

Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee

15 July 2024

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

Report of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To scrutinise the current position in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping in Nottingham, and the restructuring work taking place within Housing Solutions.

2 Action required

- 2.1 The Committee is asked:

- 1) to make any comments or recommendations in response to the report from the Executive Member for Housing and Planning on the current position regarding homelessness and rough sleeping in Nottingham; and
- 2) to consider whether any further scrutiny of the issue is required (and, if so, to identify the focus and timescales).

3 Background information

- 3.1 Homelessness is a significant national issue and many of its causes apply everywhere. However, specific features of the Nottingham housing market, economy and other local circumstances have led to the city having a particularly acute problem. A restructure is currently underway of the Council's Housing Solutions service as one of the key interventions to help address the current challenges.
- 3.2 The majority of the Council's costs related to homelessness are due to its duty to support households in priority need who are becoming homeless as a result of a range of factors, including eviction or relationship breakdown. Separately, there are growing numbers of rough sleepers, often with a range of complex needs. The majority of grant funding made available by the Government are ring-fenced to tackle rough sleeping and cannot be used to meet the Council's statutory duties in relation to homelessness.
- 3.3 The Council's primary objective is to seek to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first instance. This involves encouraging households at risk of homelessness to contact Housing Solutions at the earliest opportunity, where officers have a range of interventions available to seek to save a tenancy or move the household into alternative accommodation before they become homeless. The Council has been successful with its prevention work in many cases, however, this work requires the right level of officer capacity. High

casework numbers (compounded by many people presenting to Housing Solutions at a very late stage) have meant that there are still large numbers of households that become homeless and need assistance with rehousing or temporary accommodation. However, this is now being addressed through additional capacity created within the Housing Solutions team.

- 3.4 Nottingham has an existing Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy that was developed in 2019 and is currently in the process of being updated for completion later in the year. The Strategy draws on a cross-sector partnership of organisations that have committed to take actions to help prevent and respond to homelessness and its causes, and also to tackle rough sleeping. It is monitored by the multi-partner Strategy Intervention Group, which is completing an updated Homelessness Needs Assessment to provide the evidential base to inform the new Strategy.
- 3.5 There has been a significant rise in rough sleeping nationally, which has also been evident in Nottingham. Most of the factors leading to increase homelessness generally also impacts on the number of people rough sleeping. Many rough sleepers have complex support needs and factors such as people being discharged from hospital without accommodation can further exacerbate this. In October 2023, the Government announced that it was closing a range of hotels housing asylum seekers and this has also led to an increase in rough sleeping for refugees without accommodation. More recently, the overcrowding pressure in prisons has led to a significant number of early releases, including of offenders who do not have appropriate accommodation.
- 3.6 Rough sleeping is a symptom of a range of other underlying issues. As with homelessness more generally, the Council's first priority in tackling rough sleeping is to prevent people from reaching this stage at all. Many people sleeping rough have multiple complex issues and if housing is provided without appropriate wrap-around support then this often results in the person becoming homeless again. The Council, therefore, takes a co-ordinated response to addressing this, working with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to produce an Ending Rough Sleeping Plan with agreed actions and an analysis of the gaps in support contributing to increased rough sleeping.
- 3.7 Ultimately, Nottingham faces a significant challenge around homelessness and rough sleeping, which is consistent with the national picture. This growing problem, which the Council has a statutory duty to address, is leading to major additional pressures to the Council's budget. Many of the drivers for this growing problem relate to the wider housing market, combined with high levels of deprivation locally. As a result, the Council has a plan to address the challenges and reduce homeless and rough sleeping numbers. The significant investment in the Housing Solutions services to enable a range of initiatives around prevention and private sector engagement, combined with investment into sourcing and reorganising temporary accommodation and measures to drive down costs, are designed to tackle the backlog of cases and increase the flow of people into settled housing.

3.8 The Committee considered the Council's approach to approaching homelessness and rough sleeping previously at its meeting on 16 October 2023, making recommendations focusing on enhanced engagement at the national level and the development of close partnership working locally to seek to help address the significant challenges being experienced.

4 List of attached information

4.1 Report: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

5 Background papers, other than published works or those disclosing exempt or confidential information

5.1 None

6 Published documents referred to in compiling this report

6.1 Reports to, and Minutes of, the Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee meeting held on [16 October 2023](#)

7 Wards affected

7.1 All

8 Contact information

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