
Homelessness Services Update

Housing Scrutiny Commission: 27/08/2024

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Elly Cutkelvin
Lead director: Chris Burgin

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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- Report version number: v2.0

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on homelessness in the City and progress in relation to Leicester's latest Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy (shared with Housing Scrutiny Commission 19th September 2023).
- 1.2 It has been challenging, nationally and locally, as we have seen rising levels of homelessness. The Council declared a housing crisis in November 2022. The lack of affordable, quality housing drives homelessness, as well as pressures arising from the cost-of-living crisis and many other national factors. This has impacted on households being able to sustain their tenancies and, in many cases, leading to homelessness.
- 1.3 The national picture of rising levels of homelessness are indicated by government data:
 - 3,898 people are sleeping rough in England (Autumn 2023). The number of people rough sleeping has increased by more than a quarter for two years in a row.
 - a new record high in both the number of households and the number of children who are homeless in temporary accommodation provided by local councils. 109,000 households are homeless in temporary accommodation – up 10% in a year. 142,490 children are homeless – up 16,960 (14%) in a year
 - Single households increased by 7.4% to 41,380 from the 31st of December 2022. Compared to the previous quarter there was a 5.3% increase in households without children in temporary accommodation.
- 1.4 Due to huge financial pressures on homelessness services the Council has provided an additional £1m of funding in 23/24 and £10m in 24/25 to help meet the demands of increasing homelessness. This places the Council under even more financial pressure in balancing its General fund budgets.

2. Background

2.1 Picture of homelessness

2.1.1 Increasing numbers of people seeking support

The numbers of people contacting homelessness services for help has risen by 11% from 22/23 to 23/24 (4,869 in 22/23 & 5,385 in 23/24). The numbers of unique individuals who are / were rough sleeping has also increased over the same period (447 in 22/23 and 464 from 01/04/2023 up to 31/02/24) although on our annual verified count the number of individuals found rough sleeping was down on the

previous year (26 in 2023 whereas 34 in 2022). Leicester was one of a few local authorities that saw a reduction in this single night count in autumn 2023.

We are experiencing high levels of people approaching homelessness services; families leaving private sector accommodation or being asked to leave family/friends accommodation and also more individuals who have had a decision on their asylum claim and leaving national asylum support service accommodation because of the government's plan to speed up asylum decisions.

2.1.2 Increasing numbers in temporary accommodation

As of the end of May / start of June we had 520 families in temporary accommodation (of which 262 in bed & breakfast / hotel accommodation) and 552 singles in temporary accommodation (of which 159 singles in bed & breakfast / hotel accommodation).

These are the highest numbers in temporary accommodation for decades and for the first time in many years we have families who are in hotels accommodation for more than 6 weeks. The use of hotels in accommodating families and singles is a last resort. It is recognised that hotels are not ideal for families or for the authority in terms of cost.

The Council is required by law to provide accommodation to people who are statutorily homeless, this includes all families and some 'vulnerable' singles (priority need) although the Council has an enhanced offer which currently means around 55% of singles households in bed & breakfast, we do not legally have to accommodate.

The current enhanced offer means that services and staff are stretched, and support is diluted across a greater number of individuals. This can prevent individuals who have complex needs and or have regularly slept rough not receiving the level of support they need.

2.1.3 Lack of settled accommodation options

Either to prevent homelessness or when it does occur to enable a move-on from temporary accommodation there needs to be a range of affordable settled housing solutions, this could be in the private rented sector, housing association or council housing.

The housing crisis means that there is a shortage of settled accommodation options and people are waiting longer in bed & breakfast / hotel accommodation. Currently the average length of stay for a family in temporary accommodation is over 6 and half months. In October 2023 the average waiting time for a 2-bed property on the housing register was 1 year with the highest priority, 1 year 5 months for a 3-bed property and a wait of over 5 years with the second highest priority (often individuals who are not in priority need but in temporary accommodation).

2.1.4 Ongoing partnership working

The council commissions over 350 rooms of temporary accommodation with different specialist organisations providing accommodation and support services. Leicester has always provided a wide range of accommodation and support, above and beyond the statutory requirement.

In Leicester there are also a wide range of support services available for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness:

Outreach & Navigators

There is an outreach team that operate 7 days a week, who whenever they find someone sleeping rough, encourage them to take up offers of accommodation or reconnect to their area of origin. They also receive Street Link referrals, from members of the public to identify individuals rough sleeping and offer them support. In 2017 additional funding was secured to extend outreach services into the evening. This extended outreach service is still operating as well as including services on the weekend. Services are provided by Leicester City Council and Help the Homeless and work in partnership with health services (Inclusion HealthCare) and drug, alcohol and peer support services (Turning Point and Dear Albert).

The council has also funded since 2019/20 more intensive support services for rough sleepers, Rough Sleeping Navigators. Two local charities are funded by the Council through the RSI programme to provide immediate support to rough sleepers, referred by the Council, and link with their pre-existing offers and networks of support. Individuals referred are entrenched/have complex support needs and who have previously refused offers of support.

Specialist Primary care services

Inclusion Health Care

There is a specialist service to provide primary care for homeless people (primarily rough sleepers and singles in temporary accommodation). The current service is provided by Inclusion Healthcare where GP, ACP and Nursing clinics are held Monday to Friday. While based primarily at the city centre location of Charles Berry House, the team are also able to provide outreach clinics at drop-in centres and aim to be flexible and responsive in meeting the needs of the homeless population. In addition to the usual GP services offered by practices, the following services are also provided:

- Midwife appointments
- Specialist support for people with alcohol or drug related difficulties
- Extended appointment times to acknowledge complex needs
- Physiotherapy
- Visiting secondary care healthcare professionals- for example, ADHD nurses
- A proactive approach to preventative healthcare e.g., vaccinations and screening

A strong history of working collaboratively with partner agencies around the city

Homeless Mental Health Service

The Homeless mental health service offers engagement, mental health assessment and referral to mainstream mental health and support services. This service provides a daily 'drop-in' service at the Dawn Centre and offer appointments at other homeless hostels. This service offers:

- Mental health assessment
- Access to mainstream mental health services
- Short term supportive counselling and coping strategies
- Access to mental health support, psychology talking therapies and psychiatric treatment
- Signposting to other relevant support services

Substance misuse recovery hub

Inclusion Healthcare manage the No.5 Recovery Hub based on Hill Street and in partnership with local recovery organisation Dear Albert deliver the service which includes the provision of a 'wet centre' for street drinkers and provides a range of services to people with a street lifestyle and who have problematic substance use. This includes practical help with food, shelter, laundry, and a shower as well as harm reduction advice and access to other services such as Turning point, homeless mental health service, health & well-being, and housing support.

It provides an important role for helping services contact people that do not take up traditional appointment-based services, working closely with partner agencies to provide an outreach model. The hub contract has recently been extended to the end of March 2025 and is also partly funded by the OPCC.

Drug and alcohol services

Turning Point

The council also funds Turning Point to provide drug and alcohol services who provide a range of services and support including:

- Group work sessions
- Recovery worker support
- Counselling
- Relapse prevention
- Peer mentors
- Substitute prescribing
- Mindfulness
- Harm reduction services
- Needle exchange

Turning Point's Homeless Outreach team which was set up in early 2019 but has expanded over 2022-3 thanks to central government funding through the Rough Sleepers Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant. This Grant focusses on the needs of rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping and has enabled the service to expand from 4 recovery workers to 11 alongside increased clinical and administrative support. This means that recovery workers now offer outreach and in reach to hostels and day services up to 7 days per week. This enables the service to move away from an appointment -based system and to spend time building trust and relationships with individuals who are rough sleeping or at risk of

rough sleeping. The service also receives some funding from the Changing Futures programme.

Dear Albert

Provides an addiction rehabilitation centre in Leicester open 5 days a week and they offer a breakfast service on Sunday mornings. Dear Albert also hosts the citywide homelessness service user forum.

Day Services

YASC

The Y Advice & Support Centre (YASC) operated by Leicester YMCA which was based within the Dawn Centre is part funded by the Council to see up to 60 clients a day on a drop-in basis. Following the COVID pandemic, this service had to close for a temporary period and has resumed operation from East Street. The Y Support service provides a range of practical support as well as advice and information.

The Bridge – Homelessness to Hope

The Bridge provides a safe and non-judgemental service to the homeless and vulnerably housed in Leicester. They offer support and mentoring to anyone who is homeless or who is at risk of becoming homeless, this includes rough sleepers, people that are sofa-surfing and those that are in temporary or unsuitable accommodation. The Bridge provides a safe space for people to wash and dry their clothing, shower, access WIFI, get clothes and toiletries as well as eat a hot meal whilst socialising with others. Since the pandemic the centre is open as a day centre, and they have increased the recreational arts as art therapy and have more staff at the centre.

The Centre Project

The Centre project is a local charity based in the city that supports vulnerable people. They aim to reach those who are most excluded from society to reduce isolation and promote wellbeing. They are open Monday to Friday and offer a range of services and support (from a food bank to games and activities).

Other voluntary and community services

The voluntary and community sector has an important role to play in preventing homelessness and supporting homeless people. These services are often provided by faith groups as free provision based on need.

There are a range of groups providing food and drinks; some provide other assistance and a place to meet and chat or creative activities. These include:

- Midland Langar Seva Society
- Triangle at Holy Trinity Church
- Sound café, St Martins House
- Rachel's Table
- Lighthouse Saturday kitchen
- Church of the Martyrs Tomatoes Café

- Chroma church / Vineyard
- St Peter’s Lunch club
- Robert Hall Church
- Open Hands

2.2 Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Update

We have an agreed homelessness & rough sleeping strategy and action plan, developed in conjunction with partner organisations. This was published in December 2023. Actions & improvements will be scaled over the length of the strategy 2023-2028. This will be an agile document responding to the challenges and pressures arising throughout the length of the strategy.

Below we have detailed some key progress to date by each of the four main aims of the strategy.

2.2.1 Prevention (wherever possible stop people from becoming homeless or rough sleeping for the first time)

- Currently tendering for a contractor to undertake building work for development of a prevention of rough sleeping hub.
- Prioritisation of resources to prevention of homeless wherever possible, and continuation of specialist PRS Prevention Team resulting in good outcomes for Tenants and Landlords.
- Recruitment progressing to get service to full establishment – target to reach 25-27 Homelessness Prevention Officers by end of Summer 2024.
- Call Before You Serve is active and serving landlords who are interested in maintaining tenancies and avoiding evictions. Further comms required to maximise interest – planned for Autumn 2024.
- Approx. £38K spent to secure short-term extensions with landlords, preventing entry into TA and saving the Council an estimated £109K in temporary accommodation costs.

Last 4 quarters prevention of homelessness KPI:

Percentage of Prevention Duty cases that came to an end within Quarter with the outcome “Secured accommodation for 6+ months” as a percentage of all Prevention Duty cases that came to an end within Quarter.

	Q1 23/24	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24	Q4 23/24
Leicester	53%	62%	60%	67%
National Ave.	51%	51%	52%	Not yet available

The Council has maintained strong performance compared to the National average when it comes to prevention of homelessness, with a marked improvement in Q4. It should be noted however, that this continues to be a very challenging area of work made more difficult by increased cost of living. The Council continues to work to identify issues upstream and develop initiatives to combat this to enable continued performance.

2.2.2 Intervention (improve early action and support so homelessness is as brief as possible, and that individuals rough sleeping are supported to move off the streets)

- The Council has also secured a cumulative total of £7.7m additional funding through the Governments Rough Sleeping Initiative and other programmes to strengthen services locally from 2018/19 to 2024/25 including £486k in 2024/25.
- Leicester City Council recently supported two successful bids to DLUHC's Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) to support rough sleepers with complex/high support needs. These will deliver 4 x 1-bed flats, owned and managed by emh (East Midlands Housing) and 14 units of temporary accommodation with 24/7 staffing, owned and operated by Action Homeless Leicester, bringing over £1.5m to the City.
- The Council has also recently agreed to invest £45m to buy a further 225 units of temporary accommodation to house homeless households. This will be a mix of 1-bed to 3-bed properties. This will help ensure homeless households do not have to stay in unsuitable bed & breakfast accommodation for long-periods and reduce use of bed & breakfast accommodation.
- Work ongoing with Prisons and Probation to improve the pathway for people leaving prisons without accommodation.

2.2.3 **Recovery** (enable access to settled housing and support for those who need support so homelessness doesn't reoccur. Enhance support for those who have slept rough to ensure they don't return to the streets)

- The Council has invested over £250m to develop and acquire new council housing. The Council has a commitment to deliver 1,500 more new council, social and extra care homes by 2026/27. It is also investing £0.3m a year to lease a further 125 units of accommodation.
- Homelessness services private rented sector team delivers 200 private rented tenancies a year to prevent or relieve homelessness.
- Work planned to expand on PRS Incentive Schemes and grow team to enable bringing on increased landlord portfolios, and therefore more solutions within the PRS

Last 4 quarters relief/recovery from homelessness KPI:

Percentage of Relief Duty cases that came to an end within Quarter with the outcome "Secured accommodation for 6+ months" as a percentage of all Relief Duty cases that came to an end within Quarter.

	Q1 23/24	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24	Q4 23/24
Leicester	37%	29%	27%	33%
National Ave.	33%	34%	33%	Not yet available

The Council has improved performance in the last quarter back in line with the National Average. The investments and initiatives cited above should allow us to maintain performance in this area, and in doing so, drive down the number of people who are homeless and waiting in temporary accommodation.

2.2.4 **Working in partnership** (enhance partnership working to improve services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness)

- The Homelessness Charter held a successful event for front line staff sharing information from the Council and other homelessness organisations.
- A homelessness resource map for service users was developed by the Homelessness Charter and distributed by partner agencies.
- Creation of a Criminal Justice Pathway Manager to help coordinate working across Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland and with probation and prison services.
- A new joint specific needs assessment (JSNA) completed specific to the health & well-being needs of people who are homeless to help inform decision making.
- The Council are working with Inclusion Healthcare to fund a Homeless Engagement Practitioner.
- Funding through the Rough Sleeping Initiative funding homeless partners such as Action Homeless, The Bridge (Homelessness to Hope), Help the Homeless & One-Roof Leicester to provide specific initiatives to help tackle rough sleeping in the City.
- Internal partnerships within LCC are also critical, and we have joint working protocols in place with Childrens Social Care, focussed on 16/17 years olds and care leavers. Further protocols are due to be developed around families with children at risk, and with Adult Social Care around vulnerable adults facing homelessness.
- New arrangements with Childrens services & Public Health to ensure that families with support needs in unsuitable temporary accommodation are able to access additional support including facilities at local Childrens Centres and health services.

3. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

3.1 Financial implications

The increased presentations of homelessness cases in the city continues to add financial pressure to the council due to grant funding and housing benefit being insufficient to cover the rising costs of temporary accommodation. A further £10m budget was allocated for 2024/25 to ease the burden in this area, however this adds extra pressure to the council's general fund budget and the ability to balance it. Finance is liaising closely with the Housing team to monitor the ongoing pressures and offer support to mitigate any challenges as much as possible.

Jade Draper – Principal Accountant

3.2 Legal implications

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report, which is prepared for the purposes of updating Members.

Jeremy Rainbow – Principal Lawyer (Litigation)

3.3 Equalities implications

When carrying out its functions (including decision making, policy and service development, projects and service delivery) the Council must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (Equality Act 2010) by paying due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not. In doing so, the council/ decision makers must consider the possible impact on those who are likely to be affected by the recommendation and their protected characteristics.

Protected groups under the Equality Act are age, disability (including mental health as well as physical disabilities), gender re-assignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

This report provides an update on homelessness in the city and progress in relation to Leicester's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Housing is a human right and the strategy outlines Leicester's commitment to ending rough sleeping and tackling all forms of homelessness.

The impacts of homelessness can be devastating for individuals and families. It can affect both physical and mental health, educational and employment opportunities (for both adults and children) and has long term consequences for those affected. The local authority has a statutory duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households who fall into a 'priority need' category. The Council also provides advice and other assistance to help prevent homelessness and has an enhanced offer to help more households than its statutory duty.

Certain categories of household, such as pregnant women, families with children, young care leavers and households that are homeless due to an emergency such as a fire or flood, have priority need if homeless. Other groups may be assessed as having priority need because they are vulnerable if homeless due to, for example, old age, or physical or mental ill health, or because they are vulnerable as a result of being in prison, or care or as a result of becoming homeless due to domestic abuse.

Those affected by homelessness are likely to include individuals from across various protected characteristics. Support provided to homeless people and those facing homelessness helps to develop skills to live independently in their own homes. This includes integration into the community, taking part in leisure activities and support to find education, training or employment. Continued partnership work that strengthens ways of working together across agencies, disciplines and sectors, should lead to positive impacts for people from across all protected characteristics.

Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148

3.4 Climate Emergency implications

There are limited climate emergency implications directly associated with this report. More widely, housing is one of the largest sources of carbon emissions in Leicester, responsible for 33% of emissions. Following the council's declaration of a Climate Emergency addressing these emissions is vital to meeting our ambition, particularly where the council has a higher level of influence and control. As such projects aiming to provide accommodation should consider opportunities to reduce carbon emissions as appropriate

and relevant, for example through ensuring that properties are well insulated and have high-quality and low carbon heating. Improving energy efficiency should also help to ensure that housing is comfortable for occupants, reduce energy bills and help to limit maintenance costs.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

4. 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

5. Is this a “key decision”? If so, why? No, update report.