

Report of the Assistant Director Housing and Community Safety

## **Housing & Community Safety Update on Homelessness in York**

### **Summary**

1. This report updates the committee on measures being taken by the Council through its preventative work and resettlement pathways to provide support for people who are homeless and classed as either rough sleepers or single homeless people.

### **Background**

2. In December 2018 a piece of research was released by The Bureau of investigative Journalism highlighting the deaths of homeless people nationally in 2017 using the same definition used by homeless charity Crisis; it defined someone as homeless if they are sleeping rough, or in emergency or temporary accommodation such as hostels and B&Bs . This research concluded that 449 people died in 2017.

<https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2018-10-08/homelessness-a-national-scandal>

3. This research was undertaken by the use of a freedom of information request to local authorities around the country; It is unclear whether or not York was included as a local authority in this research. Local authorities are not required to keep figures on deaths and any information submitted to any FOIs regarding deaths were based on service records and people memories. Due to the cyclical nature of these requests York began keeping a record of individuals that services were aware of who have died since 2017. There is no definition or criteria attached to these records they are people who the services support or are aware of.
4. The release of this information prompted local media to request information on York's figures of the deaths of those under the above criteria. A figure of 11 homeless deaths in 2017 was provided to local

media in Dec 2018; this was picked up by the York's Member of Parliament and raised in prime minister questions prompting further media interest.

5. The Council resolved to call for an update on homelessness in York with particular reference to this data.
6. In close relation to this in December 2017 a housing scrutiny report updated the committee on measures being taken by the council through its preventative work and resettlement pathways to provide support for people who are homeless. This was after an October 2017 motion to full council in accordance of Standing Order 22.1, following the sudden death on the streets of York of one of the city's long term rough sleepers.
7. This outlined immediate measures to provide temporary accommodation and avoid if possible further deaths on the streets during the winter in particular. On the back of this, a review was undertaken of winter night emergency provisions in York across the winter periods, capacity and availability was increased in York during 2017 and this has being further increased during 2018. Including increased resources of both staff and financial assistance to enable more innovative approaches and intensive support packages for people who are homeless to provide suitable accommodation.
8. This work has enabled a significant culture change among support services and its customers regarding more innovative outcomes and risk taking when it comes to providing accommodation, including an increase in the use of housing first and housing first approaches to accommodate people who are described as having complex needs.

### **Provision for Homeless People**

9. The Housing Act 1996 places a statutory responsibility on a Local Authority to provide advice and assistance to anyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness. Further to this the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 (HRA17) further enhances this duty by introducing a duty to prevent homelessness and a duty to relive homelessness to anyone.
10. In general terms there are 4 categories of homelessness:
  - Statutory homeless – where a individual / household has met the criteria of the Housing Act 1996 (eligible, homeless, believed to be in priority need the duty on the LA is to provide temporary accommodation, if they are accepted as homeless (ie meet all 5 criteria eligible, homeless, priority need, unintentionally homeless

and having a local connection) the LA has a duty to provide permanent accommodation primarily via North Yorkshire Home choice and access to social housing. A second homeless presentation cannot be taken unless there has been a period of settled accommodation or significant change in circumstances.

- Youth homelessness (16 and 17) – where a homeless young person will generally be offered social services support (often refused) and hostel accommodation.
- Single homeless – where an individual is homeless but does not meet the criteria of the Housing Act 1996 and will be offered advice and support to access accommodation. If an individual has some vulnerability they will generally be offered hostel accommodation, but those with no vulnerability will be helped to access private rented accommodation. If they have no connection to York the accommodation offered will not be in York.
- Rough sleepers – where an individual is homeless but does not meet the criteria of the Housing Act 1996 and will be offered advice and support to access accommodation. If an individual has some vulnerability they will generally be offered hostel accommodation, but those with no vulnerability will be helped to access private rented accommodation. If they have no connection to York the accommodation offered will not be in York.

11. The focus of this scrutiny report is on rough sleepers/single homeless and those going through a resettlement pathway. It should be noted that a large proportion of households that present as homeless are re-housed through the Housing Act 1996, accessing emergency temporary accommodation.

12. Considerable progress has been made in York in the last 10 years:

- The number of households living in temporary accommodation has reduced from 207 on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007 to 68 at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. As at the end of September 2018 the number in temporary accommodation was 58.
- York has a number of protocols which enables agencies to work together to prevent homelessness / help people move into accommodation in a planned way (e.g. York and North Yorkshire Offender protocol or York's No second night out protocol or winter nights provision).

13. The homelessness and resettlement service in York is rated highly and in December 2016 was awarded gold standard. At the time we were one of only three Local Authorities in England to have achieved this. The resettlement service offers a structured pathway of accommodation from temporary homeless through to permanent housing and increased tenancy sustainment.
14. The level of rough sleeping has increased in the last 10 years and in 2017 this figure was 29 people on a typical night the highest since the 1990s. As consequence of increased funding etc the number sleeping rough at the count in 2018 reduced to 9. The issue of rough sleeping is multi-layered and includes:
  - Those at risk of homelessness who will not have anywhere to live in the near future;
  - Those at risk of homelessness and will not have anywhere to sleep tonight;
  - Those who are technically homeless but who can stay with people in the very short- term 'sofa surfing' but often putting another persons tenancy at risk;
  - Those who are new rough sleepers;
  - Those who are entrenched rough sleepers;
  - Those who have been in services but been asked to leave for serious breach of accommodation agreement and have returned to 'sofa surfing';
  - Those who have been in services but been asked to leave for serious breach of accommodation agreement and have returned to rough sleeping.
15. When working with individuals who are at risk of homelessness or recently homeless and who are willing to engage with services, these people are generally helped into accommodation quickly but there may not be accommodation available for more complex / entrenched because of behaviour or their lack of engagement. These are the most visible rough sleepers.
16. All rough sleepers have been offered help to access accommodation, although for those with no local connection to York it may not be in the district. Help is offered to reconnect them to an area where they have a

local connection but the individuals concerned often do not wish to leave York. A second concern is that a significant number of current rough sleepers have previously used the services available but have been excluded because of their behaviour. Before anyone is excluded, services confer and manage individuals to avoid the need for exclusion if at all possible. The option of returning to the service remains open providing they are prepared to abide by the rules within the hostel.

17. A number of rough sleepers are entrenched and refuse any form of help.
18. A third concern is that a number of people who are rough sleepers or associated to rough sleeping and street culture are often engaged in begging activity which can prove to be very lucrative, it is often quoted by people who beg that they can raise over £100 pounds per day and even more than this on special days of the year like the Ebor weekend for example. People engaged in this behaviour often do not want to stop begging for reasons often linked to a substance misuse, this level of income can only exacerbate the risks associated to homeless deaths. It is a major challenge for support providers to encourage someone who has learned to survive on approx 5-700 pounds per week to sustain themselves on 70 pounds a week state benefits, without a significant cognitive change occurring within that individuals thinking and a desire to effect change around issues such as substance use.

### **Rough sleeping figures**

19. Rough Sleeping has increased year on year since 2010 in York and nationally. The Street count figure is undertaken using a formal process scheduled every year that offers an analysis or snapshot of a typical nights rough sleeping in a particular local authority area, these counts are done using a specific methodology to offer a figure. All local authorities are required to provide these counts.

It is important to note the formal counts are not inclusive or part of our local information gathering processes undertaken by Resettlement Services on an ongoing daily and weekly basis. Formal street counts take place around the country between the 1<sup>st</sup> October and 30<sup>th</sup> Nov. York undertook its formal count using an estimate process using the night of 21<sup>st</sup> Nov into 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov 18 as a typical night.

20. In 2017 York had a cohort of 20-25 people who were visible / entrenched in rough sleeping and associated problematic behaviours and complex needs. To give some regional context, Doncaster had a similar but much larger cohort of about 70 people; Hull about 23 and Harrogate 12. In

2018 we have seen this cohort reduce through the rough sleepers initiative (RSI) interventions, although there are still people unwilling to engage with services, they are embroiled in street culture type behaviours including begging, substance misuse, and anti social behaviour. The reduction in the amount of people has come about due to the targeted efforts of Resettlement Services; in particular The RSI complex needs rough sleepers team, North York's police, Probation, Changing lives and City Of York Council. Who have made huge in roads and continue to do so in reducing the number of rough sleepers. And improving the options available to them.

### Street Culture

21. What we have seen develop again to 1990s type levels is a powerful street culture re emerge in the city, this involves individuals engaged in highly risky behaviours such as begging, substance misuse and rough sleeping, street culture is not just made up of York's rough sleepers it also includes people who are drawn to this due many different factors such as precarious accommodation, financial gain, social isolation, substance use/supply and Poverty etc.

### **Services for single homeless and rough sleepers**

22. Homeless supported accommodation services have had a to respond to an ever increasing customer group who's support needs are more complex, Services have personalised an approach to ensure people with complex needs are not excluded from support, or deemed to be too high risk, despite the risk factors that may come with accommodating them. These Risk factors and reasons why people street beg, street sleep and/or experience homelessness indicate that it is a highly complex mix of issues that combine, stemming from early childhood experiences through to the development of substance misuse and mental health problems. This coupled with the significant social exclusion faced by these adults with complex needs, serves to make the provision of interventions and services to reduce and prevent homelessness incredibly difficult. However there are a number of different responses implemented in services to ensure fair and quick access to people.

### Engagement with rough sleepers (advice and support)

23. Ideally, anyone at risk of homelessness should approach advice services prior to actual homelessness. CYC Housing Options Team deal with all enquiries and Salvation Army Early Intervention and Prevention Team are contracted to work with single homeless 18+. Where people

approach services prior to homelessness, relevant advice is given to help people access self contained accommodation (via private rented sector or North Yorkshire Home Choice). For those more vulnerable a referral will be made via Single Access Point to supported housing.

24. In addition to this since June 2018 we also have via the RSI funding a Complex Needs Rough Sleepers Team, this team offers more resources to be able to take on a targeted approach to tackling rough sleeping, and can offer additional financial resources to optimise and increase better outcomes for rough sleepers.
25. The complex needs rough sleepers team is made up of additional Outreach Workers, a Mental Health worker, and MEAM (Making every adult matter) workers, and a coordinator to structure the whole approach and robustly work with hard to reach people.
26. The Complex Needs Rough Sleepers team work in partnership with Resettlement Services, North York's Police, Neighbourhood Enforcement Teams, York Bid , Probation, Mental Health services and voluntary sector food provisions e.g. Carecent and Kitchen For Everyone.
27. Salvation Army Street walks to encourage rough sleepers to access services, these are undertaken 3-4 times per week and provide a regular information stream of rough sleeping in the city. They receive Intel from a variety of sources on rough sleepers, and are aware of all rough sleepers in the city.
28. In addition the RSI complex needs rough sleepers workers undertake regular street walks and target hard to reach individuals who are rough sleeping to build relationships and offer and encourage people into accommodation.
29. Salvation Army drop in service to provide advice and support to access accommodation and other services, Salvation Army co ordinate in partnership with resettlement services the No Second Night Out emergency beds, and the Winter Night Provisions, these beds are the nearest thing to direct access beds in the city.
30. MEAM (Making Every Adult Matter) engages people with complex needs. MEAM customers must be homeless, have mental health issues, offending issues and substance issues. There was one MEAM worker in 2017 this has now increased to 4, funding for 2 of these posts is via the RSI funding. This has increased the amount of personalised intensive support we can offer to rough sleepers significantly.

31. Housing Options Team provides housing advice to anyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness. They assess applicants under the Housing Act 1996 (homeless presentation) but can only assist according to the legislative criteria, however the HRA 17 has made options available to single homeless and rough sleepers more available.
32. Youth Homeless Workers (16-17) provide specialist advice and support to young people 16 and 17
33. Staff within all Resettlement Services and other partner agencies are accredited to provide appropriate housing advice. There is an ongoing training programme to maintain and expand this across services.
34. Naloxone in supported accommodation Services. Use of Naloxone aims to reduce the number of opiate overdoses and opiate related deaths in the City Of York, In July to Sept 2018 six Naloxone kits were administered by support staff in one hostel alone to customers when they were alerted to or became aware of overdose scenarios, this is just one example of crisis intervention and life saving prevention of deaths of people who are homeless. (*Naloxone is a drug that can reverse the effects of opiate overdose*)
35. **No Second Night Out (NSNO)** where a person is new to rough sleeping, York has adopted the NSNO approach. This means that someone who has slept out for one night will be offered an emergency bed and asked to engage with Salvation Army to secure longer term accommodation.

[https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/8527/no\\_second\\_night\\_out\\_nsno\\_and\\_emergency\\_bed\\_protocolpdf](https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/8527/no_second_night_out_nsno_and_emergency_bed_protocolpdf)

36. Winter night beds While NSNO offers the emergency provision for the majority of the year, between 1<sup>st</sup> Nov and at least the 28<sup>th</sup> Feb the Resettlement services offer a winter night provision, this offers an increase in capacity of the NSNO provision so we are able to respond to rough sleeping when there is an increased risk to life, this year we increased the capacity of the emergency beds to 29, this is because should rough sleepers, even those who are unwilling to come into services wish to do so because of the weather, then services can at least safeguard them and offer them an emergency bed.
37. NSNO and winter night beds are a multi-agency provision co-ordinated by Salvation Army Early Intervention and Prevention Team. The beds are provided by Peasholme Centre, Howe Hill for Young People and Robinson Court Women's Hostel and Union Terrace Hostel. These are



additional emergency beds offered in addition to commissioned beds. NSNO is provided from within current provision free of charge to enable rough sleepers into emergency beds.

38. York is flexible in its use of NSNO beds and where possible will offer them to those who have not slept rough but need emergency accommodation and to those entrenched rough sleepers that re-engage with services and ask for accommodation.
39. Anecdotally, Salvation Army does not believe many of the entrenched rough sleepers would look to access emergency accommodation when the winter night provision is available. They are aware of the service.

17-18	Howe Hill	Peasholme	Arc Light	Robinson Court	Total
NSNO	487	1101	485	248	2321
Severe weather	181	620	335	78	1214
<b>Total</b>	668	1721	820	326	3535

40. In 2017/18 Resettlement services offered 3535 additional bed nights to prevent people sleeping rough.

### **Resettlement model**

41. The aim of the Resettlement service is to offer single homeless and rough sleepers access to supported hostel accommodation. Initially this is tier 1 (24/7 staffed hostels). Individuals are expected to adhere to hostel rules, pay their rent and amenity charges and engage with support and education services. When ready, individuals will move on to tier 2 shared housing, with more independence before ultimately moving into self contained accommodation.
42. York has a range of front line tier 1 accommodation for single people that are homeless and have vulnerability. All referrals are via Single Access Point  
[https://www.york.gov.uk/info/20094/homelessness/816/hostels\\_and\\_emergency\\_accommodation](https://www.york.gov.uk/info/20094/homelessness/816/hostels_and_emergency_accommodation)
43. Tier 1 accommodation provision includes:
  - Union Terrace Hostel 39 beds.
  - Peasholme Centre 23 beds
  - Howe Hill for Young People 24 beds.

- Robinson Court women's hostel 13 beds
- Robinson Court young peoples service 4 beds.

In total there are 103 tier 1 beds in the city

44. York has significant success with those people that do engage and move through resettlement services. Last year York resettled 40 people into permanent tenancies in social Housing via its resettlement category , plus a small number of complex individuals using the Housing First model.

### **Housing First**

45. <http://hfe.homeless.org.uk/principles-housing-first>

*'Housing First is an evidence-based approach to successfully supporting homeless people with high needs and histories of entrenched or repeat homelessness to live in their own homes. The overall philosophy of Housing First is to provide a stable, independent home and intensive personalised support and case management to homeless people with multiple and complex needs. Housing is seen as a human right by Housing First services. There are no conditions around 'housing readiness before providing someone with a home; rather, secure housing is viewed as a stable platform from which other issues can be addressed. Housing First is a different model because it provides housing 'first', as a matter of right, rather than 'last' or as a reward.'*

46. CYC has adopted the Housing First model and uses existing stock to house a small number of complex rough sleepers who are engaging with MEAM and for whom this is the most suitable housing option. All MEAM customers are homeless and have mental health, offending, substance misuse issues and they require intensive, often daily visits for long term support for many years. CYC began using Housing first in Aug 2015 and have since housed 13 complex individuals using a housing first approach of these 13 people 11 have been successful to date and 2 have broken down, however it is worth pointing out that the 2 have been safety net moved into supported accommodation schemes through negotiation, and without the need for formal actions to be taken.
47. Housing First is not an appropriate option for everyone. The majority people benefit from supported housing and moving onto independent accommodation though resettlement services and North Yorkshire Home

Choice. Housing first is an option that York has used successfully for a small number of complex people. There are no additional units of accommodation and use of stock for rough sleepers must be considered alongside the need to move people out of hostels, care leavers, statutory homeless, over crowded, under occupation and other elements of the NYHC allocations policy which reflect the housing needs of individuals and families.

### **Homeless Deaths**

48. The number of people known to our services who died was 11 in 2017
- One person was a rough sleeper who was offered accommodation,
  - Eight people were in supported accommodation Services.
  - The 11<sup>th</sup> person referred to previously died on the street but was not homeless, we were aware of him through his association with homeless people.
  - There have been 2 rough sleepers deaths since 2014 one in 2014 and one mentioned in 2017.
  - The 2017 figure of 11 deaths of homeless people was a percentage of 1.8% of people in homeless accommodation in the city in 2017.

### **Concerns**

49. There remains concern by professionals that due to increased demand over the last few years there are insufficient emergency beds, supported accommodation beds and long term affordable (social) housing in York. The pro-active approach to providing structured resettlement support may not suit all people but there are no 'long term' supported housing options for rough sleepers / those with complex needs, this means many are being supported in hostels.
50. There is significant demand for social housing from many customer groups which must be balanced. Safe and stable communities are important. There are concerns that individuals with complex needs may cause some anti-social behaviour in social housing tenancies if they have not fully engaged with resettlement services prior to moving into independent accommodation.

51. There are limited numbers of 'specialist' supported housing projects in particular mental health and learning difficulties schemes and so more people try and access resettlement services.
52. There appears to be an increase in the number of offenders needing resettlement services, due to Southview Approved Premises being re-designated as a national facility and because there is more emphasis on offenders leaving prison and having accommodation on release.
53. While the private rented sector has been beyond the reach for many of CYC customers, the impact of Local Housing Allowance has further reduced access to the private rented sector.
54. The impact of welfare benefit reforms is causing significant distress to individuals claiming Universal Credit.
55. Homeless Reduction Act although 10 months in to this legislation there still remains uncertainty over what impact the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 will have on services, There has being an increase in the use of B&B and demand for temporary accommodation remains at a over capacity level, with no additional accommodation to assist people. at the end of 2017/18 there were 49 Households in temporary accommodation, it is expected that there will be an increase at the end of this financial year. HRA 17 has seen people staying within the temporary accommodation route for longer due to the 56 day time frames on the duties.

## **Council Plan**

56. This report links to the following priorities of the Council Plan 2015-19:
  - **A focus on frontline services** – to ensure all residents, particularly the least advantaged, can access reliable services and community facilities.
  - **A council that listens to residents** – to ensure it delivers the services they want and works in partnership with local communities

## **Risks and Implications**

57. There are no risks or implications arising from the recommendation in this report. A number of identified concerns are listed in paragraphs 49 - 55 above.

## Recommendations

58. Members are asked to note the content of this report and agree any relevant comments
59. Reason: So Members are satisfied that issues around homeless people are being addressed.

## Contact Details

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**Report Approved**  **Date** 01/02/2019

**Wards Affected:** *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

**All**

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

## Abbreviations

B&Bs \_ Bed and Breakfast  
CYC – City of York Council  
FOI- Freedom of Information request  
HL – Homeless  
HRA 17 – Homeless Reduction Act 2017  
LA- Local Authority  
MEAM – Making Every Adult Matter  
NSNO – No Second Night Out  
NYHC- North Yorkshire Home Choice  
RSI - Rough sleepers initiative  
SWP – Severe Winter Pressure  
YB0 – Yes Below Zero