

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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| <b>COMMITTEE</b>          | Anti-Poverty and Inequality   |
| <b>DATE</b>               | 20 March 2024   |
| <b>EXEMPT</b>             | No  |
| <b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>       | No  |
| <b>REPORT TITLE</b>       | Six monthly update on the Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Work and Pensions on Preventing Homelessness |
| <b>REPORT NUMBER</b>      | CUS/24/077  |
| <b>DIRECTOR</b>           | Andy MacDonald  |
| <b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>      | Jacqui McKenzie   |
| <b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>      | Paul Tytler   |
| <b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b> | 2.3   |

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an update on work agreed through the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with the Department of Work and Pensions on preventing homelessness.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Committee

- 2.1 Note the report; and
- 2.2 Instruct the Chief Officer - Early Intervention and Community Empowerment to liaise with the Department of Work and Pensions and update the Memorandum of Understanding in line with current priorities and submit it back to Committee for approval.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 On the 13th July 2022 Council agreed to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Work and Pensions. On the same date Council agreed that update reports for the Memorandum of Understanding be submitted on a six-monthly basis to the relevant committee.

- 3.2 The table at Appendix 1 sets out progress against each aspect of the Memorandum of Understanding.
- 3.3 DWP have not identified any risk areas in relation to the MoU and are very pleased with how it is working at an operational level.
- 3.4 There is a requirement to refresh the MoU with DWP as a result of changes in resourcing and to ensure it aligns with current priorities. This will ensure we realise strategic value from the partnership. This will be undertaken jointly with DWP and reported back to Committee.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

**5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report

**6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

**7. RISK**

| <b>Category</b>       | <b>Risks</b> | <b>Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level</b> | <b>*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)</b><br><br><b>*taking into account controls/control actions</b> | <b>*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?</b> |
|-----------------------|--------------|--|---|--|
| <b>Strategic Risk</b> |              | No significant risk identified                                       |   | Yes  |
| <b>Compliance</b>     |              | No significant risk identified                                       |   | Yes  |
| <b>Operational</b>    |              | No significant risk identified                                       |   | Yes  |

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|------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|-----|
| <b>Financial</b>             |  | No significant risk identified |  | Yes |
| <b>Reputational</b>          |  | No significant risk identified |  | Yes |
| <b>Environment / Climate</b> |  | No significant risk identified |  | Yes |

## 8. OUTCOMES

| <u><a href="#">COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</a></u>  |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b>   | <b>Impact of Report</b>  |
| <p><b>A PROSPEROUS CITY</b></p> <p>Develop our economy in a genuine partnership with the private sector, third sector and residents.</p> <p><b>A CARING CITY</b></p> <p>Work with partners to identify and agree specific integrated solutions for tackling the health and social problems caused by misuse of alcohol and drugs.</p> | <p>The Memorandum of Understanding will help ensure the Council delivers on its stated vision.</p> |
| <u><a href="#">Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</a></u>   |  |
| <p>Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes</p>  | <p>1 - No one will suffer due to poverty by 2026</p>   |

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

| <b>Assessment</b>                        | <b>Outcome</b>                                      |
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| <b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>      | New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed |
| <b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b> | Not required at this time                           |

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Preventing Homelessness – Memorandum of Understanding between Aberdeen City Council and the Department of Work and Pensions  
[CUS/22/144](#)

## 11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Progress report on the Memorandum of Understanding.

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

|                      |                             |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
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MoU action tracker

|   | Action   | Update February 2024   |
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| 1 | <p>Aberdeen City Council and Department of Work and Pensions will work together to support homeless citizens by:</p> <p>a - Working towards a data sharing agreement to allow the sharing and analysis of customer data so changes in benefit status for homeless households can be identified</p> <p>b - Share information within data protocols on new tenancies created through the homeless process to ensure support is provided when starting a new home</p> | <p>Development work is required to establish an agreement and to then share information.</p> |

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| <p>c - Co-locate where appropriate to enhance the support available to those experiencing homelessness</p> <p>d - Replicate the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 “Duty to Refer” arrangement, ensuring that where work coaches are aware of a homeless person, they refer to ACC</p> <p>e - Create a Single Point of Contact Model (SPOC) for homelessness and work together to support homeless applicants with no income, reducing the timescale for support where possible</p> <p>f - Collaborate where possible to determine status of No Recourse to Public Funds groups as quickly as possible.</p> | <p>DWP and Aberdeen in Recovery (AiR) have agreed in principle to co-locate and offer outreach services in AiR premises – to be progressed in coming months. Further development has been agreed to consider co-location and referral processes with other services and at other locations.</p> <p>The new legal duties to prevent homelessness, contained within the Housing Bill will place a duty upon all public bodies to identify a risk of homelessness and to act on that information. This is not yet in place and there is no indication on timescale.</p> <p>These have been identified.</p> <p>DWP are running a 3 month national "Housing Confident" campaign across all their Job Centres &amp; Service Centres with the aim of upskilling frontline staff and managers around housing and rent related matters.</p> <p>Entitlement to benefits is checked with DWP for those presenting as homelessness if they state they have claimed or are claiming UC. This can include EEA nationals who can be helped to secure their status and following a positive Home Office decision, we work closely together to apply for relevant benefits, get into payment and work towards</p> |
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|   |  | <p>employability, effectively covered by the resettlement tactical group. This includes eligibility for homeless support where appropriate.</p> <p>In terms of people with No recourse to Public Funds, DWP can take no action but checks are made with social work to determine possible homeless support for children and families</p>   |
| 2 | <p>Aberdeen City Council and Department of Work and Pensions will continue to work collaboratively, sharing intelligence as per current protocols and seek to further develop these, including supporting Move to Universal Credit when this is planned.</p> | <p>Department of Work and Pensions and Aberdeen City Council currently work closely in a number of service areas, including revenues and Benefits, Housing and Support, and Homelessness.</p> <p>Move to UC started in January 2024. By the end of the financial year 2023/24, roll out of Move to UC for Tax Credit only customers will have been completed, other than those that have been exempted or deferred due to case complexity.</p> <p>Looking ahead to 2024/25, the remaining groups of households receiving legacy benefits will be migrated to Universal Credit, excluding Employment and Support Allowance only and Employment and Support Allowance with Housing Benefit.</p> <p>A wide range of comprehensive support is available, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a dedicated phone line, run by DWP, - included on the migration notice and letters</li> <li>• further guidance on gov.uk which will signpost to independent support from Citizens Advice Help to Claim service</li> </ul> |

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|   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specially trained staff in Job Centre Plus's and service centres, including signposting to third parties and stakeholders</li> <li>• support through the Help to Claim service (from Citizens Advice)</li> </ul>  |
| 3 | <p>Department of Work and Pensions will continue to be an active partner in Community Planning Aberdeen, continuing our work through the Aberdeen Prospers Group, and actively participating in the Anti-Poverty Group and Alcohol and Drugs Partnership. This will include:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a) Department of Work and Pensions advisors co-locating with Alcohol and Drugs Partnership services to support stabilisation and recovery</p> | <p>Aberdeen in Recovery (AiR) and DWP have agreed effective direct referral processes. DWP and AiR have agreed in principle to co-locate and offer outreach services in AiR premises – to be progressed in coming months. Further development has been agreed to consider co-location and referral processes with other services and at other locations.</p> |

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|   | <p>b) Alcohol and Drugs Partnership support to Department of Work and Pensions to identify alcohol/drug risks and pathways</p>   |  |
| 4 | <p>Department of Work and Pensions will continue be an active partner in the Criminal Justice system, building on work already being provided at HMP Grampian through:</p> <p>a. Collaborating with ACC's Prison Liaison Officer to ensure planned support is in place prior to liberation</p> | <p>There is a lot of good partnership working going on between the Prison Liaison Officer and the Prison Coach, with any identified benefit queries referred to the DWP when needed.</p> <p>Partnership activities have focused on employability. A partnership between the local authority, the Scottish Prison Service and Greene King has resulted in the creation and operation of a training kitchen in the</p> |

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|   | <p>b. Department of Work and Pensions joining the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Strategic Oversight Group as required.</p> | <p>prison, with guaranteed jobs on release for successful participants. The second cohort of training is in place.</p> <p>This has been expanded to barista training. Focusing on key sectors, a knife skills course is offered to support fish industry, alongside construction and warehouse training courses .</p> <p>The Management of Offenders etc. (Scotland) Act 2005 (Disclosure of Information) Order 2010 sets out the conditions under which information may be disclosed between the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Department for Work and Pensions), the Responsible Authorities and duty to co-operate agencies in the MAPPA – albeit DWP is not a duty to co-operate agency.</p> |
| 5 | <p>Aberdeen City Council and Department of Work and Pensions will continue work together to</p>  | <p>Department of Work and Pensions continue to provide active support to refugee work across the city.</p>   |

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|   | <p>support families in the current Home Office Afghan Resettlement Scheme, with Department Of Work And Pensions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Actively engaging in Afghan Resettlement Scheme Tactical meetings</li> <li>b - Assigning a work coach to all families or individuals where eligible</li> <li>c - Participating in quarterly reviews of the resettlement scheme, identifying lessons learned and ensuring these are translated into practice</li> <li>d - Participating in any future resettlement schemes.</li> </ul> |  |
| 6 | <p>Aberdeen City Council and Department of Work and Pensions will work together and in collaboration with other National and Local partners to support employability across Aberdeen. This will include –</p>   |  |

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|  | <p>a. supporting young people to overcome multiple barriers to employment, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The establishment of a Youth Hub, as well as introducing Youth Employability Coaches, specifically to work with 18 to 24-year-old unemployed people, in order to increase both skills attainment and employment outcomes</li> <li>ii. Continuing to develop the established Local</li> </ul> | <p>Aberdeen City Council, Skills Development Scotland, and Department for Work and Pensions delivered a PACE redundancy support event for the North-east employees of Stewart Milne Homes and others affected by redundancy. The support for those in need remains available.</p> <p>DWP continues to refer individuals in need of support to ABZWorks. DWP is an active participant in a range of employability-related activities led by the Council, including playing a crucial role in the recruitment of employers for ABZWorks Jobs Fairs, and in the delivery of employer engagement and wider sessions.</p> |
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|  | <p>Employability Partnership</p> <p>iii. Sharing relevant and appropriate information, to enhance young people's employability and ensure a positive destination is reached.</p> <p>b - Supporting adults to overcome barriers to employment, including:</p> <p>iv. Aberdeen City Council and Department of Work and Pensions will collaborate to link local employment opportunities with Community</p> | <p>DWP continues to actively engage in the Local Employability Partnership, contributing to planning, information and data sharing, and working closely on a number of joint activities in partnership with the Councils Employability and Skills team. This includes sharing information about employer skills gaps and demands, and being a member of the scoring panel for the Council's employability services commissioning activities.</p> |
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|  | <p>Benefit clauses included in procurement contracts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>v. Aberdeen City Council and Department of Work and Pensions will work with key stakeholders to co-ordinate an effective offer for individuals and employers at risk of redundancy</li><li>vi. Aberdeen City Council and Department Of Work And Pensions will collaborate to maximise the employability of people with long term</li></ul> |  |
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|   | <p>health conditions</p> <p>vii. Reviewing these arrangements on an ongoing basis.</p>   |   |
| 7 | <p>Aberdeen City Council and Department of Work and Pensions will work together to strengthen the support available to lone parent families. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. An agreed contact point for escalation between both organisations where a lone parent family requires additional support</li> <li>b. Joint access to relevant systems and common data platforms allowing quantitative analysis and prediction. This</li> </ul> | <p>Development work is required to develop and progress this area. This has been identified with DWP once key staff identified, development work will be planned.</p> |

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|   | <p>will include Aberdeen City Council Housing and Council systems, and Stat Xplore.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Agreement of referral pathways where there are mental health issues being experienced by the lone parent</li> <li>d. Exploring the creation of a Parent Hub to provide wraparound support</li> <li>e. Department of Work and Pensions as a stakeholder in the development of the Family Support Model in Aberdeen.</li> </ul> |  |
| 8 | Aberdeen City Council and Department of Work and Pensions will collaborate to ensure the new  |  |

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|   | <p>Housing and Support delivery model provides support to tenants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. At risk of becoming homeless to resolve any housing element issues timeously</li> <li>b. An agreed contact for escalation between both organisations</li> <li>c. Commitment to sharing feedback on the development of the landlord portal, influencing where possible.</li> </ul> | <p>This is in place.</p> <p>This is in place.</p> |
| 9 | <p>Aberdeen City Council and Department of Work and Pensions will work together to tackle safeguarding, suicide and drugs deaths. This will include:</p> <p>a - Enhancing and define existing escalation and referral routes where safeguarding concerns are</p>   | <p>This is in place.</p>                          |

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|    | <p>identified, including through the Risk and Concern Hub</p> <p>b - Department of Work and Pensions becoming an active partner in the City's Alcohol and Drugs Partnership in its attempts to reduce drugs deaths in the City task force</p> <p>c - Sharing of information regarding financial harm</p>  | <p>This is in place.</p>   |
| 10 | <p>Department of Work and Pensions will support Aberdeen City Council wherever possible in its vision to eradicate poverty in all its forms. This will be based on whole and targeted population data, including at locality level, and include the sharing of data through a data sharing agreement on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Child poverty</li> <li>b. Fuel poverty</li> <li>c. Food poverty</li> </ul> | <p>Department of Work and Pensions are an active partner in this work, with a key role in the development of responses to poverty, high profile work recently includes benefit checkers and income maximisation outreach work.</p> |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>d. In work poverty</li><li>e. Poverty and employment issues affecting minority ethnic communities</li><li>f. Care experienced young people</li></ul> |  |
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