

Report to Health Improvement Board 10th September 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 and what the next steps are. This is in addition to the usual homelessness performance data reporting.

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 27th 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.

At the maximum point there were approximately 230 single homeless people accommodated in hotels (and Oxford YHA) on a single night in Oxfordshire as a result of Covid-19. However, over the whole period a total of 452 people have been accommodated.

As at 26th August 2020 there are around 150 people still accommodated. Move-on planning continues and all district councils are working collaboratively, using strengths based needs assessments (SBNA) to identify client needs and aspirations. The development of the SBNA has been led by Crisis who are carrying out research in Oxfordshire, listening to the views of people with lived experience of rough sleeping with a view to making recommendations about the future model for service delivery.

As far as we can determine covid-19 infection rates among rough sleepers and people in homelessness accommodation have been very low. Oxford City Council has created covid-protect and covid-care accommodation for rough sleepers as follows :

Covid-Protect: This now constitutes 10 units at Canterbury House, a student accommodation block in Oxford. This provision was previously at Egrove Park, and then temporarily decanted to Fairfield House, pending availability of Canterbury House. The Covid-Protect group comprises people who are deemed to be particularly vulnerable to Covid-19 e.g. because of underlying health conditions.

Covid-Care: This now comprises 6 units at Fairfield House in Oxford. The trigger for bringing it online is having 3 people with symptoms who need to self-isolate. So far we have not needed to use this provision. Oxford City has only had one or two people at a time who are symptomatic and people have been accommodated in self-contained temporary accommodation where they have been able to self-isolate.

O'Hanlon House (OHH) hostel in Oxford is used by all the district councils. In March shared rooms were changed to single occupancy and no new residents were taken in during the lockdown. The hostel has now been opened up to new referrals. Testing is in place to ensure that any new residents that are offered a place have tested negative for Covid-19. Individuals are tested before moving into OHH and also when moving out of OHH. This has worked satisfactorily but there have not been many cases to date. Homeless Oxfordshire who run the hostel have reported that the process is working efficiently.

MHCLG expects housing authorities to achieve move-on for all rough sleepers accommodated during Covid-19 (Luke Hall MP letter May 2020). We also need to include those still on the streets and those who need to move on from supported accommodation. Oxfordshire district councils have enabled a significant number of people to move on already and most hotel settings have now been decommissioned.

There has been some success in enabling people to move on to settled or longer-term accommodation : in to social housing, the private rented sector, the adult homeless pathway and in to a number of Housing First tenancies. But there is more to do and districts are expected to provide interim accommodation while long term solutions are found. To support the move on process MHCLG invited bids under the Next Steps Accommodation Programme with a deadline of 21st August 2020. All Oxfordshire district councils have submitted bids for revenue costs to support move on, and in some cases capital funding has also been applied for in order to acquire and deliver additional units of accommodation that would be available long-term.

Public Health England has launched a £23m fund targeted at priority areas (Oxford City in our case) to improve support and outcomes for people experiencing rough sleeping who have drug and alcohol dependence needs. Public Health colleagues within the County Council are coordinating this bid in conjunction with the City Council, Turning Point and providers of homelessness services. It will be submitted early October. Funding is initially for 2020/21 but will be part of a 4 year programme. The funding is targeted at people who were rough sleeping and have accessed emergency accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic, and people who are currently rough sleeping.

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

Summary

| District | Total homelessness placements made during Covid-19 (March – August 2020) |
|-----------------|---|
| Cherwell | 74 |
| South and Vale | 90 |
| West | 56 |
| City | 232 |
| Total | 452 |

| Cherwell | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Rough Sleepers Accommodated | 74 people placed in hotels and within existing temporary accommodation stock |
| Sourcing and additional cost | 2 hotels - in Banbury and Bicester 1 jointly procured hotel in Oxford (10 rooms) now ended. Purchasing rooms in Banbury and Bicester now on a case by case basis. Actual full costs are still to be fully determined but c£200k |
| Move-on plans | 27 people moved on to date |

| South and Vale | |
|--|---|
| Rough Sleepers or people at risk of rough sleeping Accommodated | 43 homelessness placements have been made by South Oxfordshire 47 homelessness placements have been made in the Vale Total = 90 11 placements in temporary accommodation in the South Pre Covid-19 14 placements in temporary accommodation in the Vale pre Covid-19 Total pre Covid in temporary accommodation 25 |
| Rough sleepers or person at risk of rough sleeping moved from emergency accommodation into long-term sustainable accommodation | South Oxfordshire have housed 19 Vale of White Horse have housed 22 Total number of people housed = 41 |
| Sourcing and additional cost | South & Vale have ended their contractual arrangements with 2 hotels - now provided on a pay-per-usage basis. Actual full costs are still to be determined |
| Move-on plans | South and Vale have funded a floating support worker to help support individuals in their new tenancies. |

| West | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Rough Sleepers Accommodated | 56 homelessness placements made 15 placements in temporary accommodation pre Covid-19 |

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Sourcing and additional cost | Hotels in the Cotswolds and Cheltenham have been used. 1 jointly procured hotel in Oxford (10 rooms) Actual full costs are still to be fully determined |
| Move-on plans | 24 people moved on to date. |

| City | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Rough Sleepers Accommodated | 232 people accommodated in total – combination of hotels and YHA. |
| Sourcing and additional cost | A combination of hotels, hostels, university accommodation and other leases means that 124 units were secured. Canterbury House student accommodation now up and running as interim accommodation. Full costs are still to be determined |
| Move-on plans | 90 people moved on to date. |

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Date : 28th August 2020