

**SAVING PROPOSALS
BUDGET 2012/13 – 2014/15**

**Item Ref. No:
AHWB 6 (2012)**

TITLE OF SAVINGS OPTION:		Housing Link Phase 2			
DIRECTORATE:		Adults Health & Wellbeing			
SERVICE AREA:		Comm. & Strategy	LEAD OFFICER:		Deborah Cohen
FINANCE CONTACT:		Paul Thorogood			
£'000	Current Budget	Saving £000s (Incremental)			
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Total Savings
Employees (FTE)	205	100	105		205
Employees					
Others					
Income					
TOTAL SAVINGS	205	100	105		205
Revenue/Capital Costs: Are there any revenue or capital costs associated with this proposal? N – Please complete the table and also provide reference no. of corresponding bid):					
		Costs (Incremental)			
	Ref No.	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16+
Revenue Expenditure					
Capital Expenditure					
Total					
Nature of expenditure:					
1.	Outline/ details of savings proposal , including indications of stage of development, and work and timescales needed to finalise proposal:				
<p>Housing Link is a floating support service aimed specifically at people with mental health issues who are experiencing housing related difficulties. The service is for people with mental health needs who are in housing crisis including: the threat of eviction or imminent homelessness, rent arrears, or the need for urgent transfer.</p> <p>The service is funded by Adults Health and Wellbeing, with a total budget for 2011-2012 of £204,700. 66% of its current funding is from what was previously known as supporting people grant, the additional</p>					

funding comes from mainstream AHWB funding.

Following a recent review of the Housing Link Service, in the context of all floating support services provided to this client group, there is found to be an over provision of floating support services in this area; leading to the recommendation that this service should be decommissioned in the new financial year and service users move to generic support services.

In 2007 the Borough reconfigured all low level floating support services into a generic tenancy support service, moving away from client group specific services to a more generic pattern of service provision that was able to respond to a number of often inter-related support needs and so improve service user accessibility and overall experience. This resulted in 11 services, including two specialist mental health services being transferred into a “generic” service, able to meet a broad range of individual vulnerabilities. This contract was, after due process, awarded to Look Ahead and is known as the Look Ahead Generic FS service. Housing Link sits alongside the reconfigured floating support service and it is generally recognised, that the current configuration of services involves a significant level of duplication that adversely impacts on accessibility for service users who are frequently cross referred between services and also generally does not provide value for money in provision.

Housing Links productivity is compromised by its high level of rejections of referrals. This means too much time is spent on assessing individuals who are then not accepted to the service. Housing Link accept only 49% of total the total referrals compared to the generic service at 98%. This level of refusal also indicates that the “specialist” nature of the service makes it more difficult for individuals to access a service where their needs are not considered to fit within the eligibility criteria of the service.

Moving to a generic service model would mean service users do not have the inconvenience of being referred and assessed by more than one service. The generic service provides a very similar service to individuals with mental health issues which broadly equates to 25% of their acceptances, or 151 people during 2010-11. This compares to Housing Link who supported a total of 168 people through the same period.

Moving to this generic model would not adversely impact on services for people for mental health issues. This is explained in detail below, but in general terms, there is significant capacity in the generic service, together with continuous turnover, to ensure a tenancy support service for people with mental health issues is available to all who require and need it. The Borough has also invested in more intensive services for people with mental health issues through the increased capacity provided by the Independent Living Service (ILCS). And will continue its programme of modernisation and investment as highlighted in the Mental Health Accommodation Strategy. Therefore this proposal does not reflect an overall dis-investment in the area of mental health provision.

2.	Service implications of saving:
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In addition to Housing Link, the Borough commissions two other floating support services for people with mental health issues. These are listed as:

- ILLCS service for people with mental health issues; and
- Look Ahead Generic Floating Support (LAGFS) for people with a range of support needs, which will

include but is not exclusively for people with mental health issues.

Service	Provider	No. of service users	Annual contract value
Housing Link	Internal	70	£204,700
Generic Floating Support	Look Ahead	456	£879,060
ILCS.	Look Ahead	150	£469,477
Total		676	£1,553,237

ILCS will continue to be available to work with statutory mental health services in delivering the key targets of the Mental Health Accommodation Strategy, to enable greater capacity in working with the Borough to deliver the move on and support with independence required within the Strategy. In delivering the MH Accommodation Strategy, ILCS will enable people to move out of residential care, hospital and supported housing into their own tenancies. They will ensure people get the support they need to live independently and prevent escalation/emergency placements into higher need services, so enabling the Borough to meet some very challenging targets in reducing its reliance on Registered Care.

The generic service is commissioned to provide a broad range of floating support services to meet the tenancy related support needs of borough residents including supporting people with mental health needs. It has a very broad remit and will generally work with people to addresses the particular needs they have, irrespective of their primary presenting need. Housing link and LAGFS (where they work with people with mental health issues) both support individuals who have:

- a diagnosed mental health issue, receiving a statutory service in the past but not currently in contact with services; or
- an undiagnosed mental health issue which is currently contributing to a housing crisis; or
- a range of complex issues, including but not limited to mental health difficulties, which is contributing to a housing crisis. Including dual diagnosis substance and mental health issues.

For LAGFS this constitutes a significant percentage of their overall service users at broadly 26% of their caseload between the period of April 2010 and September 2011. In terms of numbers, this is usually in excess of the 75 service user caseload carried by Housing Link at any given time, at an average of 83 per quarter.

Housing Link service is essentially the same as that provided by Look Ahead Floating Support, it supports the same people, with the same type of needs. Decommissioning Housing Link will therefore not have an adverse affect on the services available to people with mental Health issues as LAGFS will continue to provide a service to this group within existing capacity.

3. Actions required to achieve saving:

- 1- Consult with staff team
- 2- Consult with service users.
- 3- Commence HR processes for decommissioning and managing staff redundancies/ redeployment.
- 4- Manage the reduction and ultimate closure of the service, including completing the packages of support for those service users with short term interventions and the hand-over of those service users who will require an alternative service.
- 5- Publicise the changes in service provision to referral agencies

4. Potential implications for staff, contractors, partners, assets and other Directorates:

Please indicate financial impact on other directorates (show cost increases as +ve and decreases as –ve)

Directorate	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	TOTAL
Chief Executive's				
Children, Schools and Families				
Schools (DSG Funded)				
Communities, Localities and Culture				
Development and Renewal				
Housing Revenue Account				
Resources				
TOTAL				

Impact on Service Users

Decommissioning the service will not impact on the majority of Housing Link's existing service users, the average length of provided service being six months, most existing service users will cease to use the service naturally during the wind down process. A small number of individuals, who have been using the service for some time **may** have to be transferred to LAGFS, but it is important to note that this service was only ever intended to support people for short- term crisis intervention. Taking turnover into account Housing Link supports an average of 168 service users a year. With an average length of service at six months, closing the service to new referrals during the decommissioning process would see the majority of cases close naturally over this time. The exception would be the small number of service users who foresee utilising the service for the long-term. For these individuals the removal of the service, even if another was offered, is likely to cause some anxiety, but can be carefully managed with support and effective communication, and it is likely, that a different more long term service is appropriate if this is the case.

There is generous capacity in the other existing floating support services to provide floating support for people with mental health issues. The availability of these services and the turnover therein, would ensure that should housing link be decommissioned this would not have a detrimental affect on access for individuals who requested a service. The LAGFS service will continue to support this client group and provide for new referrals of this type without any detrimental impact on future provision.

Impact on Staff

There is a staff team of 4 support workers and 0.8% of a Managers post; all staff are currently seconded to and managed by ELFT and are based in Mile End Hospital. The secondment agreement comes to an end in the New Year. One of the workers post is currently vacant therefore a total of 4 individuals would be

offered redeployment.	
5.	Other risk factors which could prevent this saving being achieved following implementation
N/A	
6.	Efficiency/ value for money - how will this proposal contribute towards greater efficiency/ better value for money and how will the efficiency improvement be measured?
<p>The service does not provide value for money; its cost per hour and unit cost are much greater than all other third sector services. Required services for this client group can be provided at a much more cost effective rate through the Framework Agreement.</p> <p>As part of the Councils Financial Plan to 31st March 2014 all Supporting People services will be re-tendered against a Framework Agreement, to ensure that maximum efficiencies are achieved in tandem with maintaining a high quality service to meet maximum identified need.</p> <p>Housing Link is currently the only commissioned SP service where the staff cost per hour is above the locally agreed upper benchmark of £21. At £23.37 it is the most expensive service provided. As services are let via the Framework, the gap in these costs can only widen, indications are that revised costs will be in the region of £19 per hour.</p> <p>Furthermore the current pattern of service delivery does not provide the most effective value for money in terms of the direct support in service users home and accessibility of opening hours to those that work or have commitments during normal office hours. This service operates a 9-5 service, whilst other floating support services are available 8-8pm at weekends and bank holidays. When the staff cost per hour is taken into consideration this raises further value for money concerns.</p> <p>The team support 75 service users at any one time, this equates to a caseload of 18.75 for each full time staff member, which is below other service providers.</p>	