

Exception Report by Housing Support Advisory Group

Report on the number of people rough sleeping in the City of Oxford

Purpose

Performance Exception Report - To highlight the significant increase in rough sleeping in Oxford.

Report

1. The Housing Support Advisory Group (HSAG) received and reviewed the latest housing performance data on 25th January 2018, and resolved to submit this report to the Health Improvement Board to provide more information with regard to rough sleeping increases and possible reasons for this.
2. Measure 10.5 of the suite of HIB performance indicators is to “ensure that the number of people estimated to be sleeping rough in Oxfordshire does not exceed the baseline figure from 2016/17” (which was 79). This has not been met, having increased to 117 people.
3. The table below indicates that between November 2016 and November 2017, the number of persons estimated to be rough sleeping in Oxfordshire rose by 48% (38 people). The numbers fell in two district council areas (Cherwell and South Oxfordshire), but rose in the other three (Oxford City, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire). The increase was most significant in Oxford City, which saw an 89% increase (42 people) based on the estimate figures. West Oxfordshire also shows a significant change from zero to seven people in their estimate.

Description/ District	CDC	City	South	Vale	West	Total
Number of people estimated to be sleeping rough (Nov 16)	17	47	7	8	0	79
Number of people estimated to be sleeping rough (Nov 17)	9	89	2	10	7	117
<i>Percentage change (Nov 16 to Nov 17)</i>	<i>-47%</i>	<i>+89%</i>	<i>-71%</i>	<i>+25%</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>+48%</i>
<i>Variation from target (79)</i>	<i>-8</i>	<i>+42</i>	<i>-5</i>	<i>+2</i>	<i>+7</i>	<i>+38</i>
Official street count - City Only (Nov 16)		33				
Official street count - City Only (Nov 17)		61				
<i>Percentage change (Nov 16 to Nov 17)</i>		<i>+85%</i>				

4. Oxford City Council also conducts an actual street count, in the same month. From November 2016 to November 2017, this data for Oxford showed an 85% increase in people observed as rough sleeping, and bedded down at the time of the count, from 33 to 61 people. This is the highest number ever recorded in Oxford. Further information is summarised at Appendix A.
5. Figures just published by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government show that the number of people sleeping rough increased nationally by 15% (comprising of a 18% rise in London and 14% in the rest of England) for the same period (Nov 16 to Nov 17). This is an increase of 617 people sleeping rough (from 4,134 to 4,751). The report notes that just under half of this increase was due to increases reported by eight local authorities, including

Oxford. When considered per 1,000 households of population, Oxford is the 7th highest local authority listed, after City of London, Westminster, Brighton & Hove, Camden, Bedford & Luton.

6. Of the 61 people identified as sleeping rough on the night of the official count only 6 people had a confirmed connection to Oxford City, whilst a nearly a quarter (13/61) had a known connection to another Oxfordshire District Council area.

Local Connections	Number	
Connection to Oxford City	6	
Cherwell	9	13
South Oxfordshire	1	
Vale of White Horse	2	
West Oxfordshire	1	
No connection to Oxfordshire	21	
Connection unknown / investigating at time of count	21	
Total	61	

7. Of the 21 people with no connection (local or pathway) to Oxfordshire, 12 have rough slept in the city over 1 year. Where it is clear that a person may not have a connection anywhere, the City's Outreach Team (Oxford SPOT) may apply for an exemption from the connection criteria under the 'Reconnection Policy'.
8. Of the 21 people whose connection was unknown/ being investigated at the time of the official count, 4 of the clients were thought likely to have a connection to the City; 3 to either South or Vale; and 2 to Cherwell. Subsequently, it has been established that 3 have an Oxford City connection; 2 a connection with South Oxfordshire; and 1 with an expired connection to Cherwell. 3 are in/ or have been in prison and no local connection is currently established; 1 continues to not engage; and 6 were considered to have no Oxfordshire connection (3 of whom have already have relocated away, and 1 who was only seen once on that night). 5 clients were not identified by name on the count, so follow up on connection has not been possible.
9. Of the 61 people identified on the night of the count, 55 people found were already known to services, with 22 having rough slept in the City for over 6 months; most had high level support needs including 25 who had mental ill health issues (10 of these 25 known drug users), 24 who misuse drugs, and 20 who misuse alcohol.
10. The following important changes, between the November 2016 and November 2017 Oxford City counts, should also be noted:
- A significant increase in number of women found on the count – from 0 to 10 individuals
 - An increase in 18-25 year olds – from 1 to 3
 - An increase in number of EEA nationals found – from 6 to 11
 - An increase in the number of adults aged 60 years and over - from 2 to 5

Reasons for the increases

11. The rise in the number of people sleeping rough, to some degree, reflects the national trend which is a consequence of austerity and pressure on key public services, including mental health, support for people with drug and alcohol problems, health, prison, probation, and adult social care, together with the direct effects of welfare reform which has resulted in vulnerable households being unable to cover housing costs.

12. Locally, cuts by Oxfordshire County Council to the Adult Homeless Pathway are reducing the number of supported bed spaces available. Despite district councils now commissioning their own supported accommodation services for homeless people, the number of number of bed spaces available does not appear to meet this rising demand.
13. Oxford City Council has taken over the commissioning of some essential services and is increasing supply. More than 150 bed spaces will be available for people with a connection to the City in 2018/19, as a result of the City Council's substantial and increasing investment in services for rough sleepers and single homeless people (inc 27 at O'Hanlon House).
14. However, it is clear that the Oxfordshire District Councils' commissioned supply of beds is inadequate to meet current need, particularly for people with complex needs. This is causing blockages within the Adult Homeless Pathway, with people typically being unable to access the limited supply of District Council bed spaces at O'Hanlon House (29 bed spaces) and – for those that can – being unable to move on from there due to the complete lack of provision within the Oxfordshire District Council areas for people with more complex needs, and requiring more hours of support. Clients are not moving through the adult pathway in the 6 to 9 months that was originally envisaged.
15. As a result, more people with a connection to one of the Oxfordshire Districts are ending up on the streets of Oxford, without the support they need and unable to access suitable supported accommodation in their local area that would enable them to move on. More active involvement from district councils, in a pathway leadership role, at case level, is actively helping to move some people through the pathway, but blockages remain due to a lack of supported move-on options. This is particularly the case with clients with a connection to the Cherwell District Council area. At the count, the eventual breakdown of district connected clients was:

• Cherwell	9
• South Oxfordshire	3
• Vale of White Horse	2
• West Oxfordshire	1
Total	15

16. Other reasons for an increase may include:

- a. Lack of take-up of reconnection offers by clients to 'home' areas;
- b. Oxford having a young demographic; with drug consumption appearing to have increased (based on complaints; needle finds; crime data; etc);
- c. Being an affluent city, that is relatively tolerant, making it a good begging location;
- d. Having nearby areas that have implemented PSPOs that ban rough sleeping and begging outright (Banbury); and the proximity to HMP Bullingdon;
- e. A number of clients that have complex needs; are chaotic and/or refuse to engage with support services that challenge support models and limit 'progression'. A number of clients on the streets have been excluded or evicted from the pathway due to behaviour
- f. High housing costs locally that further limit access and opportunities for those people ready to move-on and who are suitable for private rented accommodation.

Report on behalf of: Housing Support Advisory Group

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Appendix A - Headline data from Oxford City Council's Official Street Count and estimate November 2017

Street counts and estimates since 2010:

Street Count		Estimate	
2017	61	2017	89
2016	33	2016	47
2015	39	2015	56
2014	26	2014	43
2013	19	2013	-
2012	12	2012	-
2011	8	2011	-
2010	16	2010	-

Street count and estimate data 2017:

Street Count Nov 2017	No	Estimate Nov 2017	No
Total	61	Total	89
Rough Sleeping Status		Rough Sleeping Status	
1 st night out/ New	2	1 st night out/ New	0
Known (2 nights to 6 months r/s)	33	Known (2 nights to 6 months r/s)	42
Entrenched/ rough sleeping 6+ months	22	Entrenched/ rough sleeping 6+ months	44
Unknown to services	4	Unknown to services	3
Total	61	Total	89
Gender		Gender	
Male	51	Male	74
Female	10	Female	15
Total	61	Total	89
Age		Age	
18-25	3	18-25	2
26 – 35	13	26 – 35	25
36 – 49	27	36 – 49	39
50 - 59	8	50 - 59	16
60+	5	60+	7
Unknown	5	Unknown	0
Total	61	Total	89
Nationality		Nationality	
UK nationals	46	UK nationals	65
EU nationals (excluding UK)	11	EU nationals (excluding UK)	21
Non-EU nationals	2	Non-EU nationals	3
Not known	2	Not known	0
Total	61	Total	89

Connections		Connections	
No connection to Oxon	21	No connection to Oxon	31
Unknown/investigating at time of count	21	Unknown/investigating	31
CDC	9	CDC	9
OCC	6	OCC	10
SODC	1	SODC	4
VOWHDC	2	VOWHDC	3
WODC	1	WODC	1
Total	61	Total	89
Had access to accommodation on night of count/ typical night	4		2
Rough sleepers outside of city centre streets	11		N/A