

# **Report to Health Improvement Board 14th May 2020 - Covid-19 and Homelessness**

## **1. Introduction**

The Housing Support Advisory Group has been asked to provide an update on how people who are homeless, particularly rough sleepers, have been supported during the Covid-19 period. This summary report has been prepared in place of the usual performance data. Reporting will return to normal for the September 2020 meeting of HIB.

## **2. Update on the County-wide Response to Covid-19**

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) directed all housing authorities to accommodate anyone known to be rough sleeping by 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020, regardless of priority need or immigration status. Funding of £750 per rough sleeper based on the number of rough sleepers reported in the last annual count (November 2019) was allocated to each local authority. Accommodation had to be self-contained to be compliant with Public Health England guidance i.e. no shared facilities where at all possible.

Key points from the District Councils' responses to this directive are :

- 223 homelessness placements have been made across the county (as at 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020)
- All additional accommodation that has been sourced is short-term, mainly comprising of hotels and is not equivalent to supported housing or hostel accommodation which is specifically commissioned for homeless people
- Additional costs are still to be fully quantified but are significant
- Compliance with social distancing can be difficult to enforce, however accommodation providers backed up by neighbourhood policing teams are working to promote and ensure compliance
- As at 1<sup>st</sup> May there appeared to be very few cases of Covid-19 among the rough sleeping population
- Providers experienced difficulty initially in obtaining supplies of PPE and guidance about how to deal with Covid-19 in hostels and supported accommodation settings but these issues seem to have been resolved
- There are different arrangements in each District but local authorities have arranged for food to be provided to most of the people accommodated
- Move-on plans based on a commitment that no one accommodated should have to return to rough sleeping are being worked on county-wide. As a county wide system local authority partners are working together to coordinate analysis of need, properties available and support packages required
- The complex nature of many of the people accommodated is recognised and move-on plans need to reflect this e.g. the need for more Housing First units and options for people who have previously refused accommodation offered through the Adult Homeless Pathway
- There are positive signs that some social and private sector landlords are willing to offer properties to people that need to be housed post-Covid, particularly as there will be voids in the system as we come out of lockdown.

However, appropriate support packages for people moving on will need to be provided and also landlord incentives/safeguards

- Increases in Local Housing Allowance levels and in Discretionary Housing Payment budgets are welcome and should help with accessing the private rented sector
- All the local authorities are working together to submit proposals for additional funding from MHCLG to assist with move-on and to resource the support that people will need in order to access and sustain long-term accommodation.

### 3. Individual Districts' Specific Updates on Homelessness Related to Covid-19

#### Summary

District	Homelessness placements made during Covid-19 (from 27 <sup>th</sup> March 2020)
Cherwell	34
South	24
Vale	20
West	27
City	118
<b>Total</b>	<b>223</b>

Cherwell	
Rough Sleepers Accommodated	34 homelessness placements have been made including 2 out of area 20 temporary households were in temporary accommodation pre Covid-19 Additional 5 people in extended Winter bed provision
Sourcing and additional cost	2 hotels - in Banbury and Bicester 1 jointly procured hotel in Oxford (10 rooms)  Actual full costs are still to be fully determined
Move-on plans	As outlined in the Countywide update
Other Issues	As outlined in the Countywide update 2 placements of people fleeing domestic abuse

South	
Rough Sleepers Accommodated	24 homelessness placements have been made 11 placements in temporary accommodation Pre Covid-19
Sourcing and additional cost	1 hotel in South Oxfordshire 1 jointly procured hotel in Oxford (10 rooms)  Actual full costs are still to be determined

Move-on plans	As outlined in the Countywide update
Other Issues	As outlined in the Countywide update

<b>Vale</b>	
Rough Sleepers Accommodated	20 homelessness placements have been made 14 placements in temporary accommodation pre Covid-19
Sourcing and additional cost	1 Bed & Breakfast in the Vale 1 jointly procured hotel in Oxford (10 rooms)  Actual full costs are still to be determined
Move-on plans	As outlined in the Countywide update
Other Issues	As outlined in the Countywide update

<b>West</b>	
Rough Sleepers Accommodated	27 homelessness placements made 15 placements in temporary accommodation pre Covid-19
Sourcing and additional cost	Hotels in the Cotswolds and Cheltenham 1 jointly procured hotel in Oxford (10 rooms)  Actual full costs are still to be fully determined
Move-on plans	As outlined in the Countywide update
Other Issues	As outlined in the Countywide update

<b>City</b>	
Rough Sleepers Accommodated	118 homelessness placements made (including those decanted from communal settings at Floyds Row and a small number from shared rooms in O'Hanlon House). 10 of these placements are in 'Covid-Protect' accommodation for people who are asymptomatic but high clinical risk
Sourcing and additional cost	A combination of hotels, hostels, university accommodation and other leases means that 124 units have been secured  Full costs are still to be determined
Move-on plans	As outlined in the Countywide update
Other Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outreach activity has scaled back to targeted interventions as the team have been deployed to staff the temporary settings</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• However, Outreach is starting to see a return to normal service with 2 shifts operating per week</li><li>• There is an ongoing street population of 12-15 people who have refused offers of accommodation</li><li>• No current requests for people to be accommodated because of domestic violence</li><li>• 'Covid-Care' accommodation units have been put in place for people who are symptomatic but there has not been a need to place anyone to date</li><li>• A triage process was set up in early April made up of St Mungos, City Council Housing Options and Luther Street providing clinical input to enable and support new rough sleepers into accommodation on an ongoing basis</li></ul>
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