

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy-Next Steps Following Covid-19 Responses

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 was agreed by Housing Committee in June 2020 whilst we were in the midst of responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. This gave us a unique opportunity to develop new approaches and accelerate some of the objectives contained in the strategy.
- 1.2 An accommodation offer was made to all people sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough. In line with the aims and principles contained in the strategy, we are now working to progress this work, to support people into sustainable accommodation, ensuring rough sleepers do not return to the streets.
- 1.3 It is important we don't lose sight of the need to continue with prevention of homelessness, intervening at an early stage when homelessness is a risk.
- 1.4 Over the last six months there has been an increase in demand for homeless & rough sleeping services in the city. It is clear the pandemic will have a significant financial impact both locally and nationally. This will be relevant in terms of funding streams and the response of the economy may lead to increased economic insecurity. Similarly, health impacts (physical and mental) are unknown and this may also have an impact on housing need. Many of our partner agencies will also see impacts on their services. The formation of the Homeless Reduction Operational Board will enable us to work collaboratively in our response.
- 1.5 The development of the Homeless Reduction Board action plan will reflect our emerging response to the pandemic and recovery, for reporting back to future Housing Committee meetings.

2. Covid-19 response

- 2.1 Pre-Covid-19 emergency there was an average of 12 people a week falling into rough sleeping. While this is an average we were experiencing higher than usual numbers in February with up to 20 people a week being found rough sleeping.
- 2.2 During lockdown this reduced to an average of 6 people a week which has been rising since lockdown started easing with a new average of 10. As furlough ends, evictions resume, and the full impact of the economic downturn is felt it is likely that this will rise further.
- 2.3 In addition, Housing Options have seen a significant increase in presentations from single people who would not normally be owed an accommodation duty and who, without an offer of accommodation, would rough sleep.

- 2.4 Five hotels were initially acquired for the Care and Protect model for those verified as rough sleepers and those who were in congregate accommodation.
- 2.5 Further accommodation was acquired in addition to existing emergency accommodation for those who have not rough slept but are homeless, at risk of rough sleeping and would not normally be owed an accommodation duty by the council. In June, alternative provision was secured to replace short life hotels with University of Brighton student accommodation. In addition, the Care Hub (for people with symptoms of Covid-19) was moved to a smaller unit as need was lower than anticipated. Where possible people were have been moved on to more sustainable housing.
- 2.6 One of the venues is being remodelled following discussion with the MHCLG and will replace the previous dormitory style No Second Night Out Service accommodation. The full costs of the service delivery will be met through existing grant funding.

3. Current provision of Covid-19 accommodation

- 3.1 Total number of beds: 401 as at 27/08/20
- 3.2 223 of the above people in accommodation acquired under the current Covid-19 emergency provisions are in stock that does not form part of our usual stock of emergency or supported housing.
- 3.3 291 units of accommodation are available to us until the end of December 2020. We are working hard to move people into more sustainable options and/or re-connect them safely to areas of connection. We have managed to maintain numbers by moving on enough people to offset the new people becoming homeless.

As at 23/08/20

Move on to supported housing	98
Move on to private rented accommodation	10
Reconnection	23
Reconciled with family/friends	8

- 3.4 Move on work takes time and we will be unable to meet everyone's accommodation needs using existing resources. The agreement by Policy & Resources Committee in continuing provision of short-term accommodation we have acquired until the end of December 2020 has enabled us time for further move on planning.
- 3.5 Move on provision for accommodated under Covid-19 provision will require additional resources. On 20th August 2020, the council submitted a bid to the MHCLG setting out proposals for future funding in response to the Government's Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP), this includes funding for shorter-term/interim accommodation and immediate support.

- 3.6 The outcome of the MHCLG grant funding bid is not yet known. There are risks attached to this if MHCLG do not provide the level of funding requested.

4. Achieving a sustained reduction in rough sleeping overall.

Next Steps Accommodation Proposal

- Ensuring current provision to safeguard rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping can continue for an appropriate length of time.
- Reconnection where safe to do so.
- Expand Homeless Prevention and Resolution Officers (Brighton & Hove City Council).
- Expanding Housing First coupled with expanded Home Purchase Policy
- Expand provision of supported move on accommodation and increasing Private Sector Leasing via partners to provide additional supported accommodation.
- Expanding use of private rented sector accommodation.
- Provision of specialist resource to work to secure the settled status of individuals who are EEA nationals without settled status.
- Access to Employment.
- Return Home reconciliation work with young people where this is a safe option.

- 4.1 Organisations not involved in the Co-production of the proposal but who will work with the project:

- Arch Health CIC.
- Clinical Commissioning Group.
- Sussex Community Foundation Trust.
- Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust.
- Change, Grow, Live

5. Modelling of the proposal

- 5.1 Plans are modelled on needs assessments and mapping of likely future need. This will ensure the provision of accommodation suitable to the needs of people we currently house and will address future demand. We recognise a need for:

- long term sustainable accommodation with intensive support for Multiple Compound Need clients.
- flexible floating support to ensure sustainment of tenancies for those with support needs.
- rapid resettlement to prevent future homelessness.
- self-contained accommodation - 33% of people assessed are clinically vulnerable.

- 5.2 We are working with private rented landlords to enable more provision for people who have low to medium needs but who could manage a tenancy with some support. Our plans include comprehensive support to enable tenancies to be set up robustly and to proceed so they are sustainable in the longer term.
- 5.3 We have a project in place to work with landlords to minimise evictions following the lifting of the moratorium on private rented sector evictions. This is part of our business as usual work and does not form a part of the bid but is integral to achieving a sustained reduction in rough sleeping overall.
- 5.4 We are looking at flexibility within the Housing Allocation Policy and requesting additional units from local registered providers in order to offer a minimum 6 additional units to this group.

6. An effective local response and future direction.

- 6.1 We are working on demand management, to gain a better understanding of the cause of homelessness and interventions required.
- 6.2 This work is embedded within new Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy (agreed in June 2020) which has the key themes of prevention, intervention and sustainability.
- 6.3 At present we are seeing a demographic shift in the people becoming street homeless away from those with multiple, compound need (MCN) and entrenched, towards first-time rough sleeping. Resolving the needs of our current MCN group and establishing a Rapid Re-Housing model using Housing Options prevention and the existing No Second and No First Night Out (NSNO & NFNO) services will enable us to minimise increased flow to the streets, whilst rapidly responding to anyone who does become street homeless. This will limit entrenchment and enhance our ability to rapidly reconnect and resettle people.
- 6.4 We are working with private rented landlords to enable more provision for people who have low to medium needs but who could manage a tenancy with some support. Our plans include comprehensive support to enable tenancies to be set up robustly and to proceed so they are sustainable in the longer term.
- 6.6 In order to succeed we need to make sure that accommodation is sustainable. This means that resettlement plans for individuals and households are in place. We will work to build resilience and ensure that people understand both their rights and their responsibilities.
- 6.7 A change in circumstance can quickly put someone at risk of repeat homelessness and we will work with partners to ensure that referral routes back into a service are quick and as seamless as possible.

- 6.8 We also need staff to be able to work with people in a way that means that they do not feel stigmatised or feel that they have failed if they ask for support.

7. Challenges

- Exceptional and ongoing demand following the Covid-19 emergency. As of 27.08.20, 401 people are accommodated, in 291 units of additional interim accommodation in addition to spot purchase accommodation. This figure has remained broadly static due to low move on and continuing flow.
- Ongoing flow to the streets; 10 new rough sleepers a week (previous average was 15 expected to increase as furlough ends and private rented sector (PRS) evictions re-commence.
- Disproportionately small social housing sector. 11,500 council rented properties and 17,910 social rented properties in the city. An average of 700 properties available annually including approximately 390 are1 beds/studios including sheltered housing. This compares with high demand, 10,000 households waiting.
- High number of people housed or continuing to rough sleep despite offers, have significant support needs.
- High numbers of people accommodated have significant health needs and will require self-contained accommodation.
- A disproportionately large private rented sector which is high cost. Rents significantly exceed Local Housing Allowance rates. Resulting in limited move on from supported accommodation.
- Very limited availability of land for development.
- Little opportunity to use social housing or existing emergency accommodation due to the significant pressures in the city; Over 200 households in spot purchase bed and breakfast accommodation due to the current pressures of Covid-19 and the lack of other private sector options. The current budget assumed an average of 70 households.
- Little opportunity to establish new supported accommodation due to lack of accommodation and community opposition. In recent years community opposition has resulted in three services being withdrawn prior to mobilisation.
- The timescale to acquire and mobilise accommodation within the MHCLG bid prospectus parameters is challenging, and even if successful achieving NSAP funding we will still have an estimated shortfall of 71 move on units at financial year end which we could provide in a longer timeframe ie after 31.03.21.

