

**Health, Housing and Adult Social Care Policy
and Scrutiny Committee**

12 December 2017

Report of the Assistant Director Housing and Community Safety

Provision for homeless people over the winter period

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.

Background

2. Following changes to the senior management structure within City of York Council in September 2016, issues around homelessness were transferred from the former Directorate of Communities and Neighbourhoods to a newly formed Directorate of Health, Housing and Adult Social Care. The scrutiny arrangements which support all service delivery within City of York Council have also been realigned with issues around homelessness now falling within the remit of the Health, Housing and Adult Social Care Policy and Scrutiny Committee.
3. In late October 2017 a Motion was submitted 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.
4. The Council acknowledged the achievement of the Council's Housing Options team in being awarded a 'Gold Award' for their work and the large number of people inside and outside the Council in the voluntary and community sector striving to support the homeless.
5. However, Council resolved to call for an urgent report to Executive to consider options on the following:
 - Immediate measures to provide additional temporary accommodation and avoid if at all possible any further deaths on our streets this winter;

- Any further measures that can be actioned in a short/medium timescale to prevent this crisis from spiralling out of control in York. These might include an extension of the Housing First model; the provision of daytime facilities in the city centre to improve the health of people who find themselves on the streets; and the options for closer working with partners across the region to improve outcomes for homeless people.
 - Plans for engagement with people living on the streets, in temporary accommodation and other homeless people to learn from their views and ideas.”
6. A briefing paper on provision for homeless people over the winter period was circulated to all Committee Members in November 2017 and it was agreed this item be added to the agenda for the meeting in 12 December 2017 with relevant comments and suggestions being fed into a full report to Executive on 25 January 2018, in line with the Committee’s policy development function.

Provision for Homeless People

7. 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.
8. 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.
9. The focus of this scrutiny report and the forthcoming report to Executive is on rough sleepers and those going through a resettlement pathway. It should be noted that a large proportion of household that present as homeless are re-housed through the Housing Act 1996, accessing emergency temporary accommodation.
10. Considerable progress has been made in York in the last 10 years:
- In 2007/8 there were 406 homeless acceptances, last year the number had reduced to 186. In the first six months of this year the figure is 87.
 - The number of households living in temporary accommodation has reduced from 207 on 31st March 2007 to 68 at 31st March 2017. As at the end of September the number in temporary accommodation was 58.
11. As the focus and level of preventative work has increased, the number of acceptances and the number in temporary accommodation has reduced. Ten years ago there were 278 successful interventions. Last year there were 752 successful interventions thus avoiding the need for an individual / household to present as homeless.
12. 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)

13. The homeless 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.
14. The level of rough sleeping has increased in recent years to 29 people (2017). 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 engage with services, they are generally helped into accommodation fairly 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 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. A number of rough sleepers are entrenched and refuse any form of help.

Rough sleeping figures

17. Rough sleeping increased by 132% nationally from 2010 to 2016 and the homeless charity Crisis predicts there will be a 76% rise in rough sleeping nationally over the next decade.
18. The Street Count Evaluation is scheduled every November. This is an evaluation based on a typical night and is submitted to central government. It is determined by a strict methodology, used nationally and is not a simple street walk head count.
19. Since 2010 this figure has increased year on year.

	Nov 2010	Nov 2011	Nov 2012	Nov 2013	Nov 2014	Nov 2015	Nov 2016	Nov 2017
York	2	2	8	9	13	18	18	29
England	1,768	2,181	2,309	2,414	2,744	3,569	4,134	TBC

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

Services for single homeless and rough sleepers

21. Engagement with rough sleepers (advice and support)
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
22. Salvation Army Street walks to encourage rough sleepers to access services.

23. Salvation Army drop in service to provide advice and support to access accommodation and other services
24. 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 is one MEAM worker. At present there is no confirmed long term funding of this post.
25. 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.
26. Youth Homeless Workers (16-17) provide specialist advice and support to young people 16 and 17
 - Informal advice / support from Carecent volunteers;
 - Advice, support and liaison on behalf of a customer from other agencies such as National Probation Services, Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), Citizens Advice.
27. 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.

No Second Night Out (NSNO)

28. 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
29. NSNO is 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. 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.

- Peasholme Centre up to 5 No Second Night Out / Emergency beds.
- Howe Hill for Young People up to 5 NSNO/emergency beds.
- Robinson court women's hostel 1 NSNO/emergency bed.

30. 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.

31. In 2016/17 2657 additional bed nights were provided by services to prevent people sleeping rough.

	Howe Hill	Peasholme	Arc Light	Robinson Court	Total
NSNO	487	1,341	154	119	
Severe weather	260	237	48	78	
Total	747	1,511	202	197	2,657
1/4/17 – 6/11/17	79	131	N/A	17	

<http://www.homeless.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/policy-and-lobbying-priorities/no-second-night-out-campaign>

Severe weather provision

32. Severe weather operates over winter months during cold weather and is monitored between 1st Nov and 28th Feb offering 5 more beds in Arc Light when required. These are in addition to the 11 NSNO beds.

33. Anecdotally, Salvation Army do not believe many of the entrenched rough sleepers would look to access emergency accommodation when severe weather is activated. They are aware of the service.

Resettlement model

34. The intention of the 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 onto tier 2 shared housing, with more independence before ultimately moving into self contained accommodation.

35. York has a range of front line tier 1 accommodation for single people that are homeless and have a vulnerability. All referrals are via Single Access Point

https://www.york.gov.uk/info/20094/homelessness/816/hostels_and_emergency_accommodation

36. Accommodation provision includes:

- Arc Light Hostel 39 beds.
- Peasholme Centre 22 beds
- Howe Hill for Young People 23 beds.
- Robinson Court women's hostel 13 beds
- Robinson Court young peoples service 4 beds.

In total there are 101 tier 1 beds in the city

37. York has significant success with those people that do engage and move through resettlement services. Last year York resettled 70 people into permanent tenancies, plus a small number of complex individuals using the Housing First model.

Housing First

38. <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.'

39. 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.

40. This is not an appropriate option for everyone. Some people benefit from supported housing and moving onto independent accommodation through resettlement services and North Yorkshire Home Choice but it is an option that York has used successfully for a small number of 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.

Rough sleeping

41. As stated in paragraph 18, above, the Street Count Evaluation is scheduled every November with the latest taking place on 22 November 2017. The figures in York have increased year on year since 2010.

Nov 2010	Nov 2011	Nov 2012	Nov 2013	Nov 2014	Nov 2015	Nov 2016	Nov 2017
2	2	8	9	13	18	18	29

42. In York there is currently a cohort of people involved in what is known as street culture. An approximate estimate for this cohort is between 20 and 25.

- Many of the people involved in this are involved in begging, substance misuse / street drinking etc; have complex needs and usually no desire to engage with support services at this point in their lives.
- Not all beggars are rough sleepers. Many are in accommodation, but York is a lucrative city with a vibrant night time economy which attracts begging and significant sums of money can be made.
- It is very difficult to encourage someone off the streets if they don't want to engage in the resettlement offer.
- There isn't anyone on the streets that the outreach services are unaware of.
- Welfare reform has contributed to non-engagement as some people do not wish to claim benefits, which precludes them from accommodation.

- All of the people concerned have been offered services appropriate to their situation.
- The need for a busking licence was withdrawn resulting in increasing begging and very little in the way of powers to prevent it
- Resettlement aims to work with people to move away from behaviours associated with street culture so for those who are not ready to leave this lifestyle or the financial incentive associated with it there is very little support services can do to effect a change without enforcement.
- North Yorkshire Police resources struggle to control city centre begging, but the Business Improvement District rangers have to some degree stepped into this role.
- Due to reductions in public spending there has been a reduction in outreach services and supported housing in recent years.
- There is significant demand for social housing (circa 1,600 on North Yorkshire Home Choice)
- There is limited private rented accommodation available in York for people on benefits
- The average life expectancy for an entrenched rough sleeper is 47, the man who died recently was part of this cohort of people reluctant to move away from this choice
- There has been a campaign in York to encourage the public to give to charities rather than people begging to help ensure that this money goes to services that support rough sleepers wanting to access resettlement services



Concerns

43. There are concerns 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.
44. 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.
45. 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.
46. 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 having accommodation on release.
47. 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.
48. The impact of welfare benefit reforms is causing significant distress to individuals claiming Universal Credit.
49. There is uncertainty over what impact the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 will have on services, but it is anticipated there will be an increase in demand with no additional accommodation to assist people.

Options

50. This report is provided for information. However, Members may feel fit to make comments to be fed in to a future full report to Executive.

Analysis

51. This report is for information.

Council Plan

52. 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

53. There are no risks or implications arising from the recommendation in this report. A number of identified concerns are listed in paragraphs 43-49 above.

Recommendations

54. Members are asked to note the content of this report and agree any relevant comments or suggestions to be fed into a full report to Executive.

Reason: So Members are satisfied that issues around homeless people are being addressed.

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Report Approved



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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the authors of the report

Abbreviations

CYC – City of York Council

MEAM – Making Every Adult Matter

NSNO – No Second Night Out

SWP – Severe Winter Pressure