

Report for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee following the request for an update on the issue of increasing homelessness in Nottingham, Housing Aid service and performance, information around recording, commissioning of services, and if there have been any rough sleeper deaths in Nottingham.

Reasons for the increase in homelessness

It is widely accepted that the reason for the national increase in homelessness is a combination of years of continued austerity (including welfare reform and substantial budget cuts) at the same time as a reduced availability of truly affordable housing.

Furthermore, investment in services to help prevent homelessness and address the causes of homelessness (e.g. mental health, substance misuse, offending) has been significantly cut over recent years. Analysis from St Mungos and Homeless Link estimates that there has been £5 billion less spent between 2009 and 2018 than if the 2007/8 funding levels had been maintained.

The number of rough sleepers has increased over recent years. The annual snapshot showed a 165% increase between 2010 and 2018. In Nottingham in 2010, 184 individuals were found rough sleeping and in 2018 this total had risen to 635 different people within the year.

There have been further pressures on local authority homelessness services since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018. The new legislation brings in a statutory duty for councils to try to prevent homelessness of households at risk, or if the household becomes homeless, the council must try to help them find alternative accommodation before they are able to make a decision under 'full duty' – which is the old 'homelessness application'. In March 2019, the Local Government Association published a research report which found that most councils have reported an increase in homelessness presentations, caseloads and use of temporary accommodation following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

Homelessness in Nottingham

Homelessness in Nottingham can be separated into two defined cohorts:

1. Families – who are generally low support needs but are homeless because of low household finances and limited availability of affordable housing
2. Single people – who are either young people with limited resources/resilience or people aged between 25-60 who have got a range of support needs that have contributed to the cause of their homelessness (e.g. mental health, substance misuse, history of childhood trauma, offending).

Whilst it is visible and extreme, rough sleeping accounts for only around 5% of homelessness in Nottingham. Families are never found rough sleeping in the city and largely rough sleepers are middle-aged single males.

Around 4800 households approached Nottingham City Council for homelessness assistance in 2018. Currently, Nottingham City Council Housing Aid has 1300 open homeless cases and each officer has an average caseload of 75. Around 95 different households present to Housing Aid each week and in addition, the service

receives around 15 referrals about homeless people every day from public bodies such as prison, hospital and the Jobcentre. The council currently provides 289 families with temporary accommodation, a room in supported accommodation to 395 single homeless people and emergency shelter to 42 rough sleepers. Despite this, at the most recent street count in August, 55 rough sleepers were found.

Trend analysis shows us that the pressure has increased over the last decade. In Q3 2018, there were 521 households supported as homeless under a duty yet in Q3 2009 HAid made decisions on only 194 statutory homelessness cases.

Pressure on temporary accommodation provision

A snapshot for official reporting in 2009 showed there were 74 families in temporary accommodation. However, the snapshot for the same time in 2018 found 244 families were provided with emergency accommodation under a homelessness duty. This increase is reflected nationally with Crisis research finding a 71% national increase in temporary accommodation from 2011 to 2018. This is partly because of increased demand for support as people are unable to financially sustain their tenancies or access housing that is affordable to them.

However, it is also because the new homelessness legislation requires a homelessness relief period of 8 weeks where households are expected to be proactive and work with the council to find accommodation (mainly in the private rented sector). It is common for households to resist engaging in this process and the council is limited in the action it can take until the 56 days have expired and an offer of accommodation can be made under the full homelessness duty.

Role of the private rented sector

There is an overwhelming desire for social housing in Nottingham however, the reality is that there were 11% fewer properties in stock in 2018 compared to 2008 – largely because of the popularity of the Right to Buy scheme which saw 435 properties sold in 2017/18. Turnover of remaining stock is slow – especially as Nottingham City Homes supports homelessness prevention by delivering an eviction prevention approach.

Therefore, the private rented sector is largely relied upon to rehouse homeless households. This is problematic in Nottingham where there is competition with students and professionals for properties, rents are generally higher than the frozen local housing allowance levels and landlords may be reluctant or disinterested in working with the local authority.

Although the private rented sector is the main solution to homelessness in Nottingham, it is also one of the main reasons people become homeless. Receiving notice on a private rented tenancy and being asked to leave the family home by parents or relatives are overwhelmingly the two primary reasons for homelessness – especially for families. Whilst a desire to sell the property or rent it to someone who can pay more rent may drive some private landlords to serve eviction notices, locally in Nottingham there are also common reports of high and ongoing rent arrears and

people not adhering to terms of tenancy agreements as being the reason provoking the eviction.

Nottingham City Council response to homelessness

Nottingham City Council takes a strategic approach to homelessness prevention and response. The new Homelessness Prevention Strategy was agreed at Full Council in November 2018 and it promotes cross-sector partnership working to:

1. Tackle the causes of homelessness (such as mental health, financial vulnerability and multiple and complex needs)
2. Deliver early interventions to prevent people from becoming homeless (such as work with private, social and supported accommodation landlords to prevent evictions and with institutional settings such as hospital and prison to ensure housing upon discharge and release)
3. Ensure that people are supported into suitable and sustainable accommodation if they do become homeless (by delivering housing solutions, including utilisation of the private rented sector)
4. Address rough sleeping (through implementing a new system of services through maximising grant funding).

The council has developed a sufficiency plan which looks at preventing people from needing rehousing, but if they do, ensuring there is adequate supply of suitable temporary accommodation and maximising opportunities to access affordable settled housing. A major driver for this plan is to limit the use of Bed and Breakfast as temporary accommodation for families and not return to the position of October 2017 where there was a high of 140 households accommodated in B&B. Measures that have been introduced through the plan and which helped deliver the reduced use of B&B to zero by Christmas 2018 include:

- Redesigning and expanding the Nottingham Private Rented Assistance Scheme (NPRAS) at Housing Aid to include a 'say before you serve' process for landlords to get in touch if they experience difficulty with their tenants and the introduction of social lettings to take on tenancy management responsibilities from the landlord in exchange for a small fee.
- Loan to Nottingham City Homes for the purchase of 150 properties from the open market to be used as temporary accommodation and utilising 25 existing council owned property as temporary accommodation
- An NCC property acquisitions programme which will see the purchase of 320 units of social housing within the next 4 years, including properties to support the delivery of Housing First in the city. The council also takes a proactive approach to encouraging developers to build affordable housing on new housing schemes.
- Work with Nottingham City Homes to introduce a private sector leasing scheme to provide up to 48 additional properties for use as temporary accommodation
- 40 bedspaces in new hostel provision brought on line and arrangements with Nightly Paid Temporary Accommodation providers for self-contained emergency accommodation
- Targeted interventions of social housing direct offers and a review of the allocations policy to ensure that a proportion of social housing properties can be utilised to help the council rehouse homeless families whilst at the same time enabling churn through the general waiting list.

Housing Aid service delivery

In addition to the measures outlined above, there has been a review and changes to service delivery at Housing Aid. This has included reducing staffing vacancies from 13 to 6 and introducing a range of new grant funded posts to bolster the service and enable compliance with the legislative requirements as well as delivering an effective response to citizens in need.

In preparation for the service move to Loxley House in Autumn, a new telephone system is being implemented to increase ability to answer more calls and manage the majority of triage over the phone, thus reducing footfall to the office and freeing capacity to focus on casework. A new website is under development and when fully launched will provide advice on line, a degree of self-triage and the facility to access and update personal housing plans. It is anticipated that this will allow more people to self-help or enable their case to progress without requiring a visit to the service and reducing total dependency on the council.

In efforts to reduce demand for and length of stay in temporary accommodation Housing Aid have introduced additional scrutiny on approval decisions and intensive case management meetings to support decision making on more complex cases. The service has instigated a partnership arrangement with Priority Families to carry out home visits to all young people or households with children who have been made homeless by parents or family members. Housing Aid and Childrens Services also work with Nottingham City Homes to deliver an Eviction Prevention approach to households who are at risk of losing their social housing because of failure to pay rent or antisocial behaviour.

Housing Aid has also developed a policy to ensure household compliance and cooperation in resolving housing need and a dedicated placements officer is being recruited to enable temporary accommodation officers to focus on temporary accommodation management and support the implementation of this policy.

Monitoring of information

A cross-council group of officers has been meeting weekly-fortnightly since October 2017 to drive forward the sufficiency plan. The group analyses monitoring and performance data including:

- circumstances around approvals and placements
- throughput and length of stay in emergency accommodation
- budget implications
- delivery of new supply of temporary accommodation and number of tenancies that have been created in the private rented sector
- home visits and outcome of the eviction prevention panel
- progress on delivery of planned interventions and consideration of new options.

There are also daily meetings at Housing Aid to assess the circumstances of households in nightly paid emergency accommodation and implement move on plans.

Other homelessness data on initial assessments, prevention, relief, full duty and temporary accommodation is recorded and submitted on the H-CLIC return, which has replaced the P1e as the statutory return required by the government.

All commissioned homelessness services have a set of agreed outcomes and outputs that are reviewed in regular contract monitoring meetings. The council also commissions the Street Outreach Team to provide a daily report on rough sleepers found so action can be taken to support them into housing options and a more detailed monthly report giving insight into gender, local connection and support needs.

The Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group has membership from over 40 organisations across the public and community sector and regularly seeks insight on emerging issues and trends at the monthly meetings to ensure that activity is targeted in the appropriate areas.

Commissioned services

Nottingham City Council commissions a range of services to prevent and respond to homelessness and reduce rough sleeping in the City. This includes over 630 units of supported accommodation for homeless families and singles, specific services for rough sleepers, an independent living support service and a housing related advice service for people who need help to sustain or settle into new tenancies. The council also commissions specialist mental health, domestic violence and substance misuse support services.

The Adults Supported Accommodation service is commissioned from Nottingham City Council Core funding to provide access to 248 units of secure short-term accommodation & support to homeless adults who have a local connection to Nottingham City and are assessed as having complex needs, before facilitating a return to more independent & settled accommodation. The provision is a mix of accommodation types (e.g. different sized hostels and dispersed accommodation, female only accommodation etc.) located in various wards within the city.

Nottingham City Council also funds the provision of 80 bedspaces for homeless young people, 30 bedspaces for ex-offenders who are homeless after being released from prison and 16 homeless teenage parents.

The Crime and Drugs Partnership commissions 31 units of accommodation across three refuges for female survivors of domestic violence and were successful in a bid for government funding for six additional bedspaces within an independently operating refuge for survivors with multiple and complex needs. Nottingham City Council has also been successful in a partnership bid with Nottingham City Homes for the provision of eight houses offering continued support for those moving on from the refuges.

Commissioned services for Rough Sleepers

NCC provides core funding for the delivery of the Street Outreach Team (SOT). The aim of the service is to reduce levels of rough sleeping in Nottingham City through the early identification of rough sleepers during daily street outreach sessions, assessing their needs and facilitating access to accommodation. The service also works to attend to the welfare of rough sleepers by supporting access to healthcare, treatment and support.

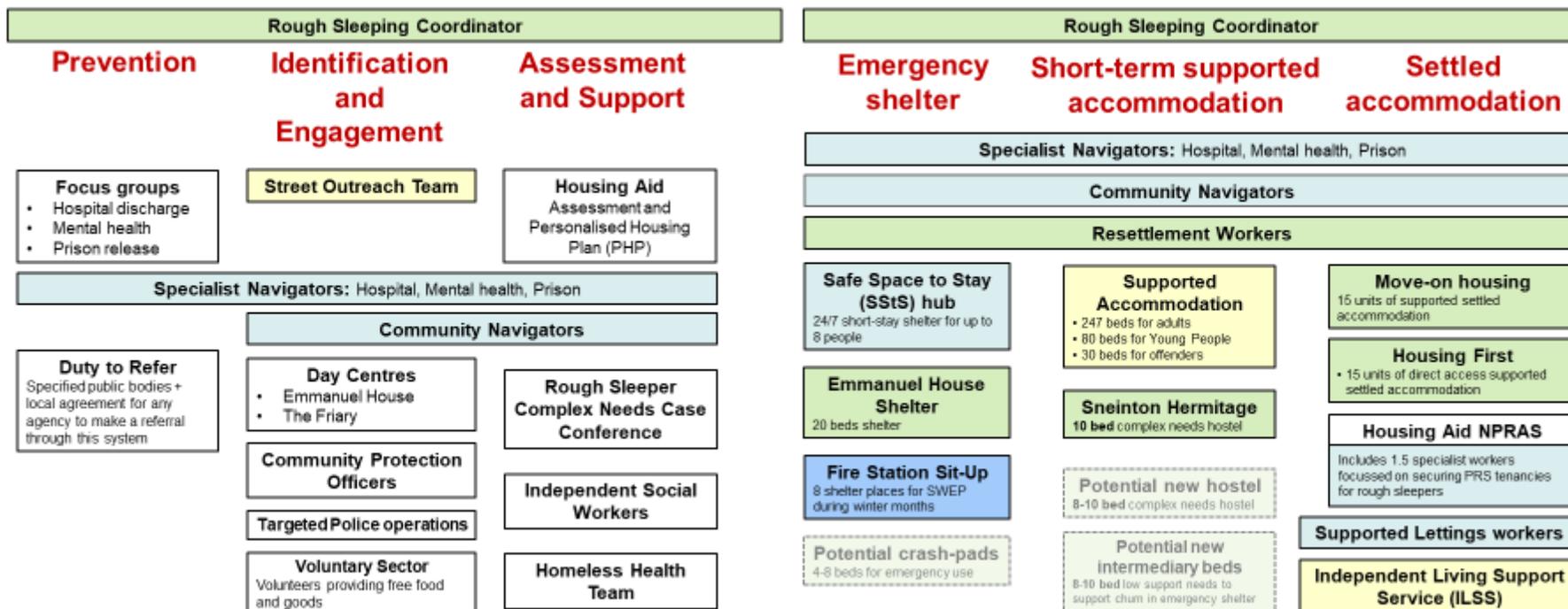
The Street Outreach Team (SOT) work closely with Community Protection Officers (CPO's) who provide additional support in helping to identify rough sleepers, provide welfare checks and encourage engagement with the SOT and other services.

Nottingham City Council has taken full advantage of opportunities to bid for government funding to tackle homelessness. NCC and partners have successfully bid for non-recurrent funding awards through the central Government Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) & the Rapid Rehousing Pathway (RRP) funds. Securing this additional funding has involved the quick and intensive mobilisation and implementation of services by NCC & partners. The result is delivery of a bigger system of support in Nottingham, up from £265,000pa at the start of 2016 to >£1.3m in 2019/20. This has supported the implementation of our five-stage strategic approach of prevention, identification and engagement, assessment and support, shelter, resettlement and sustainability.

This approach was developed following a number of dedicated partnership workshops where representatives from across the public and community sector identified the challenges and responsibilities they had in delivering solutions. An action plan has been generated which includes the delivery and connectivity of the new services introduced through grant funding, specific task groups to address prison release, hospital discharge and mental health and a reconfiguration of the rough sleepers case conference meeting – giving officers the autonomy to seek individualised partnership solutions for complex cases.

A summary of the system of services for rough sleepers is available overleaf. However, it does not include the wider systems of support to address the needs of rough sleepers (e.g. mental/physical health, substance and/or alcohol addiction etc. that can cause and sustain rough sleeping if they are unmet).

Additional emergency shelter is provided during periods of cold weather (i.e. temperatures forecast at 0 degrees and below on a given night) under Nottingham's Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP). Under these conditions, the Sit-Up service based at London Road Fire Station (a partnership between Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue and the British Red Cross) provides an extra 8 places of shelter for rough sleepers referred by the Street Outreach Team.



A list of the specific services that have been introduced as a result of government funding in 2019/20 is available at Appendix A.

Nottingham City Council has achieved success from all competitive funding streams released by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). As part of their monitoring regime, officers from MHCLG have visited Nottingham on numerous occasions over the past 12 months and expressed satisfaction and praise in the way that the council and partners have responded to pressures and implemented the system of services. Nottingham is held as an exemplar of good practice in this area and the government often arranges for other local authority areas to learn from our leading practices.

Rough sleeper deaths in Nottingham 18/19

Rough sleeping is a dangerous and isolating experience. Over time, people become more and more ostracised from society and are less likely to take actions such as attend a GP appointment when they are feeling unwell.

Many people find that over time they feel deep the despair and shame, not only for previous trauma, but because they are homeless.

The above factors, linked in with substance misuse, damp sleeping areas, poor hygiene and diet, means that those sleeping rough are incredibly vulnerable and therefore more susceptible to illness and death.

In Nottingham over the past 12 months there have been 4 rough sleeper deaths. Each individual had very different circumstances and services knew much more about some than others.

The cases are all very different yet equally upsetting. However, it is clear from all the reports from Framework and other agencies (substance misuse, Community Protection, Police, Opportunity Nottingham) that no individual died through neglect. Regular checks were made on all individuals and they were all reminded of what they had available for them. When rough sleepers became ill teams even took medication to them and the Outreach nurse administered health care on the streets if they refused to go to see a GP. All individuals were offered relevant support and accommodation; however individuals cannot be forced to accept the offers if they do not wish to.

One detail which all the individuals shared was a consistent lack of engagement. This is common amongst rough sleepers and has been identified as an area which we need to focus on. Therefore, Nottingham City Council is working alongside Opportunity Nottingham to create a team of volunteers with direct experience of homelessness to pair up with the Street Outreach team. They will operate more of a “buddy” system, building up trust and longer relationships with those rough sleeping. This has worked in other cities across the country and had a direct impact on engagement for many entrenched rough sleepers.

Further information is available in Appendix B.

Challenges

- Short-term grant funding which does not enable future planning and restricts the market of delivery partners. Intensive use of council resources to bid and implement in tight timescales. Requires delivery partners with resources and assets that allow immediate mobilisation. Funding can only be used in accordance with a prescriptive criteria and is dependent on rigorous monitoring. The funding is not enough to replace what has previously been lost through budget cuts, despite the services needing to operate in an environment of increased pressure, need and demand. There is no opportunity to ensure the continuation of services if the grant funding ends in March 2020
- The government asked the council to develop and deliver a plan to reduce reliance on B&B as emergency accommodation for rough sleepers under No First/Second Night Out. The expectation is for the plan to be delivered within the existing grant allocation. This is challenging as existing provision is frequently at full capacity and B&B is the only form of accommodation that can be utilised when everywhere else is full. There

is no further budget for B&B and the council will cease using it to deliver the NFNO policy from August 2019.

- Government has not reinstated sufficient levels of investment in early intervention homelessness prevention services or budget for the supporting infrastructure that tackles the support needs that can be the cause of homelessness (e.g. mental health, domestic violence, refugee support, substance misuse, offending, targeted family support, welfare rights/debt/housing advice, tenancy and lifeskills training).
- The shortage of affordable housing creates significant difficulty for the council in rehousing households when homelessness cannot be prevented. Furthermore, the reliance on the private rented sector yet lack of appetite for this tenure impacts on the time it takes to facilitate suitable housing during the homelessness relief period and significantly increases pressure on temporary accommodation

Appendix A

Rough Sleeper services introduced via government funding grants (Rough Sleeping Initiative and Rapid Rehousing Pathway)

- Rough sleeping coordinator – to oversee the effective delivery and connectivity of the system of services and ensure that they are responsive in meeting local need.
- 20 bed year-round emergency night shelter – provided by Emmanuel House from different church halls across the city. The service is available to people without a local connection to Nottingham, with no recourse to public funds and people with low level needs.
- Somewhere safe to stay hub – 8 bed year round sit-up service providing emergency and immediate access to shelter and safety
- A new 10 bed short-term hostel – able to support rough sleepers with higher/more complex needs, including those previously excluded from shelters and supported accommodation services. Short –term stays (normally up to 3 months) are offered to re-engage rough sleepers and offer stability whilst alternative, longer-term accommodation with support is arranged
- 30 units of Housing Led accommodation in partnership with Nottingham City Homes (NCH), Framework HA & Registered Providers (RP's). Based on principles of the Housing First Model, this new option provides housing alongside intensive tenancy support rough sleepers with high needs and histories of entrenched homelessness.
- 2 x resettlement workers – to maximise throughput in accommodation provision
- 3 x community navigators – working with hard-to-engage rough sleepers to maximise engagement and help meet support needs that are preventing them from accepting offers of shelter
- 3 x specialist navigators – working to find accommodation and provide ongoing support for people in prison, hospital and mental health inpatient settings who are at risk of rough sleeping upon release and discharge
- 1.5 x local lettings officers – based in the Nottingham Private Rented Assistance Scheme (NPRAS) at Housing Aid and focussed on securing tenancies in private rented housing for rough sleepers
- 2 x tenancy support officers – providing tenancy sustainment support for rough sleepers once they are rehoused into independent living

Appendix B.

Further information on rough sleeper deaths in Nottingham over the past 12 months

Person A

Person A was a persistent rough sleeper and had been on the streets since 2007. He had stayed in many different types of supported housing but never for long periods of time, before returning to sleeping rough.

He had significant substance misuse and mental health issues. He received support via Opportunity Nottingham and had a Community Psychiatric Nurse assigned to him. Framework also funded a detox for person A but he did not complete this and left before the programme had ended.

In August 2018, he was housed by Opportunity Nottingham but was subsequently removed by Police.

In September 2018 he attempted to take his own life and was taken to hospital. His life support was turned off after just over 2 weeks and he died in hospital.

Person B

Person B had been known by the Street Outreach Team since 2011. He had been accommodated a number of times in the City via Housing Aid. Over the years he would refuse offers of accommodation frequently, returning to sleeping rough for prolonged periods of time. He was most recently accommodated at Sneinton Hermitage under the additional Rough Sleeper Initiative provision.

However, he left the property as he was wanted by the Police. He subsequently returned to the streets on 15/10/2018 after a custodial sentence.

The Outreach team made contact with Person B and advised him to register for a bed at Emmanuel House, whilst they organised a detox for him at Michael Varnham House. Person B never attended Emmanuel House or the night shelter.

Person B was found days later in his rough sleeping spot just outside of the City Centre.

Person C

Person C was first found rough sleeping in Nottingham in July 2018. He was very support resistant from the first interactions he had with the Outreach team. He consistently missed appointments and refused accommodation which was on offer to him.

During the colder winter months a hotel was booked for person C under SWEP (Severe Emergency Weather Protocol) in order to preserve life. He was aware of this but never used the room which had been paid for.

In February 2019 Person C was diagnosed with an invasive infection. Medication was taken to him by the Outreach nurse but he refused to take this or attend hospital.

In April 19 person C suffered a cardiac arrest in the City and was taken to hospital. One month later he died in hospital, his parents were present.

Person D

Person D was found rough sleeping in a tent within the city, along with 2 other individuals. Not a huge amount of information was held on the individual. Whenever he was offered support or assistance with housing he would say he was “ok” and didn’t want the help offered. Person D was visited regularly by the Outreach team but never engaged in conversation.

In April 2019 the individual he shared a tent with flagged down police officers and advised that person D had died. The circumstances were not suspicious.