

Housing Scrutiny Commission

Commission Meeting: 4th July 2016

Homelessness, Street Begging and Rough Sleeping

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Andy Connelly

Lead Director : Chris Burgin



City Mayor

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: ALL
- Report author: Caroline Carpendale, (Head of Service)
- Author contact details: 0116 454 (37) 1701
- Report version number: V1.1

1. Definitions

The report starts with a definition of homelessness, rough sleeping and begging in order for the reader to understand that they are different.

- 1.1. Homelessness - There are a number of different factors that determine whether a person is homeless. The legal definition is '*a person is homeless if he or she has no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere which is available for his or her occupation and which that person has a legal right to occupy. A person is also homeless if he or she has accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, or the accommodation is a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel designed or adapted for human habitation (such as a caravan or house boat) and there is no place where it can be placed in order to provide accommodation. A person who has accommodation is to be treated as homeless where it would not be reasonable for him or her to continue to occupy that accommodation*'.
- 1.2. Rough sleeping - *People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents (inappropriate use of tents), doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or "bashes")*
- 1.3. City Centre Begging – usually involves individuals with complex needs and complicated lives who do not engage with support and services in place. The majority of these also have accommodation and drug and alcohol dependency.

2. Summary

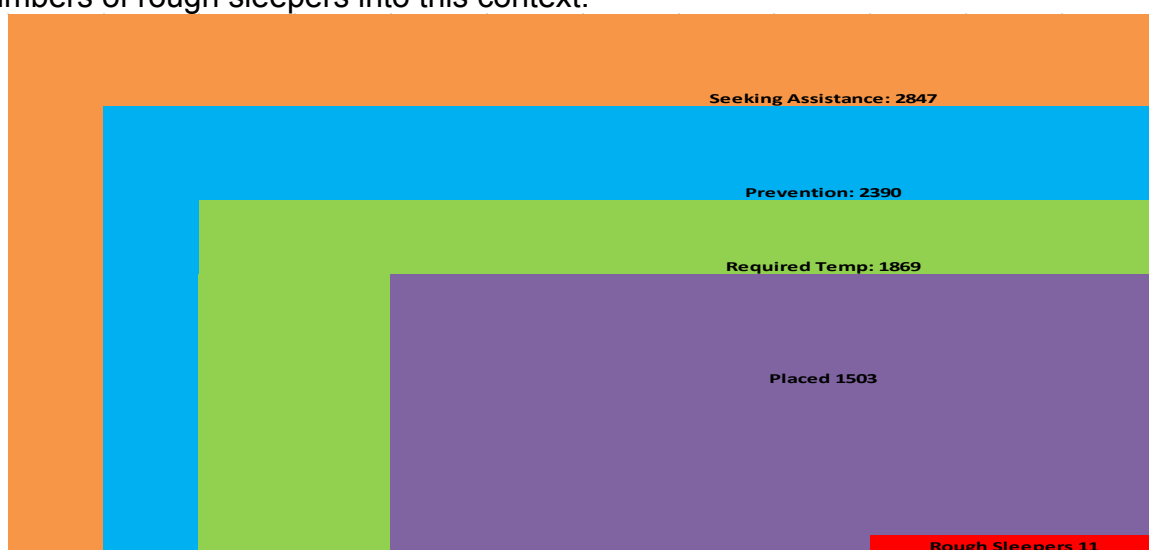
- 2.1. Leicester's approach to Rough Sleeping is "no one needs to sleep rough." We are committed to providing resolutions for those that will accept our support and services.
- 2.2. In Leicester we have a small number of problematic individuals and there is a heightened awareness of begging by the general public. The perception is that homelessness, begging and rough sleeping is one of the same. The reality is that they are different and the individuals experiencing or involved are in most cases unique.

3. This report provides and considers

- 3.1. The majority of those begging do so to fund drug and alcohol dependency and also in a lot of cases have their own accommodation or somewhere to stay and are not homeless.
- 3.2. A table of services and initiatives that are already in place to manage rough sleeping, begging and street drinking. (Appendix 1)
- 3.3. How we ensure and enable those who want to accept our support and services, including access to emergency accommodation.
- 3.4. The anti-social behaviour associated with begging.
- 3.5. Education of the general public to attempt to persuade them not to give to beggars, outlining why this can be detrimental.
- 3.6. The work in conjunction with the Police to manage the people who the public view as rough sleepers, but are actually beggars who do have somewhere to live or who have refused all offers of assistance.
- 3.7. A profile of case studies.

4. Service structure and other agencies

- 4.1. Homelessness prevention, advice and assistance are available to all citizens of Leicester as required. Prevention is seen as better than cure and the City have excellent outcomes for prevention of homelessness either by sustainment, intervention, or providing other housing resolutions.
- 4.2. Leicester's Homelessness Strategy 2013 -2018 committed to provide services including the provision of accommodation for more than just those to whom a statutory duty is owed.
- 4.3. Figure 1 below illustrates the full picture of homelessness in Leicester and puts the small numbers of rough sleepers into this context.



- 4.4 The Housing Division has strong and robust joint working arrangements in place across the Council to assist those in need of Homeless services, including Adult Social Care, supporting vulnerable adults, Children Services to safeguard and prevent children and young people from homelessness and Public Health who have targeted interventions for drug and alcohol services including outreach services. Close working arrangements with the Police, provide enforcement as a last resort to disperse beggars and rough sleepers causing anti-social behaviour (ASB); and the Community Rehabilitation Company, and the United Kingdom Border Agency assist where administrative removal is required.
- 4.5 Leicester City Council also have excellent working relationships with the Voluntary Sector to provide a community based approach to meet the aims and objectives of Leicester's Homelessness Strategy. The Leicester Homelessness Partnership provides a joined up approach across Council, Voluntary and Statutory services to meet the needs of those people who have multiple needs, are living chaotic lives, face chronic social exclusion and who are dying prematurely because they are failing to get the support that they need. Action Homeless is the lead partner for this.
- 4.6 A Single Access and Referral Service (SAR) located within the Customer Services Centre where an on-call duty team manage emergencies on weekdays for anyone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness. In addition an "out of hours" service is in operation after the close of business, weekends and bank holidays, managed through The Dawn Centre. The City Council's Outreach Team carry out daily street work from 6am each weekday to identify and support rough sleepers into accommodation and other services such as drug and alcohol support, mental and physical health services. The Outreach team also have access to emergency accommodation within The Dawn Centre.
- 4.7 A detailed breakdown is provided in Appendix 1 of the Homeless prevention and support services that are available to the people of Leicester.

5 Number of Hostel Places and Vacancy Rates

- 5.1 Access to emergency or temporary single homeless accommodation is primarily for those individuals that have had a settled address in the City of Leicester.
- 5.2 We have 291 bed spaces available within the City with an in house provision and the voluntary sector, namely Action Homeless, the Y, Addullam Homes and Stonham, part of the Home Group providing accommodation. The provision includes specialist accommodation for young people and ex-offenders.
- 5.3 As well as the 291 bed spaces we also have emergency beds available to those who may be found rough sleeping or who are at a high risk of rough sleeping. These beds are allocated on a nightly basis.
- 5.4 Whilst there is a high rate of occupancy for the available accommodation, 'no one needs to sleep rough'. However there are some individuals who choose to rough sleep, rather than access services or have excluded themselves due to their actions when in services.
- 5.5 Weekly monitoring of available bed spaces provides management information to ensure as far as possible that no-one is turned away from emergency beds because we have no room. Over

the last two years since April 2014, 2847 singles have sought assistance, requesting temporary accommodation, through Housing Options.

6 Numbers rough sleeping

6.1 A total of 159 people have been identified during 2015/16 rough sleeping in Leicester, this includes the 11 that had sought assistance through the SAAR and set out in Figure 1. The remaining 148 who have been found rough sleeping as part of the snapshot, were either, wanting assistance (and offered it through an alternative route), not wanting assistance and refusing help, excluded from services due to their own actions, or EU citizens unable to access services whom are refusing to be repatriated.

6.2 Leicester City Council works to the no second night out agenda and the majority of cases slept rough for 1-2 nights only. We believe that there is no one who rough sleeps because we do not have a bed space to offer with the exception of those persons from abroad that are ineligible for housing assistance of which 54 accepted the offer to be reconnected to their country of origin over the 24 month period (28 and 26 in 2015/16 and 2014/15 respectively).

6.3 A weekly snapshot of rough sleepers is carried out on a Friday to identify those who have been found rough sleeping. The last snapshot on Friday 3rd June 2016 identified 9 rough sleepers. This cohort had either previously been in services, including accommodation, were refusing to engage or accept the offer of support and assistance that had been offered, or had been excluded from services due to their own actions. In 2015/16 the range in numbers on the street was a minimum of 7 in December 2015 and maximum of 26 in August 2015.

7. Case Studies



7.1 This graphic represents the very small number of rough sleepers that also beg. This graphic is further illustrated by the case studies below.

Case 1 - Rough Sleeper – reason: Abandoned hostel, Heavy drinker. Has memory problems due to past brain injury which are heightened by alcohol intake. Evicted, from residential care for non-engagement and behaviour. Currently accommodated by ASC, whilst his social worker is trying to secure some appropriate accommodation. Service contacts – Outreach and Social Worker.

Case 2 - Rough Sleeper – reason: States he drinks too much and fails to return to his home (happens fairly regularly) Drug and alcohol use. All services are actioned to encourage use of his tenancy. RD workers are trying to make contact to offer further support.

Case 3 - Rough Sleeper – reason: Rough sleeping behind Marks and Spencers since leaving the Dawn Centre. He does not engage too well with Outreach but does speak to them and has stated he wants his own accommodation. Currently it is suspected he is using heroin, crack and New Psychoactive Substances, although he is not forthcoming with information on this. Refusing hostels, engagement limited.

Case 4 - Rough Sleeper – reason: Was living with his mum in her property but she became too ill and moved into a nursing home. Heavy alcohol and NPS drug use. - Refused two separate offers of permanent accommodation due to their location/ Enforcement: Issued Section 35 Dispersal, 1 x Verbal warning and 2 x written.

Some rough sleepers also arrive in the City from other parts of the UK and reconnection is offered.

Case Study - long term homeless in Derby but visiting Leicester and rough sleeping on numerous occasions. Mental health and substance use issues. Liaison with Derby who are

advise rough sleeper is known to services in Derby. Travel arrangements made to re-connect rough sleeper to Derby and services in Derby made aware of rough sleeper returning to ensure that re-connection is co-ordinated.

Case Study – was reconnected to Hungary back to parents and family. Came to England to look for work, but ran out of money and lost accommodation. Was some suspicion that was involved with street-working. Was using Class A drugs. Mother was contacted in Hungary to see if NK could return home. This was accepted and agreed. Flight booked and travel to airport arranged. Team accompanied NK to the airport to ensure check in.

All those found rough sleeping are encouraged to attend the day centres and made aware of the emergency provision that is available on a nightly basis.

Recent work with the police has highlighted again that many people who the public view as rough sleepers are actually beggars who do have somewhere to live. This can also include people who are staying in our hostels. The Rough Sleepers Outreach Team shares information with the Street Drinking Team and the City Centre police. A study of 12 prolific beggars revealed that 7 of the 12 had their own tenancies, 3 were living with family and friends, and 1 had a hostel placement. So out of the 12 that were begging only one was actually rough sleeping and begging.

Case Study 1 - Beggar - has been living in a tenancy in Beaumont Leys for a number of years. He is a prolific beggar in the City. He begs for money to fund his drug habit. He has breached his Community Protection Notices, and he is aware that if he continues to breach further enforcement may be considered. He is offered ongoing support in relation to tenancy sustainment.

Case Study 2 - Beggar - In tenancy and has sustained his tenancy for 2/3 years. He begs on a regular basis in the city. He openly admits he is begging for drug money and generally begs more when he is waiting for a benefit payment. Enforcement: 2 verbal, 1 written warning.

Case Study 3 - Beggar - Female, alcohol and drug use currently housed with LCC. Not engaging overly well with services at this point however she has recently started drug treatment.

8. Other Interventions including Enforcement.

8.1 The Police have served 4 Community Protection Notices and 1 Criminal Behaviour Order as well as dispersal notices, which in effect exclude individuals from the City Centre for a 24 hour period to manage the potential of professional begging rings and rotated 'pitches'. The Police have also welcomed our joint agency approach and information sharing on whether the beggars are actually homeless. This approach gives the Police more confidence that the Courts will support any actions that they may take against persistent beggars.

8.2 Leicester's experience mirrors the national picture with most cities reporting increases in begging on the streets. There are two cohorts of beggars identified, cohort one, individuals begging to fund a habit, predominantly drugs and predominantly accommodated. Cohort 2 is those individuals begging in an organised way, which can involve low level crime and ASB.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Leicester provide excellent Homelessness services to over 2847 single people seeking assistance, help and support.

9.2 In Leicester no one needs to sleep rough. Leicester has enough temporary accommodation to make sure no one has to sleep rough and support and assistance for those needing to reconnect back home.

9.3 Of those who we help by providing advice, assistance including accommodation the numbers of these who are problematic or entrenched is a small proportion.

9.4 The number of rough sleepers in Leicester is very small and this emphasises the strength of the existing services available to those at risk of homelessness.

9.5 The City Centre does have a number of Beggars. These beggars are often people that have homes or other accommodation to sleep in and do not rough sleep.

9.6 It is essential that the public are informed about these distinct groups through information and education that it is not helpful to give money to beggars or rough sleepers and alternative options are communicated to the public for those wanting to provide support and assistance.

10. Financial, legal and other implications

Financial implications – Peter Coles - Principal Accountant - Ext374077

10.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Legal implications – Jeremy Rainbow – Principal Lawyer (Litigation) – Ext 371435

10.2 There are no specific legal obligations arising from this report.

11. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

12. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No