

## Leicester's Rough Sleeping (next steps) Covid 19 Strategy.

As at 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

### 1. Executive summary

- 1.1. In March 2020, as an initial response to the Covid-19 pandemic, homelessness services including the provision of temporary accommodation were extended to ensure that no one needed to rough sleep at this time. This help and support was offered to protect Leicester's rough sleepers and also those who were at risk of rough sleeping at this time – on the streets, sofa surfing, in safe spaces and in hostels - from Covid-19 and limit wider transmission.
- 1.2 This was achieved by the swift mass procurement of safe accommodation, primarily additional self-contained flats and hotels, and – working with charities, the NHS and public health in the provision of wraparound and specialist support.
- 1.3 The purpose of this approach was is to reduce the impact of Covid-19 on people sleeping rough and at risk of rough sleeping and ultimately to prevent deaths during this public health emergency. Its basic principles were to:
  - focus on people with a history of rough sleeping who were on the streets or in emergency accommodation where it was difficult to self-isolate or socially distance, such as safe spaces and shared hostel environments
  - make sure that these people had access to the facilities that enabled them to adhere to public health guidance on hygiene or isolation, including en-suite facilities and no shared sleeping spaces – to prevent and reduce infection.
  - utilise powers and funding in place as a result of the Covid-19 emergency to assist, where appropriate, those with no recourse to public funds who required shelter and other forms of support
  - provide support to those accommodated, to both enable them to remain protected from Covid-19 and meet their wider needs.
- 1.4 As part of the recovery plan it is vital that we build on the excellent work already achieved. It is vital that this joint work continues into planning for the next stages of the emergency as lockdown is lifted and, potentially, social isolation measures are eased. Planning is also needed for potential future lockdowns.
- 1.2. This strategy sets out the joint objectives from Leicester City Council the NHS and Public Health England for the next steps for people who have been placed in emergency accommodation. It has been developed and will provide the framework for Leicester in delivering the next steps for those accommodated in emergency accommodation at this time.

### 1.3 **The objectives of this strategy are: -**

- To prevent any new rough sleeping
- 'Everyone in' – will be offered further support including more appropriate accommodation dependent upon individual needs.
- Ensure that the most vulnerable rough sleepers are supported to find long-term settled accommodation with appropriate wrap-around support to avoid them returning to rough sleeping

## **2. Support provided and where we are now.**

2.1. Homelessness Services has provided support and emergency accommodation for 344 unique individuals (including those at risk of rough sleeping or with no accommodation following discharge from prison or hospital or the breakdown in insecure accommodation arrangements). Some of the individuals have no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

2.2 As of 22nd June, there are 155 individuals still in emergency accommodation either in self-contained accommodation or hotels.

### 2.3 **Provision of welfare support and health services**

- Support to those in the emergency accommodation has been overseen by the council. Partner agencies, Help the Homeless Leicester & The LCC Food Hub have been providing food packages to individuals placed in self-contained accommodation and Midland Langar Seva Society have been delivering hot food daily to hotels.
- Inclusion Healthcare has provided outreach Covid-19 testing to hostels and hotel accommodation and secured a triage connection for registration to primary care, medication, mental health, community health, GPs and drug and alcohol services. In addition to this public health screening is taking place for blood-borne communicable diseases.
- Turning Point, the commissioned substance use service has changed the way in which they provide a service to homeless service users in light of COVID 19 and PHE guidance to ensure that this vulnerable group continue to be able to access services and scripts. They have their homeless sub team working from their hub at Eldon Street.
- A robust delivery plan for next steps for the people in emergency accommodation has been developed and up to 50 individuals have had a positive move on so far into permanent accommodation. The plans build on existing pathways, but the capacity and options available to provide solutions for such large numbers of people within such a short timetable are extremely limited.
- It is recognised that securing move-on accommodation offers often takes a considerable time. Capacity will therefore be managed and maintained, either within the emergency accommodation currently procured or through other

interim solutions (for example, other temporary accommodation), to allow this work to take place.

### 3. Principles of the Next Steps Strategy

3.1 Full consultation has taken place with colleagues in the NHS, Public Health England, local Homeless, Health Care providers, the Street Lifestyle Operational Group, the Homelessness Charter, and Voluntary Sector partners who have committed to work together to deliver the following principles and will seek to ensure that:

1. ***No-one who has been placed in emergency accommodation in response to the Covid-19 public health crisis is asked to leave that emergency accommodation without an offer of support into alternative accommodation options based upon individual needs.***
2. ***Resources will be developed, including additional move-on accommodation to ensure as far as possible there is capacity and capability to deliver and implement offers of support***
3. ***Continued protection from Covid-19 is provided for those who need it.***
4. ***There is an integrated housing approach with health and care to secure access to services and continuity of care***
5. ***The roll out is gradual, to avoid a 'cliff edge' and overload of services as lockdown is lifted.***

#### 3.2 Delivering our principles

***Principle 1: To seek to ensure that no-one who has been placed in emergency accommodation in response to the Covid-19 public health crisis is asked to leave that emergency accommodation without an ongoing offer of support to end their rough sleeping***

LCC will

- assess and determine a plan for support to prevent or exit rough sleeping for everyone in the accommodation they have procured (these plans will need to include street lifestyles, social care, primary care, mental health, public health and housing support)

The NHS will

- carry out prevention and screening in hotels to screen for and treat blood-borne health needs
- work with LCC to ensure that those who need them have health needs assessments
- develop plans to meet the gaps in health requirements that are identified through the health needs assessment
- deliver a health needs audit

- work with LCC to ensure continuity of care as people move between services or pathways

**Principle 2: To ensure there is the capacity and capability to deliver and implement In for Good offers of support**

LCC will

- develop and implement an approach to procure additional accommodation solutions and seek assistance from registered providers and voluntary sector partners to support this principle.
- explore options to enable voluntary reconnections
- work with the SLOG to coordinate support and ensure support to tackle street lifestyle behaviours
- work to ensure there is enough capacity to provide continuing support to non-UK nationals, including those with NRPF
- continue discussions around potential solutions to the financial challenges of providing an offer of support to everybody in emergency accommodation, including assessing the cost of additional provision, services and support, reviewing current potential funding streams and identifying funding gaps
- support a uniform approach to applying public health guidance to shared accommodation
- Ensure that the most vulnerable rough sleepers are supported to find long-term settled accommodation with appropriate wrap-around support to avoid them returning to rough sleeping and seek to increase the supply of housing register properties, for move on to create capacity in hostels for those with support needs in hotels
- explore other options for increasing the supply of accommodation

**Principle 3: To ensure continued protection from Covid-19 for those who need it**

LCC will

- Seek to continue to accommodate the flow of rough sleepers coming onto the street throughout and beyond the next steps phase
- Protect those who are vulnerable to Covid19 and continue to provide assessment and testing of symptomatic cases

The NHS will

- Continue to provide assessment and testing of symptomatic cases, working closely with LCC
- Ensure that public health and substance misuse services are stepped-up if needed
- Protect those who are vulnerable to Covid19

**Principle 4: To ensure an integrated housing approach with health and care to secure access to services and continuity of care**

LCC will

- Ensure that local delivery plans are coordinated with local and regional NHS colleagues so that the housing and health response is integrated.
- Ensure that local delivery plans are developed with public health, social care and health

The NHS will

- Explore options for joint commissioning of services where appropriate.
- Work with LCC to ensure that plans link with local and regional NHS plans
- work with LCC to ensure that those who need them have health needs assessments
- develop plans to meet the gaps in health requirements that are identified through the health needs assessment
- work with LCC to ensure continuity of care as people move between services within the pathway
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***Principle 5: Ensure that the roll out is gradual, to avoid a ‘cliff edge’ and overload of services as lockdown is lifted***

LCC will

- Ensure that their delivery plans schedule the move on from emergency accommodation over a period of time, with a clear rationale for how the scheduling has been done, raising risks where deadlines may not be able to be met.
- Identify the need for, and resource implications of providing, interim emergency accommodation while next steps plans are implemented.
- prioritise move on from the hotels (as opposed to other emergency accommodation), unless there is an overwhelming reason for not doing so.

#### **4. Going Forward**

4.1 The Next Steps Strategy will be regularly reviewed to monitor the progress working with all statutory bodies and partnerships who have committed to deliver the work required and to ensure that the relevant support required is in place to support those sleeping rough or at risk of rough sleeping during and beyond the Covid19 crisis are aligned.