

Rough Sleeping and winter preparedness

Report for Nottingham City Health and Wellbeing Board

November 2019

1. Current context

- 1.1 Statistically, the number of rough sleepers found during the monthly snapshot count on an average night has decreased over the past few months, following an all-time high of 55 in August 2019. The November 2019 count figure (30) is also lower than that recorded in November 2018 (34), November 2017 (43) and November 2016 (35).
- 1.2 This positive reduction is a result of the system of additional services and approaches that Nottingham City Council and partners have developed and introduced following successful bids for additional government funding from 2018.
- 1.3 In 2019/20, Nottingham City Council was successful in obtaining £1.2m in MHCLG government grants to introduce additional provision for rough sleepers and deliver our strategic approach of prevention, identification, engagement, assessment, support, shelter and sustained housing.
- 1.4 The enhanced provision includes a year round night shelter and sit-up service, complex needs hostel, move on accommodation, housing first properties, and staffing including a coordinator, resettlement workers, private rented sector lettings workers, community navigators and tenancy support workers. Funding has also been secured for specialist navigators working across the city and county and focussing on entrenched rough sleepers who are at risk of returning to street homelessness following discharge from acute and mental health hospitals and release from prison.
- 1.5 However, the reason the reduction is not more pronounced is because there are actually more rough sleepers reaching the streets than ever before. The number of different individuals seen rough sleeping in Nottingham so far in 2019 has increased by 16% when compared to the same timeframe last year.
- 1.6 The contrasting reduction in monthly counts alongside an increase in individuals found rough sleeping suggests that our ability to identify and respond to rough sleepers with accommodation and housing related support has been enhanced by the additional funding. However, there are clearly still pressures remaining that cause people to become street homeless.

2. Cold weather plan

- 2.1 The successful award of government rough sleeper funding enabled us to continue delivery of many of the usual 'winter only' measures throughout 2019/20. Whilst this has been a positive addition to year-round provision, it has also meant that we have had to develop new plans for

winter 2019/20 to ensure that we can adequately respond to ongoing need and the additional demand that we anticipate seeing.

- 2.2 This year's plan is also set in the context of a reduced ability to rely on B&B hotels as emergency shelter for rough sleepers. Any available funding for rough sleepers B&B use ended in August 2019 and MHCLG are clear that they do not support this as an ongoing option. Whilst this limits emergency availability of shelter, it is not entirely negative. Learning from last year taught us that an offer of B&B led to manipulation of the system (people holding out until later in the day/evening for a place in B&B rather than accepting an alternative offer of shelter) as well as importing need as people learned about the generous offer available in Nottingham.
- 2.3 In late September 2019, MHCLG opened the Cold Weather Fund for local authorities to bid for resources to enhance provision of shelter and services to rough sleepers during the winter months. Nottingham City Council has been successfully awarded £90k to introduce emergency and short-term additional bedspaces in new and existing projects, evening outreach workers and a move on coordinator to address blockages to throughput. The funding will also pilot a limited number of nights in community nursing beds for rough sleepers who require further rehabilitation, care or support following discharge from hospital.
- 2.4 Additionally this winter, the voluntary sit-up service delivered through a partnership between Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue and British Red Cross will be expanded to two sites to provide emergency shelter for low need rough sleepers when the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) is activated. Discussions are also progressing with the Arches project to deliver a third sit-up service when the temperatures reach freezing.
- 2.5 The Nottingham Cold Weather Plan will be agreed at the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group meeting on 26th November 2019.

3. Addressing the issues

- 3.1 There are two main housing challenges that remain:
 - Adequate emergency shelter for rough sleepers who have multiple and complex needs that are assessed as too high to be addressed solely through housing related support
 - Move on options for rough sleepers with multiple and complex needs who need specialist long term supported accommodation placements.
- 3.2 Neither of these two housing solutions can be facilitated or delivered without strategic, financial and operational input from the health, social care and criminal justice sectors.
- 3.3 As highlighted throughout the cities Homelessness Prevention Strategy, homelessness is far from simply a housing issue. The loss of accommodation is one of the symptoms or consequences of another support need that is not being met. Many rough sleepers refuse housing options and those that will accept shelter are at risk of quickly losing it if the additional support needs that caused the risk of homelessness in the first place, are not addressed. These support needs frequently and simultaneously include mental health conditions, dealing with the impact of trauma, substance misuse, physical health diseases, conditions, illnesses and injuries and offending behaviours.

- 3.4 Prevention of rough sleeping requires a system-wide, cross sector approach with commitment to adequate investment and flexible delivery of services that support people with multiple and complex needs.
- 3.5 Over the past 12 months, Naomi Robinson from the Greater Nottingham Clinical Commissioning Partnership has been working closely with the strategic homelessness group to further understand what is required from the health sector to:
- Appropriately address the needs of people with multiple and complex needs to help prevent them from reaching homelessness
 - Ensure that services are available and accessible to respond to people who are rough sleeping or with multiple and complex needs and temporarily housed in homeless accommodation
 - Review the requirement for community beds following hospital discharge of people with multiple and complex needs at risk of rough sleeping
 - Access health focused government funding for rough sleepers
- 3.6 A report containing recommendations for future commissioning is being considered within the CCP and is supporting the development of homelessness as an area of programme focus within the Integrated Care Partnership.

4. How can partners help?

- Recognise the roles and responsibilities of their organisations to adequately address support needs and help to prevent homelessness from happening in the first place
- Consider how to respond to the mental health, dual diagnosis and substance misuse support needs of rough sleepers who are street homeless or accommodated in emergency shelters
- Recognise the barriers there are for people with multiple and complex needs and adapt services to flexibly meet individual needs (e.g. through multi-disciplinary work, outreach, colocation, co-commissioning of services etc.) until they can be supported into mainstream services
- Ensure systems are in place and followed to proactively identify the risk of homelessness and enable access to pathways into support
- Specified public bodies to comply with the Duty to Refer and provide as much relevant information as possible to assist in the assessment of need
- Commitment to not discharging patients from hospital or mental health beds until a suitable accommodation option is secured
- Promote volunteering opportunities (at sit-up service, shelter etc.) and share communications about services that are available to provide support and alternative giving
- Highlight emergency shelter options that could be available for use for high risk rough sleepers

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