

Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee

Report from the Director of Public Health

8th September 2020

Homelessness Update

1. Purpose

Further to the report presented to committee on 7th July:

<https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/documents/s61808/ASC%20Scrutiny%20Committee%2007.07.20%20-%20Director%20of%20Public%20Health%20Report.pdf>, this report gives further information on the work of the multi-agency Rough Sleeper and Homelessness COVID-19 Cell and the Strategic Housing Partnership (SHP). This has ensured a county wide response, sharing of resources and the ability to deliver the right option to individual clients, irrespective of administrative boundaries. It has also ensured that Rough Sleepers, and those at imminent risk of rough sleeping, have been afforded the opportunity to self-isolate and mitigate the risk of infection during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leadership Gloucestershire, specifically the CEOs/MDs from the 7 councils, tasked Strategic Directors with oversight of this work. We continue to be guided by the following statement of strategic intent:

'We will focus on and prioritise those individuals we have housed through the Covid-19 pandemic who are vulnerable and those with entrenched homelessness, and ensure they have access to suitable move-on accommodation. We will not lose sight of the broader context of our housing needs across the County and will seek to provide options for the current cohort which will serve the housing system in the longer term'.

2. Current position

Gloucestershire has developed excellent homeless pathways pre-COVID-19, as reported to the Committee on 24th September 2019:

<https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/documents/s55907/gcc-public-health-report-final.pdf>. Appendix A of this report describes the services GCC commissions in relation to community and accommodation-based support and Appendix B shows the homeless pathway that has been developed in the County.

As lock down restrictions have reduced and the housing system has been brought incrementally 'back on line', residents have been supported to secure appropriate housing options – this has enabled us to reduce the level of block booked hotel provision from three hotels to two. Basic needs, such as food etc., continue to be provided to residents on a need's basis.

67 individuals have moved directly from the Gloucestershire Covid-19 Emergency Accommodation Protocol (CEAP) accommodation and a further 61 individuals, who have spent some time in CEAP accommodation and/or rough sleeping during this period, have moved on to private rented, social housing or accommodation-based support so far. Many others now have housing pathways identified and are waiting for suitable properties to

become available either through commissioned services or the private and social housing markets.

As at 24.08.20 there are 87 individuals in CEAP accommodation and a further 75 individuals remain in a variety of other temporary accommodation options.

The majority of the individuals now in the hotels require low to no support and have managed to maintain their placement in the hotel, under difficult circumstances, for a significant period of time. As such, the relevant district council housing teams are seeking to identify appropriate accommodation options for these residents.

3. Clients with support needs

Now that lockdown restrictions have eased these pathways are beginning to mobilise again, access into accommodation-based support and move on from the Somewhere Safe to Stay Hubs and Assessment Centres is now possible. However, due to social distancing, there is reduced capacity across these pathways. The securing of additional accommodation units as described below will enable current residents of Accommodation Based Support (ABS) services who are ready for independent living, to move on and thereby create vacancies for others in need of ABS.

Unfortunately, the hotel environment, where many clients were housed during the pandemic, has proved to be too difficult for the most entrenched/repeat homeless clients to sustain despite continued efforts from a number of different support services.

As such, 34 people have been verified as rough sleeping on 21.08.20. Of these;

- 15 individuals have been accommodated via CEAP but have returned to rough sleeping.
- 16 individuals had a history of repeat and/or long-term rough sleeping prior to Covid-19 lockdown
- 8 individuals have started rough sleeping for the first time in the last month and outreach are working to engage and collate further information to determine their needs/pathways

As part of Gloucestershire's response to C-19 a Complex Case Cell (CCC) was formed as a subgroup of the Gloucestershire Covid-19 Rough Sleeper/ Homeless Cell: it was designed not to provide a reactive, emergency response but to give an opportunity for agencies to come together to consider, assess and plan proactive longer-term solutions for individuals. This multi-agency group has ensured there is a process to assist people whose complex needs mean that access to accommodation through the District Authorities or the Rapid Rehousing Pathway (RRP) and Homeless START pathway is not possible and they require a more individual innovative partnership solution.

The cell has identified a small group of entrenched rough sleepers who have very complex needs. These people all have:

- Been rough sleeping for a number of years
- Been offered and have failed numerous times, placements within all of the different types of placements offered as part of the current Gloucestershire homelessness pathway
- Are well known to numerous parts of the Gloucestershire housing, health and social care system including: A&E, The Police, Mental Health, and Drug and Alcohol services, Housing depts.
- Present in a very chaotic and self-neglectful way
- They have suffered large amounts of trauma within their lives, with this trauma manifesting itself in challenging behaviour.

In the interim we have continued to reach out and seek to engage with rough sleepers during

this time to encourage them to access accommodation. Homeless outreach, the community drug and alcohol service (CGL), and other relevant support agencies continue to support and encourage engagement by those clients with complex needs and chaotic lifestyles, both for those remaining in the accommodation and reaching out for those cases who have either refused to access or have left the emergency accommodation.

The scale of placements required during the pandemic, has however, created such a swell in demand that our current capacity across the housing system would not have been able to accommodate this for some considerable time, even when operating under normal circumstances.

The need for an additional supply of accommodation and support was identified at an early stage and a Supply sub-cell was established to support the level of activity required to 'bridge the gap' of supply and demand.

4. Future Funding Opportunities

A Gloucestershire wide submission has been made to the MHCLG's recently announced Next Steps Accommodation Programme. This bid includes a range of additional properties and support arrangements that are deemed to be deliverable by March 2021 and are appropriate for the level and types of needs of those accommodated during the pandemic.

We are expecting to be advised of the level of funding being awarded to Gloucestershire via the Next Steps Programme in early/mid October. This will impact on the scale and pace of additional accommodation secured to rehouse those accommodated under emergency measures during COVID-19.

Appendix A

Summary of Community and Accommodation Based Support services commissioned by GCC

Community Based Support

Generic Community Based Support (CBS) Services are commissioned using a place-based approach. The County is divided into two clusters (Gloucester, Forest of Dean, Tewkesbury and Cheltenham, Stroud, Cotswold) due to its size and to mitigate the impact of any provider issues.

CBS Services are commissioned to deliver short term support that build on an individual's existing strengths to help them develop the skills and resources to become self reliant and resilient. This could include practical support to develop skills for maintaining independent living; support to access training, volunteering and/or employment; rebuilding family relationships and developing links with other people, neighbourhoods and community networks.

Using a combination of a drop-in service, more intensive one to one support and group work, individuals are supported to acquire the information and skills they need to make positive changes in their lives and make connections to the people, places and activities in their communities that will enable them to live independently and flourish in the longer term.

The service supports people in any form of accommodation and across a continuum of need from early intervention and prevention through to intensive support for people in crisis/ high level and complex need.

Building on early prevention, CBS services are adept at developing resilience, both at an individual level and a community level. Psychological resilience, the ability to recover quickly from difficulties are protective factors to combat ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences). CBS services have also been co-located in other professional settings for example Children Social Care and Hospital, with a high degree of success in supporting other front-line workers; vulnerable families and patients to achieve successful outcomes.

Accommodation Based Support

Accommodation Based Support Services provide support to people in designated short-term accommodation accessed by service users for the specific purpose of undertaking housing needs and support assessments and/or receiving support to prepare them for independent living.

With a shift of investment into community-based support we have over time worked with providers of Accommodation Based Support (ABS) services to focus on supporting vulnerable people with complex, multiple and high-level needs. These services, working in partnership with Community Based Support services, support service users to reconnect at the earliest opportunity to the neighbourhoods and communities where they have positive attachments.

ABS Services are designed to increase service user confidence and help them develop the necessary skills to support their transition to independent living in the community.

ABS units are divided into the following:

- 16+ services – Service Users aged primarily 16-21 (although older young People can access if appropriate)
- 18+ services – Services Users aged 18+ complex needs or chaotic lifestyles
- Assessment centre services (18+) operate as a first stage assessment service for homeless adults with complex needs and chaotic lifestyles.

The Assessment Services undertake a personalised assessment and provide structured interventions to identify a plan for moving on within a three-month period.

Working together to address rough sleeping and entrenched homelessness

Close partnership working has led to the joint commissioning, and successful bids for additional external funding, for services targeting Rough Sleepers and those at imminent risk of rough sleeping. This includes the expansion of the Homeless Assertive Outreach Service; funding for intensive support to over 100 entrenched rough sleepers and repeat users of homelessness services; and more recently provision of Somewhere Safe to Stay (SStS) hubs and Navigator Services.

GCC was one of 11 Somewhere Safe to Stay (SStS) Hub early adopters chosen, having demonstrated our ability to rapidly mobilise, our understanding of the local Rough Sleeper cohort and our existing wider pathway of services

The money funds two SStS hubs (Gloucester and Cheltenham). The hubs are open and staffed on a 24 hour, 7 days a week basis. The hubs build on the 'No Second Night Out' principles (detailed below), by rapidly assessing the needs of people in Gloucestershire who

are sleeping rough or at imminent risk of sleeping rough. They provide a safe environment in which they encourage people to move off the street straight away, and support them to get the right help that focuses on addressing the root causes of homelessness.

There is a rapid assessment of needs and eligibility in a shared 'sit-up' space during a short stay, and a housing plan is co-produced, aimed at alleviating their rough sleeping and providing referrals into other support services where needed.

Individuals can be supported by specialist navigators aligned to the hubs, to assess wider support needs and assist them to navigate housing, mental health and drug and alcohol pathways.

THE NSNO PRINCIPLES (Homeless Link 2014)

- New rough sleepers should be identified and helped off the streets immediately so that they do not fall into a dangerous rough sleeping lifestyle.
- Members of the public should be able to play an active role by reporting and referring people sleeping rough.
- Rough sleepers should be helped to access a place of safety where their needs can be quickly assessed and they can receive advice on their options.
- Rough sleepers should be able to access emergency accommodation and other services, such as healthcare, if needed.
- If people have come from another area or country and find themselves sleeping rough, the aim should be to reconnect them back to their local community unless there is a good reason why they cannot return. There, they will be able to access housing and recovery services, and have support from family and friends

Annexe B : Gloucestershire Homelessness Pathway

