

## Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING: Wellbeing Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel

MEETING  
DATE: 5<sup>th</sup> July 2013

TITLE: Rough Sleepers

WARD: ALL

### AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

**List of attachments to this report:** None

## 1 THE ISSUE

1.1 In March the panel were provided with an update on the current demands around homelessness and specifically temporary accommodation. At the request of panel this report has now been produced to provide an update on the specific issue of rough sleepers, included experienced demand, accommodation and support provision.

## 2 RECOMMENDATION

The Wellbeing Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel is asked to note the report.

### **3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **4 THE REPORT**

#### **Number of Rough Sleepers**

4.1 In November 2012, a snapshot estimate conducted across various services and access points in Bath & North East Somerset found 22 people known to be sleeping rough. This was a significant increase on previous findings, which were arrived at by carrying out sweeps of the area and counting those people ascertained to be rough sleeping. Reported numbers were often unfeasibly low (the lowest was 1 person, the highest was 12) and were not regarded as reliable.

4.2 A new national approach determined local authorities could submit an estimate of rough sleeping levels, reached through outreach services asking individual clients if they had slept out the previous night. This methodology was generally viewed as more reliable and likely to give a true picture of rough sleeping levels. The reasons for this are:

- The most entrenched and vulnerable rough sleepers are known to take great care to remain undiscovered. This distorts the picture and under-estimates need levels.
- Outreach workers and others working regularly with people known to sleep rough have often established trust and confidence between themselves and their clients. It is more likely that they will report nights spent out to a known key-worker or other contact.
- The geographical area covered by the count was limited to the number of people available to carry it out. This meant that large areas of Bath & North East Somerset were not included. By carrying out an estimate via key-workers, rough sleepers in those uncovered areas were much more likely to be included.

4.3 It should also be noted that Julian House, using their local knowledge and expertise, provide monthly estimates of the number of rough sleepers. Over the past year this estimate has varied between 11 and 25. As such the formal estimate is at the high level of the monthly estimates.

#### **Assertive Outreach Service**

4.4 The Assertive Outreach Service is a joint initiative funded through the DCLG's Transition Fund. Working in partnership, Julian House and DHI provide outreach and advice to rough sleepers across the Bath & North East Somerset area. Regular weekly counts are conducted, with 16 people being found sleeping rough on 6<sup>th</sup> June. A number of these are well-known to services and are regarded as entrenched rough sleepers. Some, despite the best efforts of a range of agencies, are banned from Manvers Street provision, typically due to violent or abusive behaviour. Others may be unable to access services due to the Single Service Offer approach, which directs that all newly-arrived rough sleepers are, wherever possible, reconnected to their home town or other location where they may already have accommodation or support networks. The aim of this policy is to

ensure that vulnerable people do not lose contact with family, friends and services or accommodation that they have a right to occupy. However, this approach is only taken where it is deemed to be reasonable, so someone fearing violence or other threat in their home town will not be directed back to that area. Where the reconnection service is declined, no further offer is made. This can result in people remaining in the area and resorting to rough sleeping.

## **Accommodation**

- 4.5 There is only one hostel in the Bath & North East Somerset area provided specifically for rough sleepers - Manvers Street direct access hostel and day centre. Indeed this is one of only a handful of direct access hostels in the region, the others being located in Bristol, Yeovil, Taunton, Bournemouth and Winchester. As such there is a potential for this resource to draw clients from the surrounding areas.
- 4.6 The Manvers Street service, previously known as Julian House, was long regarded as unfit for purpose. The lack of specific provision for women, the dormitory arrangement, poor lighting and ventilation and inadequate shared spaces all contributed to poor performance against outcomes targets. There was a high level of unplanned moves from the hostel. The poor quality of the accommodation was a significant factor in this, as people in need found it difficult to settle and did not address destabilising factors such as substance misuse, poor mental health and employment. As the night shelter was not able to take dogs, this restricted access for rough sleeper not wanting to part with their pets.
- 4.7 A number of bids to improve provision, including proposals for significant government funding, were developed but ultimately came to nothing. In the summer of 2012, with £80,000 contribution from the local authority, Julian House were able to undertake significant remodelling of the hostel. The service now offers 20 individual 'pods' that afford privacy for individuals that are typically not able to find this at any other time. Priority is given to female rough sleepers and for the first time, entrenched rough sleeping women are guaranteed accommodation. The pod-style rooms mean that people with dogs can be accommodated, reducing the reasons for people to refuse to come in from the streets. Feed back from partners and service users has been very positive.
- 4.8 In addition move-on accommodation for 9 people is available at Julian House's Corn Street properties, bringing the total new provision to 29. This allows former rough sleepers to test out more independent living, with the ability to move back in to the higher support afforded by Manvers Street should this prove too early in their support plan. Julian House report that retention rates are much improved, allowing for greater engagement over issues such as substance misuse. The hostel runs at full capacity and Corn Street move-on provision rarely has a void bed for more than one or two nights. Staff report that they typically turn away 5 people per night that cannot be accommodated due to high demand and that these are often not the same 5 people night after night.

## **5 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 5.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has not been undertaken due to the nature of this report, that is, an update report.

## **6 EQUALITIES**

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed because the report aims to provide a briefing only and does not make recommendations for changes to provision, service delivery or policy.

## 7 CONSULTATION

7.1 Consultation has not been completed because the report aims to provide a briefing only and does not make recommendations for changes to provision, service delivery or policy.

## 8 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

8.1 Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Young People; Human Rights; Other Legal Considerations

## 9 ADVICE SOUGHT

9.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

<b>Contact person</b>	Ann Robins, Planning Partnership Manager. (Tel: 01225 396288)  Graham Sabourn, Head of Housing Services. (Tel: 01225 477949)
<b>Background papers</b>	None
<b>Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format</b>	