

Health and Wellbeing Board Meeting

Wednesday, 20 September 2017

Dear Councillor

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD - WEDNESDAY, 20TH SEPTEMBER, 2017

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at next Wednesday, 20th September, 2017 meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No	Item
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9	<u>Tackling Homelessness in Wolverhampton</u> (Pages 3 - 10)
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	Report of [Anthony Walker, Homelessness Strategy and External Relationships Manager, to present report]
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If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact the democratic support team:

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Health and Wellbeing Board

20 September 2017

Report title	Tackling Homelessness in Wolverhampton	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Peter Bilson City Assets and Housing	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Lesley Roberts, Strategic Director - City Housing	
Originating service	City Housing	
Accountable employee(s)	Anthony Walker Tel Email	Homeless Strategy – City Housing 01902 5551631 Anthony.Walker@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by		

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

1. Comment on the actions by which the City implements the Homeless Reduction Bill.

Recommendations for noting:

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to note:

1. The impact of the Homeless Reduction Bill.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of the report is to update board on the homelessness across the City including the Homelessness Reduction Bill and the increase in homelessness, in particular rough sleeping and how this will be addressed in Wolverhampton.

2.0 Background

2.1 Nationally homelessness is on the increase, across the last recorded quarter (March - June 2017) nearly 15,000 households were accepted as homeless, the highest number since 2008).

2.2 The total number of households living in temporary accommodation whilst awaiting placement in a settled home is measured on the last day of each quarter. On 30 June 2017, there were 68,560 households in temporary accommodation, 13% higher than at the same date in 2014.

2.3 Main reasons for homelessness are:

Reason for homelessness	Percentage of all homelessness June 2017	Percentage of all homelessness June 2016
End of Assured Short-hold Tenancy	34%	44%
Family Unwilling to accommodate	27%	22%
Friends Unwilling to accommodate	19%	12%
Violence and Abuse	10%	6%
Other	10%	16%

2.4 The number of people sleeping rough in England has risen for the sixth year in a row, per the latest official figures.

2.5 An estimated 4,134 people bedded down outside in 2016, an increase of 16% on the previous year's figure of 3,569, and more than double the 2010 figure.

2.6 London accounted for 23% of the England total (960), down slightly from 26% in 2015, with the borough of Westminster (260 cases) recording the highest number of rough sleepers in both the capital and the country.

2.7 After Westminster, the highest incidences of rough sleeping were recorded in Brighton and Hove (144), Cornwall (99), Manchester (78), Luton (76), Bristol (74), Croydon (68), Redbridge (60), Bedford (59), Birmingham (55) with Wolverhampton low down the list with a figure of (18).

2.8 However, these numbers are widely disputed homeless charity Crisis claim that 16,000 people could be sleeping on the streets by 2026 across England, Scotland and Wales, in comparison to their figures of 9,100 people in 2016.

2.9 Wolverhampton have also experienced a similar increase in all aspects of homeless.

2.10

	2015-16	2016-17
Homeless Presentations	2667	2851
Homeless Applications	1326	1700
Rough Sleeping	18	23

2.11

Reason for homelessness	Percentage of all homelessness June 2017	Percentage of all homelessness June 2016
End of Assured Short-hold Tenancy	45%	30%
Family Unwilling to accommodate	20%	26%
Friends Unwilling to accommodate	17%	19%
Violence and Abuse	11%	9%
Other	7%	6%

2.12 The two tables above highlight the increasing numbers of homeless cases in particular rough sleeping and homelessness from the private sector

2.13 The increase in homelessness nationally and locally has now led to Central Government making amendments to legislation and a request that authorities work differently to prevent and reduce homelessness.

3.0 Update

3.1 The **Homeless Reduction Bill** is being introduced in April 2018 and will require authorities to provide earlier intervention to prevent homelessness.

3.2 The Bill will oblige councils to start assessing someone at risk of being made homeless 56 days before losing their home. Currently, the threat of homelessness is defined as starting 28 days before the person loses their home.

3.3 To act on a valid notice that has been given to the person under section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 (orders for possession on expiry or termination of assured shorthold tenancy) in respect of the only accommodation the person has that is available

for the person's occupation. (In a nutshell assisting anyone approaching for homelessness assistance who has been given legal notice by their private landlord).

- 3.4 A duty to agree and assess all eligible applicants' cases and agree a plan rather than process of a statutory homeless application.
- 3.5 The final duty is that each local housing authority must now provide or secure the provision of a free service that offers housing advice and assistance. (Wolverhampton currently delivers this provision via Housing Options who are based within the City Council however from Dec 2017 this will be delivered by Wolverhampton Homes).
- 3.6 The Government's aim via the Bill is to reduce the amount of homelessness via an increase in homelessness prevention,
- 3.7 For Wolverhampton this will mean an estimated increase of over 500 cases each year at a potential cost of £750,000 (based on the average cost of an application being £1500).
- 3.8 The grant received by the Local Authority to undertake this work will be in the region of £250,000, therefore will require a remodel of services to assist with the increasing demand.
- 3.9 The remodel would include:
- Work with the ALMO in relation to the Bill and how they will deliver the statutory homeless service after the transfer.
 - Increase in early intervention work with households in housing need (tenancy support, outreach work and flexible prevention funds).
 - Use current grants to increase the amount of sustainable and suitable temporary accommodation.
 - Work on the new monitoring data 46 questions as replacement for the current 12 question P1e
 - Increase in private sector offer via Rent with Confidence.
- 3.10 The implementation of the above will mean that we will be able to reduce the amount of presentations for homelessness thus reduce the need to take an expensive homeless application.
- 3.11 The **increase in people sleeping rough** like the Reduction Bill will have and has had a substantial impact on homelessness in the City.
- 3.12 Rough sleepers are defined as "people sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters); people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats).

- 3.13 Wolverhampton has up until recently had a small rough sleeper cohort (under eight people in 2014) who are assisted by several specialist organisations (P3 Navigator outreach, St Georges Hub day centre, Good Shepherd Ministry etc.). However, over the last 12 months the numbers of rough sleepers have slowly begun to increase to 23 individuals.
- 3.14 Initial enquiries have highlighted the reasons for the increase are:
- An increase in people arriving from out of area due to the closure, reduction and exclusion from their local provision - six clients have arrived from surrounding areas due to this.
 - Exclusion from local services - three clients had been excluded from all local accommodation services due to serious violent and aggressive behaviour often related to drug and alcohol issues.
 - People not willing to engage this is linked to addiction issues-eight of the clients have issues related to either drugs or alcohol or both, of which even with offers of accommodation they have refused to engage. The added addition of new drugs such as Spice and Mamba have added extra risk due to unknown nature of how the individuals react whilst under the influence and its toxic nature (three deaths in Wolverhampton in six months).
 - A lack of access to public funding due to immigration status - 50% of all people sleeping rough in Wolverhampton have no access to public funds and in fact 80% of all long term and continual rough sleepers have no access to public funds. These individuals are often Eastern / Central European, male, between 30-50 years of age, have basic levels English language and have arrived to access employment mainly labouring/ building work but had only located short term employment therefore had no access to benefits therefore no ability to access accommodation.
- 3.15 Over the last 12 months' multi - agency counts (Local Authority, Police, Drug services ASB team and Homeless Services) where rough sleepers are supported and offered accommodation have been undertaken, however this has not addressed the issue even though 15 people who were sleeping rough were accommodated (Unfortunately the 15 individuals were replaced by new rough sleepers).
- 3.16 The reason for the unsuccessful nature of the counts has been people being unwilling to take up the options of accommodation and or support available or individuals being unable to due to access services due to inability to claim benefits.
- 3.17 Both the Leader of the Council at a local level and West Midlands Mayor Andy Street have developed task groups to address the increase in rough sleeping.
- 3.18 The two groups will assist in working to get sign up from the public, agencies and services that had previously not been involved in working with rough sleepers at this level

(mental health services, Home Office, DWP, etc.) to help in working to bring an end to street homelessness.

- 3.19 Their involvement is of massive importance as it offers more options to address rough sleeping ranging from support to address client's anxieties in accessing accommodation, benefit advice especially around universal credit and in some extreme cases enforced and voluntary resettlement.
- 3.20 With the impetus of these groups there is an opportunity to address rough sleeping in a joined way and not just with a primary housing focus, which has so far not addressed the issue for this increasing group of individuals.
- 3.21 Both the increase in rough sleeping and general homelessness will mean a need to properly understand the reasons for homelessness as well as areas of increase. Therefore, robust data collection on homelessness at an individual level is required.
- 3.22 The current process involves collecting data rather than outcomes and information related to individuals. This means there is no true understanding of the reasons for homelessness and the needs of households.
- 3.23 It is recommended that we first undertake analysis of homelessness in Wolverhampton with an end goal of improving the data that we collect.
- 3.24 This information will then inform the commissioning of services, where the need for resources lies and how we plan for the future.
- 3.25 The plan would be to have this completed for the 1 April in line with the Reduction Bill.
- 3.26 The second proposal is that of a complete reconfiguration of provision to offer preventative services. This would include working with all services that offer housing advice and assistance so that they focus on preventing homelessness.
- 3.27 This would include:
 - Reduction in eviction agreements with landlords.
 - Increased floating support to assist vulnerable tenants at risk of homelessness.
 - Prevention fund to assist households where a small amount of resource (max £500) can prevent homelessness.
 - Enhanced housing advice provision.
- 3.28 Increased homeless prevention can be incredibly cost effective with the average cost of a preventative intervention being between £250 and £500 where the cost of a homeless application including investigation and rehousing being more than £2500.
- 3.29 The final proposal is that of increased housing provision to assist households to move quickly into good quality affordable accommodation.

3.30 Good quality readily available settled accommodation means that vulnerable households will not have to access temporary accommodation.

3.31 Increased provision and access to accommodation would therefore include:

- Enhanced private sector offer through the Rent with Confidence scheme.
- A new rent deposit scheme to offer greater incentives to landlords who are taking families at risk of homelessness.
- Housing First service to offer complex clients settled accommodation with support.

3.32 Even though we are working to increase the amount settled accommodation there is still a need to provide temporary accommodation for people in emergency need.

3.33 The need for emergency accommodation has become apparent with the increase in rough sleeping in particular people living in tents.

3.34 Therefore the plan would be to increase the numbers of available units by:

- Working with providers to increase the amount of emergency provision.
- Increase in temporary units for vulnerable families.
- Increase in temporary accommodation for people with complex needs.

3.35 Implementation of the proposals will mean a large-scale change to delivery of service provision however one of which will see a large scale decrease in homelessness.

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 The overall cost increase for the change in service delivery will be met via the current Homelessness Prevention Grant. The grant allocation for 2017/18 is £169,000, with a further £120,000 carried forward from previous years.

4.2 It is proposed that the remodel of accommodation will be funded from the Housing Support and Social Inclusion Grant.
[JM/12092017/S]

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 Increasing levels of homelessness combined with a reduction in social housing and temporary accommodation have led many local authorities to find ways of preventing homelessness and exploring housing options other than through the formal route of a homelessness application. Such practices have given rise to allegations of "gatekeeping" – that councils are denying households their statutory rights under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.

5.2 A local authority is duty bound to not use homelessness prevention as a way of gatekeeping the applicants right to a statutory homeless application under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.

5.2 To prevent allegations of gatekeeping, by using policy and process to prevent homeless applications being made, the Council should use the prevention services as a housing option and not the sole alternative.
[RB/06092017/J]

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

7.0 Environmental implications

7.1 There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

8.0 Human resources implications

8.1 There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

9.1 There are no human resource implications associated with this report.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

10.1 Not applicable.