

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Housing & Community Committee
9 March 2017



Homelessness Reduction Bill **Impact on Milton Keynes Council**

This briefing note aims to highlight the potential impact the Homelessness Reduction Bill may have on Milton Keynes Council.

Context

In summary, the Bill's aim is to bring about measures for reducing homelessness.

There are a number of measures the Bill will introduce but this briefing note is not intended to explain the detail of all of those measures. The Government has produced factsheets to provide this detail.

The Bill's second reading took place in the House of Lords 24th February. This has been given consent now for full committee stage to be considered by Parliament on 10th March 2017.

Key Provisions in the Bill:-

A prevention duty: a new duty for local authorities to take action to prevent the homelessness of anyone who is eligible for assistance (e.g. 'habitually resident' in the UK) and threatened with homelessness within 56 days, regardless of priority need status, local connection or intentionality, (although there is speculation that the duty to provide temporary accommodation to all those assessed as homeless for 56 days may be removed from the bill, on the basis that it would be too costly).

A relief duty: a new duty for local authorities to take steps to relieve the homelessness of anyone who is currently homeless, eligible for assistance and has a local connection to the area. This will include providing advisory services to all who need them and agreeing a plan to identify actions the applicant and the Council will take to secure accommodation.

A duty to cooperate: provisions to ensure that households are expected to take reasonable steps to resolve their own homelessness.

A duty to refer: a new duty on other public bodies to make referrals to local authority homelessness teams if they are working with people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

There will also be additional review opportunities for customers during the new process.

The bill has undergone additional changes, such as allowing care leavers to claim a 'local connection' to the area that they have been accommodated in.

Government has committed a total of £61 million to be allocated to Local Authorities over a two year period. There is concern that this will not be enough to maintain the additional duties and seeing people 56 days before homelessness will not increase the options for people any more that seeing them at 28 days.

Impacts

At this stage, we believe the impacts to be:

<p>Number of homeless cases</p>	<p>It is expected that initially at least, numbers of recorded homelessness will rise.</p> <p>We will be obliged to record requests for assistance as the process starts earlier and applies to a wider group, and these cases have not been recorded previously.</p> <p>There is no estimate of how many this may be at this point but data will be analysed to start to quantify the possible demand.</p> <p>Details from Wales, where similar legislation was previously introduced may provide some indication of the trend we may see.</p> <p>Additional resources may be required to manage increased demand.</p>
<p>Financial</p>	<p>The cost to the Housing Service of the introduction of the Bill is unknown at this stage.</p> <p>Should the Bill result in more placements in temporary accommodation the cost to the General Fund could increase significantly.</p> <p>There will also be financial demands due to the administrative burden of personalised plans and the additional duty to inspect homes in the private sector where we have 'helped to secure accommodation' for the client, even if we haven't provided it ourselves.</p> <p>There is a lot of emphasis on the 'helping to secure' part of the draft legislation, such as providing deposits. This may create an additional financial burden but could be offset by a reduction in the use of temporary accommodation.</p> <p>If more applications are being taken this will inevitably lead to an increase in the number of requests for review which will increase costs.</p> <p>However, as the Bill is being introduced to ensure Councils improve prevention of homelessness there may be a positive effect of reducing the cost to the General Fund through less usage of temporary accommodation.</p> <p>IT – there may be additional costs incurred if the Housing Management Software is required to be updated. A Pipeline request will be submitted when more detail is available, to ensure IT resources are available.</p>
<p>Funding</p>	<p>The Government has announced that additional funding of £61m will be made available to Councils, although the allocation of this to Milton Keynes Council is not yet known.</p>

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