

---

# **Executive Update**

## **Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy Update**

Draft to Lead Member Briefing: 26<sup>th</sup> October 2020

City Mayor Briefing: 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Housing Scrutiny Commission: 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2020

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Elly Cutkelvin

Lead Director: Chris Burgin

---

## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report authors: Justin Haywood, Service Manager – Housing Solutions & Partnerships
- Author contact details: justin.haywod@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: 1

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report provides a further update to Members of the Executive and the Housing Scrutiny Commission on progress in implementing Leicester's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-2023, since the last update to Scrutiny in February 2020.

### 2. Summary

- 2.1. Part 3 of this report gives important background information for the period.
- 2.2. Part 4 of this report shows the latest progress made since the last update (February 2020 to November 2020) across the key strategic aims:
  1. Anyone at risk of homelessness is aware of and has access to the services they may need to prevent it.
  2. Provide suitable accommodation and support options for people who are, or who may become homeless.
  3. Reduce rates of repeat homelessness amongst single people.
  4. Provide the right support and services so that no person needs to sleep rough in Leicester.
- 2.3. In summary good progress has been made on all points, although some objectives have had to be placed on hold or changed in order to respond to more immediate needs of the national COVID-19 pandemic, and the effect on homelessness services.

### 3. Background

#### Homelessness Strategy

- 3.1. Leicester's fourth [Homelessness Strategy](#) was formally agreed May 2018 and coincided closely with the commencement of the Homelessness Reduction Act, which came into force on 3rd April 2018.
- 3.2. The Strategy factored in new pressures, and an updated landscape, and makes it clear that this is not a council endeavour alone, as tackling homelessness requires significant partnership working to address the root causes of homelessness, and provide the level of support and advice needed to those affected.

- 3.3. As such, Leicester and key partners are undertaking an ambitious programme of work to tackle homelessness locally. Work has been ongoing to implement the agreed actions / proposals and build on the extensive work already in place.

### **Homelessness Reduction Act**

- 3.4. The Homelessness Reduction Act significantly increased the depth and breadth of local authorities' statutory homeless duties. Most notably it added two new duties; the 'Prevention Duty' and 'Relief (recovery from homelessness) Duty'.
- 3.5. As a result, the workload of our front-line officers and the Service increased significantly, and the government have provided temporary funding to acknowledge these increased burdens upon local authorities. It is important that this funding continues to be made available by central government if they expect local authorities to continue to achieve the level of prevention and support currently being delivered. They have yet to confirm to local authorities that the 'new burdens funding' will continue into 2021/2022.

### **Covid-19 Pandemic**

- 3.6. In addition to existing pressures, local authorities have been put under additional pressure as a result of the Government's 'Everyone In' directive, which began at the end of March 2020. The directive ensured that people who were rough sleeping or in shared sleeping arrangements (for example, night-shelters) at the time of lockdown were provided with self-contained temporary accommodation (TA) reducing the risk of COVID-19 infection and spread. This was necessary 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. However, it resulted in huge levels of demand within a short period of time – LCC accommodated a huge amount individual in a short space of time, some of which had no recourse to public funds (NRPF).
- 3.7. In addition to the increased demand, supply was also affected when we lost 45 bed-spaces that were considered shared sleeping arrangements, namely the Outreach dormitory, the SafeSpace, and our partner One Roof Leicester's Nightshelter.
- 3.8. LCC's homelessness services responded by extending the provision of TA to ensure we were able to respond to the crisis effectively, and that no one needed to rough sleep at this time.
- 3.9. This was achieved by the swift mass-procurement of safe, furnished 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.
- 3.1 The combined result of this is an overwhelmed Single Person & Childless Couple Homeless Pathway which the service continues to work hard to recover from.
- 3.2 As such, LCC have developed a new 'Rough Sleepers Next Steps Strategy' to aid service recovery and ensure a uniform approach is taken to support individuals at risk of rough sleeping. An update on this can be seen at 4.3.7.

## **4. Progress on the Homelessness Strategy**

#### **4.1. Strategic Aim 1: Anyone at risk of homelessness is aware of and has access to the services they may need to prevent it**

4.1.1. Homelessness Prevention is now part of the statutory duty. The duty requires an authority to provide help and advice to prevent homelessness for households in their district. We work together with applicants to create and carry out a personalised housing plan.

##### Access and awareness

4.1.2. LCC Homelessness Prevention & Support services have made it a priority to ensure that; through effective comms, partners, information on the website, and referral processes; people at risk of homelessness are aware that services are available and are available to access when they need to. We believe this is the chief reason behind why 61% of presentations to the service are made before the person becomes homeless, compared to the national average of just 52%. Homelessness Prevention & Support is much more likely to find successful outcomes for customers when they present early in the process, as sustainment of current accommodation is more likely to be a possibility. 57% of successful 'homelessness preventions' by LCC are done via sustaining the existing accommodation; removing the threat of homelessness. This compares extremely well to just 37% Nationally.

4.1.3. LCC go further by offering a self-serve Early Prevention tool called MyHOME. The MyHOME App and website allows customers to get tailored advice 24/7, and whilst it can be used by anyone in housing difficulties, it is primarily aimed at people who are just starting to have difficulties, where getting plugged into the right services can make a key difference and prevent the need for statutory homelessness support later down the line. The service is currently planning a new marketing drive to improve uptake.

##### Prevention solutions

4.1.4. Despite the COVID-19 Pandemic, prevention solutions remain high for households who approach us with a threat of homelessness. LCC compare very well against the National average, achieving solutions for 76% of applicants since the new Act was introduced. The National average is 67%.

4.1.5. The Service achieves this by offering a multitude of interventions, and putting the focus initially into exhausting every possibility of sustaining the current accommodation. If that fails, we work with the customer to identify a new accommodation solution before homelessness occurs. Interventions include:

- Negotiation with family and friends, lenders, and landlords;
- Affordability assessments, and maximising income;
- Referrals and signposting to partner agencies and specialist advice;
- Private Rented Sector solutions through financial help and incentive schemes;
- Housing Register priority; and,
- Advice about other housing solutions such as Shared Ownership, where appropriate.

##### Resumption of evictions

- 4.1.6. The amnesty on evictions ended during September and now presents a risk of increased presentations. This risk is further increased by the fact the government's furlough scheme ended on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020, replaced by the Jobs Support Scheme which is expected to be less effective.
- 4.1.7. The Coronavirus Act 2020 does provide some protection to social and private tenants by increasing the period of notice a landlord must give a tenant before they can start court proceedings to evict the tenant. This is now 6 months
- 4.1.8. Ordinarily, local authorities only have a duty to provide homelessness assistance to tenants whose notice to quit is within 56 days of expiration, but LCC have taken a proactive approach in order to use the time effectively, and are raising homeless applications as long as the notice to quit is within 112 days of expiration – doubling the support provision.
- 4.1.9. We are also providing a new Landlord Advice service for landlords who may be at hardship as a result of the changes brought by the Coronavirus Act 2020.

**4.2. Strategic Aim 2: Provide suitable accommodation and support options for people who are, or who may become homeless**

*Relief / Recovery support*

- 4.2.1. If prevention does not work, or if applicants seek help when they are already homeless, there is a range of support available to work with the customer to help them recover as quickly as possible.
- 4.2.2. The success levels for applicants can depend on the applicant's flexibility in terms of willingness to explore all elements set out in the personalised plan. Applicants who explore all elements in full, rather than limiting themselves to preferences, have a high chance of getting a successful outcome.
- 4.2.3. The Service offers a variety of housing options to applicants, including the housing register, sign-posting to separate RP housing lists, Private Rented Sector solutions through financial help and incentive schemes, advice about other housing solutions such as Shared Ownership, where appropriate, and ensuring any support required to sustain solutions is made available. The applicant must then undertake the actions in their personalised housing plan in order to ensure that they make full advantage of the options and schemes available.
- 4.2.4. Due to the additional pressures of support those already homeless and accommodated due to the 'Everyone In' directive, LCC bid for financial support from the Short-Term Next Steps Accommodation Programme and were successful in securing £320,000 of additional funding for the City. The use this money will be put towards is detailed in 4.3.5.

*Increasing supply - stock*

- 4.2.5. In addition to advice and support, the city council intends to deliver about 1,500 new affordable homes over the next four years, including developing sites to provide the estimated 640 additional Extra Care supported living spaces needed over the next 10 years. For the first year, 340 new units were purchased from the private sector housing market with 62 more in progress and another 382 planned by 2023. This complements

the new build properties additionally planned to meet the manifesto commitment. All units are going in to the HRA as Council properties.

4.2.6. Further to this, and in addition to the £320,000 from the 'Short Term' pot, LCC have bid for approx. £2.5m from the 'Long Term' Next Steps Accommodation Programme for development of settled homes for the single homeless community. This is primarily a capital bid, with elements of supporting revenue.

#### Increasing supply - Private Rented Sector

4.2.7. With regard to the private rented sector solutions, we are now set to formally launch some recently piloted changes to landlord incentive schemes. The changes resulted in a significant increase in PRS tenancies available for let to homeless households. Including HomeCome, we created 131 tenancies through schemes in 2018/2019, which increased to **201 tenancies in 2019/2020**.

4.2.8. The scheme offer has been formalised and the new offer is now presented in a booklet, and will be launched in the coming weeks alongside a press release to generate more landlord interest, and get those landlords that may have overlooked us in the past to take a second look.

4.2.9. LCC plans to roll out selective licensing across Leicester's private rented sector, which is aimed at improving the overall quality of accommodation. This needs to be carefully managed in terms of relationships with landlord, especially those who partner with us to prevent homelessness. As such, Housing are included in the Selective Licensing Project Board. Options are currently being drafted by Regulatory Services ahead of an executive decision-making process.

#### Increasing supply (and improving prevention of homelessness) - Registered Providers

4.2.10. Work is ongoing with Registered Providers (Housing Associations) to;

- increase the number of property nominations available to homeless persons;
- encourage more investment and purchasing/building in the City; and,
- improve the referral processes for tenants who are heading towards potential eviction, so we can assist with sustaining the accommodation or otherwise preventing homelessness from occurring.

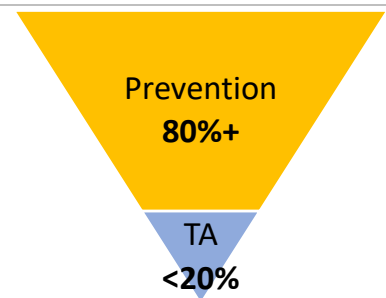
4.2.11. Initial meetings took place in September, and workshops are arranged in November with a view to develop an agreed partnership protocol and clarify responsibilities and commitments.

#### Temporary Accommodation (TA)

4.2.12. Importantly, the Council's duties at this stage also includes providing TA to families and vulnerable single-person households.

#### *Accommodation for families*

4.2.13. Generally speaking, less than 20% of families presenting as homeless or at risk of homelessness go on to need TA. As such, **in most cases where families seek assistance from the council when they are at risk of homelessness they do not actually become homeless.**



4.2.14. On average, each quarter there are 55 new families requiring TA. Over the last 2 quarters this average has reduced to only 31 families, but this is as a result of environmental factors relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily the amnesty on evictions.

4.2.15. We have been able to maintain a 100% record of ensuring all families placed in B&B do not exceed 6-weeks' occupancy, which is a legal requirement upon LAs. Furthermore, most families have been moved on from B&B within a very short period of time – days not weeks.

4.2.16. During the period, progress has been made on developing a new model of family TA to support the “Homes not Hostels” vision, and this is now approaching the final stages of design. The council aims to provide self-contained TA, when there is no alternative, which allows families to live as normal a family life as possible, whilst they find suitable settled accommodation for their family. One key principle of this new model will be to have the accommodation as dispersed as possible across the City, to allow families to remain closer to support networks and educational infrastructure, where possible, and therefore reduce the impact of homelessness on the family and on the welfare and educational attainment of the children.

#### *Accommodation for singles*

4.2.17. In the most recent HCS Strategy update we informed Members that we were looking to launch a new temporary accommodation Eligibility Criteria for singles which puts the focus on ‘best fit’ rather than circumstances alone, to make better use of the range of temporary accommodation LCC have available, and to ensure that the customer has the best pathway possible. We informed Members that this would be launched around April 2020.

4.2.18. Due to responding to the immediate needs of the COVID-19 pandemic, this development has been put on hold in favour of the ‘Rough Sleepers Next Steps Strategy’ and service recovery. The intention is now to launch the new eligibility criteria alongside the final stages of service recovery – initial predictions are April 2021.

#### *Prison releases, and accommodation for offenders*

4.2.19. Contracts remain in place with Adullam Housing Association who are a long-standing provider of accommodation support services for offenders locally. Specialist services help us support criminal justice agencies locally by ensuring the safety of the public and reduce reoffending rates.

4.2.20. The number of specialist accommodation units available for offenders has increased from a total of 20 units to a total of 30 units in the most recent commissioning exercise. This accommodation includes a range of support levels and licence agreement terms,

including 'step down' accommodation to assist Offenders to move on into independent accommodation.

- 4.2.21. We work very closely with Probation services, and especially so recently in order to assist in a COVID-safe prison release programme, which included support the Ministry of Justice with it's early-release programme whereby those near to release were released in order to reduce numbers in prisons and therefore reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading within prisons.
- 4.2.22. Housing Advice surgeries at Leicester Prison are on hold due to the pandemic, but are intended to resume in a COVID-safe manner as soon as possible. This may involve video-link rather than physical visits.
- 4.2.23. We have been working with all key organisations who provide support to Offenders / Ex-Offenders in order to develop an improved Prison Release Pathway. The new Pathway aims to plug gaps that have been collectively identified, and provide a smoother, more pro-active process. The Pathway is now within its final draft phase and will shortly be ready to pilot.

#### *Hospital Discharges*

- 4.2.24. The referral and pathway set up with the NHS's Housing Enablement Team is continuously reviewed in partnership, and further improvements have been made to ensure LCC are alerted earlier, and can take action more swiftly.

#### *Accommodation for young people*

- 4.2.25. The Joint working group established with children's services to develop a joint commissioning exercise continues to make progress and moves closer to completion. This will consider the supported accommodation needs of 16-25-year olds in the city. The driver behind the joint commissioning exercise is to allow LCC to provide a better range of options for young people.
- 4.2.26. Strategy actions relating to younger persons will be aligned with the ongoing placement sufficiency work.
- 4.2.27. Pathways in place are now regularly monitored to ensure they continue to provide successful routes.

#### *Housing-related Floating support*

- 4.2.28. A recent re-tendering exercise for improved floating support services for Leicester has closed to submissions at the end of January. However, due to COVID-19 contract extensions have been put in place with the existing provider and the date to award the new contract is yet to be decided.
- 4.2.29. Once the new contract is awarded, it will give LCC a new opportunity to ensure that services are tailored to the demands of a socially distanced City such that support can be maintained to an excellent standard.



**4.3. Strategic Aims 3 and 4: Reduce rates of repeat homelessness amongst single people & provide the right support and services so that no person needs to sleep rough in Leicester**

- 4.3.1. During the period, work has continued with local partners and charities, and we continue to fund and support various initiatives in the community, including day centres and specialist case workers (navigators), and see how those initiatives have, and must, change in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4.3.2. Donation points across the city continue to raise money for One Roof Leicester, to support their work with homeless persons and rough sleepers.
- 4.3.3. Housing Scrutiny Members were previously advised that we have achieved an exciting partnership with St. Mungo's to open a recovery college for homeless clients within the Dawn Centre. This was due to launch in April 2020 but has been delayed due to COVID-19. However, we remain interested in making this work in the City, and continue to discuss with St. Mungo's as to how we can take this forward.
- 4.3.4. In 3.7, it was stated that 45 units were lost as part of the pandemic response. Safe Space at Andover Street in particular was an enormously important part of our offer to this cohort but had to be closed due to the nature of the accommodation, and the current pandemic. The offer included 16 bed spaces for rough sleepers. Individuals who did not want to access accommodation-based support services could access this service nightly for a safe space to sleep overnight and leave in the morning. This was attractive to some and improved engagement in the long run as they became aware of the support that was available and became more confident in accessing it. Currently individuals seeking this type of service are being encouraged to enter other forms of TA.
- 4.3.5. As mentioned at 4.2.4. LCC were successful in securing £320,000 of additional funding from the Short-Term Next Steps Accommodation Programme. This will be used to financially support the other forms of TA, and support required to move-on into sustainable longer-term solutions.
- 4.3.6. LCC have developed a new 'Rough Sleepers Next Steps Strategy' which will help in monitoring and driving this work forward to enable to service to recovery effectively from the pandemic crisis.

**Rough Sleeping Next Steps Strategy**

- 4.3.7. The Rough Sleeping Next Steps Strategy now forms part of the strategic aims in the wider Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy.
- 4.3.8. The principles are set out as;
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.

#### 4.3.9. Influx

- LCC continue to accommodate the flow of rough sleepers (including those not rough sleeping but at risk of rough sleeping) coming into service in what is essentially a voluntary continuation of the 'Everyone In' directive, on humanitarian grounds. This has slowed down, but remains a pressure and continuous impact on service recovery speed.
- The Street Lifestyles Operational Group continues to ensure a robust approach in place to tackle street lifestyle behaviours.

#### 4.3.10. Move-on

- To date, 170 individuals have been moved-on positively from or within the pathway, leaving 155 remaining within 'COVID-19' provision.
- 80% of those in the pathway now have a robust plan to support them into settled accommodation and end the cycle of rough sleeping. Those amongst the 20% awaiting assessment are scheduled and will be captured shortly. Many are newly entered into the pathway.
- LCC have been working with Health to ensure that plans are robust and to ensure continuity of care as people move between services or pathways. It is important to ensure that local delivery plans are coordinated with local and regional NHS colleagues so that the housing and health response is integrated.
- Move on from hotel accommodation (as opposed to other temporary accommodation), continues to be prioritised.
- LCC continue to look to procure accommodation solutions within all sectors in order to ensure that people can exit the pathway into sustainable solutions.
- LCC continue to be committed to ensuring all those who require floating support to maintain their newly created tenancies are provided with a referral.
- LCC continue to explore options to enable voluntary reconnections for those who would receive better levels or support in other areas of the UK, due to local connection, or those who have no recourse to public funds and would be eligible for better support if returned to their 'home' country. We also continue to work to ensure there is enough capacity to provide continuing support to those who have no recourse to public funds in the interim.

Locality Matters

- 4.3.11. As a result of, we believe, decentralised shopping behaviours (resulting from the public's pandemic response), we have seen a dispersal of rough sleepers who engage in begging activity and of non-homeless beggars *from* the city centre and *into* outlying hubs of the city.
- 4.3.12. Narborough Road and Belgrave have had a noticeable impact, and to a lesser degree; Queens Road.
- 4.3.13. Special working groups have been set up in affected areas. LCC engage regularly with the Police, local Councillors, and local businesses. This has resulted in the matters improving significantly, but they continue to be carefully managed to ensure that support and enforcement are appropriately balanced.

**5. Summary of appendices:** None.

**6. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?** No

**7. Is this a "key decision"? If so, why?** No – update only.