other teams and worked as part of the HELP team during the project period. joint working agreements with each of these agencies will be discussed with their respective organisations, and none will be funded by WES at the end of this funding period.

- 3 PRS workers
- 1 TFEA
- 1 Social Worker
- 1 Admin Placement
- 2 FEANTSA Project Officers
- 1 Senior Performance and Evaluation Officer

(ii) Current Structure

Given the above, the in-scope **Current/As-Is structure covers 7 posts** which are:

- 1 Project Manager
- 2 Senior Personal Caseworkers
- 3 Personal Case Workers
- 1 Financial Capability Officer (Benefits officer)

The proposal is to develop the new service retaining the existing team as they are on their existing terms and conditions but moving management directly to Westminster City Council.

To deliver the future, the new vision requires a team characterised by:

- Trust, pride and a sense of shared identity;

- Strong leadership;
- Team-work and a can-do attitude;
- Individual and collective excellence; and
- Clear values and high standards of behaviour.
- Alignment with the service into which they are being brought.

The proposed restructure allows for the above to become a reality. The Proposed Structure can be found at **Appendix 2**.

The up-skilling of staff through training and development will continue to be core to the new ways of working, including access to the WES Adviser Academy.

We will be exploring opportunities to “grow our own” by continuing to invite graduate trainee posts and an apprentice post who could rotate within WES.

6. Benefits of the Proposed New Structure

Headline Benefits

The new structure will deliver clear lines of accountability within the funding available.

The new HELP structure will provide the resources to deliver a prevention service to prevent homelessness approaches.

The service will target people who are at risk of homelessness and will seek to achieve the following outcomes:

Outcome	Target per year
Caseload per Coach	70
Registrations	350
Interim outcomes	175
Job Starts	125
Sustains	88
Financial Capability Support	140 people supported each year

7. Risks and Mitigations

(i) **Loss of permanent staff due to uncertainty** – It is inevitable and natural that during times of upheaval that people will feel uneasy and uncertain. This risk will be mitigated by a planned and prompt approach, with a detailed timetable to minimise the period of concern.

(ii) **Loss of Service Standards over the short-term** – The uncertainty over the short-term could lead to failure to meet required standards of service to adequately support the business. This risk will be mitigated by clear regular communication,

Increased availability of management/HR and Trade Union resource during the consultation period and thereafter during the implementation period.

(iii) Loss of Service to people living in Temporary Accommodation

HELP has made a significant impact on the number of people living in temporary accommodation who are unemployed, and the number of people requiring this service have dropped. The majority of people living in temporary accommodation are in work.

There remain some service users who have worked with HELP for a few years during their journey in temporary accommodation and still access the HELP service. In future people living in Temporary Accommodation will need to access employment support from other teams within WES and we have made clear plans for these cases to be supported by our other employment teams including FACES for families, and Church Street team for households living in that ward.

Existing casework cases will be provided with a warm handover within WES if they no longer meet the HELP criteria.

(Iv) Loss of referrals – the team is already taking on referrals from those at risk of homelessness, but a significant number are households living in temporary accommodation. The team will need to develop stronger links in the community to build up new referral sources. This may impact on numbers initially. Additional marketing will be needed to make partners aware of the changes to the service.

(v) Co-location: The team has been co-located with housing solutions. The team will continue to provide an outreach service to Bruckner street to families attending the housing solutions service. In addition the team will need to do greater work in Westminster with households in housing association and private tenancies, and living with family and friends. The Council's property services will be advising on suitable Council offices and co-location sites available, and the HELP team will be consulted on the options available. Until a suitable site is identified the team will remain at 101 Orchardson Street.

8. Staffing Implications

All five staff will be brought in house on existing terms and conditions.

There is in addition, one staff member providing maternity cover, who will continue to provide this maternity cover until the end of the maternity leave.

9. Financial Implications

Summary of Financial Implications	No of FTE	Salary Cost (including On costs)	Available Funding
Total Posts created	7	WCC HELP PM WCC Financial Capability Officer Vital 2 Senior Case Officers Vital 3 Personal Case Officers	£350,000 p/a
Net position		= £266,432	

10. Consultation and Timeline

The formal consultation period for this restructure will commence on **18th February 2019** for a period of **30 calendar days**, with the last day of consultation being 18th March 2019.

At the start of the consultation period, an all staff meeting will be held with all staff affected to launch the consultation and provide the headlines of the process. We will also consult with staff who have worked as part of the project to communicate the changes and identify new ways of working.

All affected staff will have the opportunity to take part in the consultation process in a variety of ways, including face-to-face individual meetings and team/group meetings. Staff may be accompanied by a trade Union representative or a colleague during individual meetings.

To ensure that meaningful consultation takes place during this period, all affected employees are encouraged to feed into the proposal with comments or suggestions. Staff will be permitted to take time during work hours to meet together as a collective or on an individual basis to feedback into the consultation.

All comments and feedback on the proposal should be put in writing to helpconsultation@westminster.gov.uk by the end of the consultation period. Comments received will be reviewed as they come in and the final decision on this proposal will be communicated shortly after the close of consultation being 21st March

The process will be managed in accordance with the Council's [Consultation Policy and the Statutory Consultation Process](#).

Timetable for Consultation and Implementation Activities

11. Support Resources

Inevitably any period of change is unsettling, especially for those people most impacted by the proposed changes. We need to be sensitive to this over the coming few months. These proposals raise a number of issues for the majority of staff. In supporting staff through this reorganisation process, several resources are available. Please make use of these resources if you would like to:

- **Your Time:** All affected staff will have the opportunity to discuss the proposed new structure and arrangements either through one-to-one or team meetings with Shama Sutar-Smith, post the announcement.
- **Human Resources:** Staff affected who would like further information may wish to contact The ThamesReach HR service and WCC;
- **Union Representatives:** Union members may want to consult their representatives for advice and clarification of the procedures or for help in formulating their response to these proposals; and
- **Workplace Options:** WCC's employee assistance programme is available for employees who may require specialist advice or support. This is a confidential service which can be accessed 24/7 on 0800 243 458 or via assistance@workplaceoptions.com