

Report of the Interim Head of Place

Report on the Homeless Winter Night Provision 20/21

Summary

1. This paper updates the Housing & Community Safety Scrutiny Committee on the current homelessness situation and the winter night provision for rough sleepers and single homeless people in York.

Background

The Current Homelessness situation

2. City of York Council is currently in a partnership with other organisations across York, working under the 2018-2023 Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Together strategy. This partnership approach is well established, operating effectively for many years, and continues to attempt to rise to the challenges of tackling all forms of homelessness. These challenges have been further complicated this year by Covid 19.
3. The team are responding positively to the challenge of tackling all forms of homelessness. These challenges are numerous and there remains significant pressure on the service. Despite this, we continue to provide a high quality Housing Options Service and a nationally recognised advanced Resettlement service.
4. As part of the response to Covid, the team worked hard to ensure everyone had a place to sleep which was safe and minimised the risk of infection. This included utilising otherwise empty hotel accommodation which was supported by funding from central government. These relationships remain in place and can be utilised if needed as part of our winter response.

2020-2021 Winter night Provision

5. This year due to Covid 19 and the resulting second lockdown there has been a different response to bed provision in the city. On 1st November, we

activated our winter night provision for rough sleepers and single homeless people. This will offer direct access to safe and warm accommodation during this period. Due to the unique challenges faced this year, much of this extra provision is already in place, meaning the transition into winter provision has been less demanding than previous years. The work of service providers this year, whether statutory, voluntary or faith based has reduced the number of people sleeping rough and this service will continue over winter to house people during the extra challenges that cold weather brings.

6. The nature of the Covid outbreak has meant that we have had to offer a different form of night provision. In previous winters we offered up to 29 beds, however many of these were communal in nature and can no longer be safely provided. We continue to offer a vital emergency bed provision, but we will do this in a different way to help reduce the chances of infection amongst residents. A summary of the previous winter response is presented in the right hand column of the table below. The left hand column shows how Covid has limited the capacity of our usual response.

This winter period - 1st Nov to 29th Feb	Pre pandemic winter night bed offer
Peasholme centre – offer of 3 emergency beds, 4 in absolute emergency utilising a back office interview room	7-8
Howe Hill – offer of 3 Emergency beds	7-8
Union Terrace Hostel - Offering 0 emergency beds but do prioritise empty rooms on this basis	7
Robinson Court - 1 emergency bed	1
Yes Below Zero (flat 2 HH) - 2 emergency beds	5
Totals 10	29

7. In order to fill the gap in provision above we have the following additional options to utilise at short notice if needed:

Ordnance Lane - accommodation for rough sleepers added to emergency capacity due to the opening of James House	9
Hotel Partners – relationships in place and could be utilised if needed	When required
Empty hostels (Holgate Road and Crombie House) made vacant by opening of James House, these can	When required – up to 15 bed

be brought back into use if required by the resettlement team	spaces available
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8. This winter provision will provide a reliable supply of emergency provision to meet demand. A triage approach is undertaken on how and where to place people and those deemed to have complex needs are prioritised into the supported accommodation schemes where skilled staff are on duty 24/7 to support them.
9. It is worth noting that the pandemic has galvanised the culture of eradicating rough sleeping amongst services, resources have been provided to support this. This has led to a reduction in the number of people sleeping rough in York and it is hoped that demand will be lower this year than previously. We are maintaining a steady flow of more permanent supported accommodation beds to help deliver the capacity needed. However, in the event of a change in circumstances or an extreme weather event, our approach allows us to provide a significant increase in emergency capacity if needed.
10. While the official winter night provision deactivates on the 29th Feb 2021, a weather assessment is always made and extensions can be applied if required. Our approach will be phase into our all year provision to ensure no one is returned to the streets or made homeless. This year we will need to monitor the situation with regards to Covid to ensure our residents remain safe. The culture and ambition to prevent rough sleeping in York will remain next year, with resources focused on supporting long term solutions.

Summary of Homeless situation in York

	18/19 target and actual	19/20 target and actual	21/21 target and actual to date
No of households in temporary accommodation	57 Actual 66	65 Actual 62	60
No of households accepted as priority need (main duty HRA17)	100 Actual 61	80 Actual 99	80
No of rough sleepers	15 Actual 9	6 Actual 7	4 Actual 3
Not to use B&B for 16 or 17 year olds	0 Actual 0	0 Actual 0	0 0 thus far
Not to use B&B for families, other than in emergencies and then for no longer	0 Actual 0	0 Actual 0	0 0 thus far

than 6 weeks			
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11. This year, we received £6400 Cold Weather funding from MHCLG to offset the additional cost of an increase in emergency bed provision during winter.
12. In addition, we received £475k Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding for a variety of front line workers: navigators, outreach workers, MEAM workers, Mental Health and private rented sector officers. These posts have supported our 'inreach' work with rough sleepers currently in accommodation. We hope this will reduce incidences of rough sleeping in the city in the medium and longer term.
13. *RSI staff support in numbers:*
 - 1 Rough Sleepers coordinator
 - 4 Rough Sleeper Housing navigators
 - 2 MEAM workers and personalisation monies (*MEAM Making Every Adult Matter*)
 - 2 Outreach workers for our salvation army EIP Team
 - 2 Private rented Sector officers
 - A mental Health Worker.
 - Resettlement Category - permanent housing for rough sleepers
14. We have successfully worked to accommodate all of York's rough sleepers during Covid and have made a major difference to the landscape of rough sleeping in the city. The ambition is to maintain and further improve this next year.
15. Below is a summary of priority need acceptances and reasons for the loss of the last settled home.

	TOTAL housed in year
2018/19	58
2019-20	69
2020/21	48 up to Nov 20

Priority Need acceptances	19-20	2020/21 As of Nov 20
Households with children or pregnant	57	25
16 and 17 year olds / vulnerable young people	0	0
Old age	0	1

Households with physical illness or disabilities	17	5
Households with mental health issues	19	14
Domestic violence	4	1
Emergency / other	2	1
Asylum Seekers	0	0

Reason for loss of last settled home	2019/20 HRA17 reason for loss of last settled home (All approaches)	2020-21 as of Nov 20
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	191	82
Family no longer willing or able to accommodate	316	225
Friends no longer willing to accommodate	85	77
Domestic abuse	60	57
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	98	65
End of social rented tenancy	24	8 (on hold until next year – reasons are primarily around serious ASB)
Eviction from supported housing	16	22
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	27	10
Property Disrepair	1	0
Left institution with no accommodation available	39	38
Required to leave accommodation	1	0

provided by Home Office as asylum support		
Other reasons / not known	137	123
Mortgage Repossession	7	1
Racially motivated violence or harassment	0	1
Non racially motivated/other motivated violence or harassment	12	8
Left HM forces	1	0
Fire or flood / other emergency	3	3
TOTAL	1018	720

16. The Service remains very busy and we are in a position where ‘move on’ from temporary accommodation and resettlement remains challenging, we are having to use more B&B’s than previous years with the additional funds to tackle rough sleeping proving vital in helping us meet our objectives.
17. Creating and maintaining a sufficient supply of ‘move on’ options for people with complex needs continues to be a significant challenge. This has created incidents of residents sometimes ending up in our supported accommodation services for too long.
18. The number of residents with complex needs is a significant challenge for services, a person’s housing situation (or lack of) is the most visible and easy to measure record of this complex situation. However, in many cases the lack of housing is not the largest contributing factor to a person being homeless. It is often the result of a complex mix of personal circumstances. It is therefore vital that we continue to offer a holistic wrap around service alongside our housing offer to reduce occurrences and reoccurrences of people being homeless. Other services both within and outside the council have a significant role to play supporting this.
19. Any person sleeping rough is one too many. However, we continue to make great progress in reducing the number of official rough sleepers. The number of rough sleepers at the last official count was 3, down from 7 the previous year.

20. Hospital discharges and release from prison continues to create challenges to the homeless service with priority given to release and discharge. Housing people with high needs and high risk behavioural issues remains a challenge and utilises significant resource capacity within the team. Such residents require significantly more specialised support than can be provided through the homeless team alone.

21. Covid 19 has exacerbated pressure on the advice and assistance side of the service. Remote working has presented challenges for our staff teams. Physical peer support and partnership working has been difficult to replicate in a virtual way. However, despite all of these challenges our supported accommodation has remained fully operational throughout the pandemic and has adapted well to the changing environment.

Recommendation:

Scrutiny is asked to note this information and to make any recommendations on the issues raised.

Contact Details

Author:

Michael Jones
AD Housing and Community
Safety

Tim Carroll
Service Manager Housing
Options

Chief officer responsible for this report

Tracey Carter – Interim Director of Place

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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report