

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING	Planning, Housing & Economic Development Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING	6 th November 2018	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: None		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The Council delivers support and assistance to people at risk of becoming homeless and people who are homeless by commissioning services, developing effective partnerships with the voluntary sector and having an effective Housing Options & Homelessness Team. This report provides an update on these services including some proposed enhancements.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is asked to;

- 2.1 Note the contents of the report.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 This report is for information only, and as such, there are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The, [Housing Act 1996](#), the [Homelessness Act 2002](#) and the [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#), all place significant statutory duties on local housing authorities (the Council) to ensure that advice, assistance and other housing duties are available to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- 4.2 In addition the delivery of services for homeless people has implications for corporate statutory considerations such as equalities, crime and disorder, safeguarding and public health and inequalities.

5 THE REPORT

Background

- 5.1 The Council delivers support and assistance to homeless people by providing services directly, working in partnership with the voluntary sector and the commissioning of specialist services. The term homelessness is wide and includes: households threatened with imminent homelessness; those living in non-settled accommodation, such as “sofa surfing”, bed & breakfast or other types of temporary accommodation; or people sleeping on the streets/tents/cars etc.
- 5.2 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which came into effect in April 2018 and which was the biggest change to homelessness legislation for 15 years, has added two new duties, these being:
- a) a duty to prevent homelessness; and
 - b) a duty to relieve homelessness.
- 5.3 These duties preface the existing statutory rehousing duty. The effect is that the Council is required to provide enhanced homelessness support to all households who are homeless, or threaten with homelessness within 56 days. In particular the Council must now provide anyone who is threatened with homelessness with bespoke housing advice, including a supported Personal Housing Plan (PHP), regardless of whether they have a local connection or are intentionally homeless. There is also now a statutory duty for a range of organisations, such as probation, prisons, hospitals, youth offending teams, job centre and social services, to refer homelessness cases to the Council.
- 5.4 The statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation to eligible clients has not changed significantly, albeit the need to provide a relief duty prior to a statutory rehousing duty has meant that the time some clients spent in temporary has increased. To be eligible for temporary accommodation a client must be homeless, have a local connection, be in priority need and did not become homeless intentionally. People with a priority need include people with dependent children, pregnant women, 16/17 year olds, care leavers and anyone who is

vulnerable because of old age, mental illness, handicap or physical disability or other special reason.

5.5 Temporary accommodation (TA) provided by Bath and North East Somerset Council includes:

- a) Hostel accommodation occupied on a licence;
- b) Flats occupied on an assured shorthold tenancy;
- c) Bed & Breakfast accommodation.

5.6 Both the hostel accommodation and the flats are commissioned through Curo Housing. The hostel provides high quality accommodation suitable for singles and couples and small families of up to 3 people in 17 rooms with some shared communal facilities. The dispersed flats comprise 6 self-contained two bedroom properties and one, self-contained one bedroom property. These are family units and are for people with more than two children.

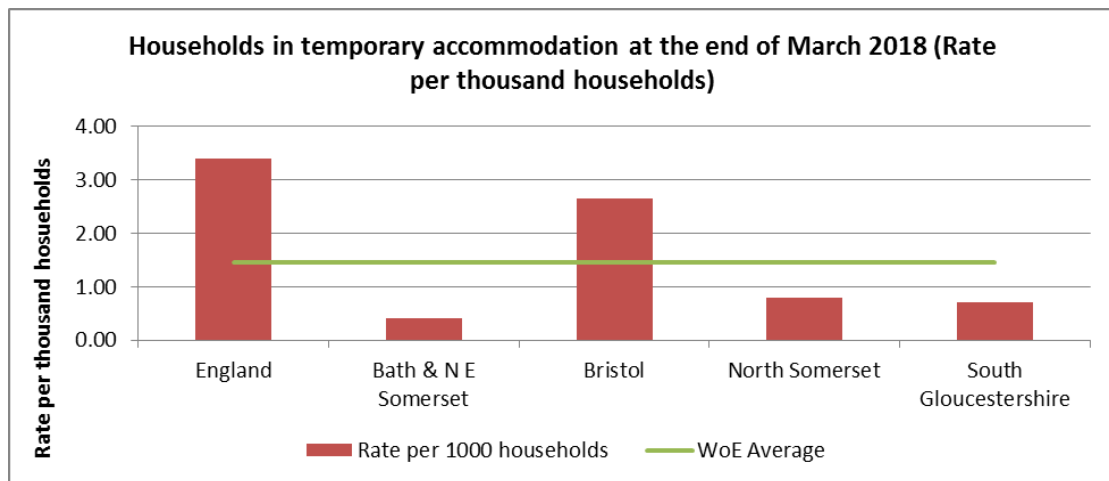
5.7 The Council tries not to use Bed and Breakfast accommodation (B&B) but if we have no alternative or it is an emergency, we aim to accommodate households in B&B within district for the shortest time possible. We have TA placement agreements with two Bath based B&B providers. However, Bath is a popular tourist destination and sometimes B&B in the district is not available at short notice. As such we therefore also have a TA placement agreement with a Bristol B&B provider.

Current Situation

5.8 The Council's Housing Options & Homelessness Team has, for a number of years, taken a preventative approach to homelessness. As such the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, reinforces this preventative approach, has been relatively modest for the Council, at least compared to other Councils. Whilst the team have not seen a significant increase in demand, at least at this stage, there have been other implications. Firstly, the time taken to support each client has increased significantly, placing increased demand upon the team. Indeed it is not uncommon for initial interviews to now take 2/3 hours per client. Secondly, the need to provide a relief duty prior to a statutory rehousing duty has meant that the time some clients spent in temporary has increased. This has the overall effect of increasing the number of households in TA.

5.9 At the time of writing there are 30 households in TA. Whilst this is above our self-imposed target of 27, it remains extremely low when compared to local and national comparators, as shown in the table below. Indeed if the rate of households in TA replicated the national rate then B&NES would need to accommodate around 200 households in TA, rather than the current 30. The financial savings that this success creates are very high.

5.10 See over



Rough Sleepers

5.11 Whilst rough sleeping is only a relatively small part of the wider homelessness agenda it is the most visible element and the most challenging. High levels of specialist support are required to provide positive outcomes. Working with local partners, including health, welfare, housing and employment the following services are provided to help rough sleepers make a transition into safer and healthier lives:

- a) Provision of 29 units of modern high quality accommodation with on-site medical provision. (20 direct access & 9 move-on units)
- b) Assertive outreach provided in partnership by Julian House, DHI and AWP – supports individual rough sleepers into accommodation and other services by working with them on the street.
- c) A drop-in centre –providing help, healthcare, advice & assistance, hot meals, showers, laundry facilities and meaningful activities services etc.
- d) A Reconnection Service. Some rough sleepers arrive from other parts of the country, having left accommodation and support networks behind. Wherever possible, contact will be made to ascertain that accommodation is still available and that appropriate support can continue. Where this is the case, travel costs are covered and the person offered the opportunity to return home. If there is any suggestion of violence or any other threat, this is not implemented.
- e) Supported Housing Gateway – web-based single access point for supported housing schemes.
- f) Priority on Homesearch Scheme for people in supported housing, and in some cases rough sleepers. This helps release bed-spaces that can then be allocated to rough sleepers.
- g) A Task & Targeting multi-agency group that shares information on and identifies solutions for named, entrenched rough sleepers.

5.12 In 2017 the official count estimated that there were 33 people sleeping rough on a single night in B&NES, of which one in three did not have a local

connection with the area. The numbers for years 2016 to 2012 were 25, 22, 27, 33 & 22 respectively. In 2012 the assessment methodology changed and so previous figures are not comparable. Importantly only 4 rough sleepers who were identified in 2017 had also been identified in 2016. This confirms that move-on support is effective. The 2018 count is scheduled within the next few weeks and it is expected to show a modest decrease.

5.13 In August 2018 the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government launched their Rough Sleeper Strategy. As part of this strategy B&NES have recently successfully secured around £660k of funding over the period of 2018/19 to 2019/20 to provide the following additional services:

- a) Safesleep - 20 additional bed-spaces for rough sleepers between November and February
- b) Advice and support within the Emergency Department at the RUH to divert patients from sleeping rough
- c) A Rapid Assessment & Reconnection Service working across local authority boundaries to prevent 'drift' into Bath from areas without provision.
- d) A tailored approach to Housing First, targeting an entrenched rough sleeper with a high profile within criminal justice and anti-social behaviour statistics.
- e) A wider Housing First project for rough sleepers, providing 5 units of accommodation.
- f) Mental Health Clinicians embedded within the outreach team. Working alongside outreach workers, these specialists will be able to assess any mental health needs and enable access to services, both of which have previously proved to be a barrier to treatment.
- g) A Flexible Support Pot will allow a wide range of services to provide specialist support at the Safesleep service in the evenings. This will mean rough sleepers are able to speak in person to agencies such as the Council's Housing Options team, Bath Mind, Citizens' Advice, DHI, Curo and the Homeless Healthcare team as they arrive.
- h) Rent in advance will be available to ensure that offers of accommodation can be accepted quickly and will not be missed out on due to lack of funds.
- i) A Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator has been appointed to monitor these initiatives and report within the Council, to MHCLG and partners on progress against targets.

6 RATIONALE

6.1 None. No recommendations, other than noting of report, made.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 None. Report for information only.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 None. Report for information only.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

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Background papers	None
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	