

# Introduction

Milton Keynes was created in 1967, conceived as a way of providing much needed housing and easing a growing housing shortage.

Fifty years on, Milton Keynes itself now faces a new housing shortage, with increasing numbers of its residents becoming homeless. This is at a time when the NHS is also under significant pressure, with increasing demand for both physical and mental health services.

The link between housing and mental health is well known and the difficulties faced in both these areas present new and complex problems. Poor mental health can be a contributory factor when someone becomes homeless, while becoming homeless will often exacerbate a person's existing mental health problems.

The scrutiny work carried out by the Housing and Communities Committee (HCC), has established the clear link between the issues of mental health and homelessness. In recognition of this, both the HCC and Health and Adult Social Care Committee (HASC) decided a more detailed piece of work was needed to look at the accessibility and provision of mental health services for the homeless.

Both Committees recommended the establishment of a Task and Finish Group (TFG) to carry out this work, with membership from both the HCC and HASC Committees and from the Homelessness Partnership.

The TFG was composed of Councillors M Bradburn, Coventry, Ferrans, Geaney, Walker and P Williams, with the Milton Keynes Homelessness Partnership being represented by Thamreen Siddiqui (Open Door) and Nicola Paton (Compass Drug and Alcohol Support Service). The Scrutiny Management Committee appointed Councillor P Williams as Chair of the Group.

Elizabeth Richardson served as the Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

Primarily, the TFG has sought to work collaboratively to explore ways to improve the accessibility and provision of mental health services to homeless people in Milton Keynes, with evidence taken from a range of sources.

Meetings have been held with voluntary organisations, and professional bodies working on the frontline providing support and health services to the homeless.

This report is the end result of that work and is an attempt to lay foundations for further work to be carried out, while recognising it is not possible to come up with quick and easy solutions to what is a complex problem.

Our hope is that the publishing of this report is the beginning of a process that sees the provision of mental health services for the homeless, established as a priority in future decisions made by Milton Keynes Council and our health partners.

Cllr Paul Williams

Chair of Mental Healthcare Provision for the Homeless TFG

Date