



## North Devon Council

Reprt Date: 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Report to: Strategy & Resources Committee

Topic: Government's Implementation of a Full Dispersal Model for Asylum Seekers

Report by: Jeremy Mann; HoS, Planning, Housing & Health

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. There is an expectation from Government that 66 bed spaces in north Devon are made available to individuals seeking asylum in the UK.
- 1.2. The accommodation providers procured by Government have been tasked to dramatically reduce the number of people in hotel and other contingency accommodation.
- 1.3. A short term performance related incentivisation scheme has been introduced. This paper seeks to provide opportunity for NDC to benefit from these arrangements, as it works with Government to implement its SW Regional Plan.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. It is recommended that:
  - 2.1.1. Officers are directed to pro-actively engage with Clearsprings Ready Homes to facilitate the commissioning of the necessary dispersed accommodation bed spaces in north Devon.

### 3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. (Reason 2.1.1.) To adopt an approach which supports the agreed behavioural principles via a culture of collective responsibility and collaboration across central, local government and the commercial partners.

#### 4. REPORT

- 4.1. Public services are under pressure from recent global events, including a sustained rise in the number of asylum seekers and a shortage of suitable accommodation. Government wishes to alleviate this pressure and move away from the dependency on contingency accommodation and hotels. The Home Office intends to meet its legal obligations to accommodate destitute asylum seekers, without the use of contingency accommodation, by increasing the capacity of alternative accommodation types. This dispersed accommodation (DA) will commonly be the (shared) houses leased from private sector landlords or new larger scale mixed developments.
- 4.2. The SW region has been assigned with the responsibility of providing 3,694 beds in the 2023 plan and only 29% of this has been achieved to date. Furthermore, the regional plan sets a requirement of 66 bed spaces in ND (but there is no current DA in use here).
- 4.3. Government is intending to make non ring fenced grants available to local authorities who support the accommodation providers in establishing new units of dispersed accommodation.
- 4.4. The first grant is an incentive payment of £3,500 for each new bed space of DA occupied from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2024.
- 4.5. The second additional grant is in the form of a 4 month pilot. From the 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2023, payments of £3,000 will be made available, where the DA beds are delivered within 1 month of the provider identifying suitable property to the local authority. A £2,000 payment is available where new leads are delivered within 2 months of the provider identifying suitable property.
- 4.6. Government has established a robust mechanism to monitor delivery of their plan and escalate any local performance issues. Home Office officials have indicated their intention to focus on areas where they view there has been insufficient growth in DA.
- 4.7. Working pro-actively with Clearsprings Ready Homes, the accommodation provider in the SW, provides the best opportunity to meet this need and reduce the risk of any wider impacts on the community. The availability of non ring fenced grants would allow the Council to commission any complementary services without there being a direct impact on the approved budget.

4.8 NDC has already shown its commitment to support this work. Officers convened the multi-agency group which co-ordinated the response to the commissioning of the contingency hotel in Ilfracombe, and have offered a Council asset (a 7 bed HMO) in Barnstaple for use of DA.

## 5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Government grants are available as incentive payments to local authorities for each new bed space of DA, as set out in Paragraph 4.

## 6. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

6.1. The Government's Full Dispersal project seeks to take a fair and equitable approach to the regional and local distribution of asylum seekers across the UK, through the implementation of Regional Plans.

## 7. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

7.1. DA will be commissioned locally by the commercial partner of the Home Office. There is no direct or indirect impact on the environmental performance of the Council.

## 8. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

8.1 Working pro-actively with Clearsprings Ready Homes should have a positive impact on the community's confidence in the implementation of this policy.

## 9. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

9.1 Part 3 Annexe 1 Paragraph 1 and to note that this is delegated power.

## 10. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

## 11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: (The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report).

## 12. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers.

J W Mann  
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