



Doncaster Council

Report

Date: 1st November 2019

To the Chair and Members of the
REGENERATION AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

**DONCASTER HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY
2019-2024**

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Councillor Glyn Jones Portfolio Holder for Housing	All Wards	Yes

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. There has been a nationwide increase in number of rough sleepers and people presenting with multiple and complex issues. This increase has been seen in Doncaster. Homelessness Legislation requires every Local Authority to provide a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to ensure a strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness, and to strengthen the assistance available to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
2. Further legislation in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 placed duties on Local Authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness and provide homelessness services to all those affected and not just those in priority need. The enhanced prevention duty extended from 28 days to 56 days, enabling housing services to prevent at an earlier stage, with an additional 56-day relief duty to relieve full homeless duty by helping those in need to secure accommodation.
3. All Housing authorities must have a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy in place, based on a review of all homelessness in their Authority area. This strategy must be renewed every 5 years, setting out plans for the prevention of homelessness and securing accommodation and support to be available for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming so.
4. This strategy sets out our strategic ambition for how we want services and the wider system to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping, but when people need it the accommodation offer and the right support are in place to get people to place they can call their own as quickly as possible.

EXEMPT REPORT

5. Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6. That the Regeneration and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel consider and provide comment on the strategy and associated information to be presented to Cabinet 05.11.19.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

7. The strategic actions contained in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy set out our direction for a whole system approach to homelessness prevention and response. We want citizens to access advice and information in a timely manner in order to prevent homelessness or understand their options when their circumstances change. Rough Sleepers will have wrap around support available to them, and will know where to access support and advice. Services will build and improve upon working arrangements to ensure a whole system response to Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in Doncaster.

BACKGROUND

8. Homelessness and in particular rough sleeping has been increasing both nationally and locally since the previous strategy was agreed in 2015. As well as increases in the volume of people, there has also been an increase in the complexity of issues people face when presenting for services; this demand has been replicated across many parts of the country. We have responded well to this rise in demand with the introduction of a complex lives alliance that works with those most vulnerable providing wrap around support.
9. We have also introduced a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) and invested council reserves into funding extra police resources in the town centre area to address begging, Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) and substance abuse sometimes associated with rough sleeping. We have also been successful in a number of funding applications from the UK government to supplement the work already happening across Doncaster, for example the Rough Sleeper Initiative.
10. Although we have responded well to the rise and changing nature of demand, in late 2018, the Homes for All Programme Board requested a review and refresh of the homelessness and rough sleeping strategy to ensure our strategic ambition and direction guided our future work and decision-making. Initial consultation followed with the homelessness and support partnership in February 2019 and work began with Crisis to consult with those with lived experience including people from the Complex Lives cohort, veterans and young people at risk of homelessness.
11. Building on this initial consultation, Imogen Blood Associates were appointed in April 2019 to conduct an independent review of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in Doncaster. The results of this review were shared

with the Council, St Leger Homes and The Homeless and support partnership in July 2019

12. Overall the review found many positives in which the council, partners and providers can build on together, in particular;
 - Wide commitment to building a co-ordinated response to the issues
 - St Leger's continued resources to prevent and respond to homelessness
 - Ongoing commitment to funding housing-related support
 - Integrated commissioning of the Complex Lives Alliance (CLA)
 - Improvements to some pathways into Home Options
 - Opportunities to develop new housing as part of the council house build programme
 - Relatively good data collection compared to elsewhere

13. However there were still areas in which the 'whole system' of partners could improve the way in which they work including:
 - High numbers presenting in Doncaster are already homeless
 - Many of these cases could be preventable
 - High levels of additional support needs and multiple needs presenting
 - The current system is reactive with the main access being the civic office
 - Sometimes a lack of support, resources and training for effective triage
 - A default response is referral to supported housing
 - Current models are not effective for the increased complexity of clients
 - Complex lives offers the support, but there needs to be suitable housing to underpin this work
 - There is a need for more flexible floating support and dispersed provision of accommodation

Supporting Doncaster Growing Together

14. The nature of this work and the strategic ambition set out in this strategy is cross cutting and has implications right across our four policy themes, Living, Working, Learning and Caring. There is significant focus on getting the right offer of accommodation and sustaining tenancies but equally important is our response to substance addiction, mental health, trauma, domestic abuse and the way in which we work together to commission services, all whilst seeking to prevent homelessness happening in the first place. This work has an impact upon multiple organisations and multiple strategy areas and as we deliver aspects of the strategy, there will be a need to review other policy and service areas to ensure alignment and value for money.

The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy

15. The vision of *Working together to Prevent Homelessness and ensuring nobody in Doncaster needs to sleep rough on our streets*, sits at the heart of this strategy attached in full as Annex A.

16. The three key objectives of the strategy, based on the independent review, consultation with stakeholders and available intelligence are:
 1. Deliver a “whole system” wide plan for Homeless Prevention
 2. Maximise opportunities for independence through a range of housing options
 3. Effective and joined up Care and Support Services for those most in need

Governance & Accountability

17. Ensuring that there is accountability and drive achieving the strategic ambition set out in this strategy is of paramount importance. The existing homelessness and support partnership has provided input into the strategy and will continue to shape and influence the annual delivery plan. Furthermore, a new strategic commissioning group should be formed to ensure that statutory partners and commissioners can develop and grip the annual delivery plan that will realise the strategic ambition set out in the strategy.

Next Steps

18. Once agreed the strategy will provide the strategic ambition and framework for responding to homelessness and rough sleeping across Doncaster, but some immediate steps alongside this agreement will also be put in place;
 - a) We will continue to develop an annual action plan, detailing the specific resources allocated to achieve the strategic ambition within the strategy. The first of which linked to the objectives in this strategy will be 2020/21 and will be agreed by February 2020.
 - b) We will set up the Strategic Commissioning Group to develop and grip the annual delivery plan and oversee the progress of the strategy.
 - c) We will set up a Prevention Task and Finish Group to create a plan for a whole system approach to preventing homelessness as early as possible, considering all relevant stakeholders
 - d) We know the latest spending round allocated further funding for Homelessness and rough sleeping to local authorities but this will not become finalised until later in 2019.
 - e) The Review of Homelessness also provided a model of accommodation that we could consider in the future. The model, based on a range of assumptions, includes the number of accommodation units we have and would need to transition to in the future. This transition, which will be considered by the strategic commissioning group, will be a key factor in achieving our housing options objective.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

19. **Option 1:** Do nothing and wait until the existing strategy expires in 2020. This option is not recommended, as we would not comply with Government with our statutory duty to produce a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy
20. **Option 2:** Adopt the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for Doncaster presented at Annex A and pursue the next steps described in Para 15. This is the recommended option.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

21. It provides the Council and Team Doncaster with a strategic plan to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping in Doncaster, with a clear commitment to deliver the actions identified in the strategy.
22. There have been significant changes in legislation and working practices since the previous strategy was adopted in 2015, along with increasing and changing demand.
23. Government requirement in the national rough Sleeping Strategy for each local authority to publish a refreshed Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy by Winter 2019.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

24.

	Outcomes	Implications
	<p>Doncaster Working: Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to good fulfilling work • Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish • Inward Investment 	<p>To enable those who are homeless or rough sleeping to engage in work activities, it is essential that they are in stable accommodation to provide the foundations to feel able to engage in work activity and training/education.</p>
	<p>Doncaster Living: Our vision is for Doncaster's people to live in a borough that is vibrant and full of opportunity, where people enjoy spending time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster • More people can live in a good quality, affordable home • Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport • Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean • Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage 	<p>Settled accommodation across the borough for homeless households is instrumental to Doncaster becoming a thriving town centre and enabling those who are unable to do so of their own accord, to live in good quality, affordable homes.</p>
	<p>Doncaster Learning: Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that is fulfilling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child has life-changing 	<p>We want to ensure people have access and opportunity to learn new skills at the right time for them.</p>

	<p>learning experiences within and beyond school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or better • Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work 	
	<p>Doncaster Caring: Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have the best start in life • Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust • Older people can live well and independently in their own homes 	<p>Our ability to provide support and care to homeless households, vulnerable families and individuals through good quality services that help them back to a place they can call their own.</p>
	<p>Connected Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A modern, efficient and flexible workforce • Modern, accessible customer interactions • Operating within our resources and delivering value for money • A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents • Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths • Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance 	<p>We want to support homeless households by aligning our services and resources to provide the best value.</p>

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

25. Doncaster has been successful in receiving Government funding for short-term interventions, for example, the Rough Sleepers Initiative. However, the long term funding of these interventions is still unclear, making it difficult to plan and manage services in a sustainable way. This uncertainty could affect Doncaster's ability to plan and co-ordinate homelessness services in the medium to long term

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS NC 02/10/2019

26. The Housing Act 1996, the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, places a number of duties on local authorities to prevent and deal with homelessness in their boroughs. The 2002 Act created a duty on Local Authorities to carry out homeless reviews and publish a Homelessness Strategy. Section 1(4) of the 2002 Act requires a revised strategy to be published within the period of 5 years beginning on

the day the current strategy was published. The statutory Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities clarifies that this is a strategy for:

- (a) preventing homelessness in the borough;
 - (b) securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in the borough who are or may become homeless; and
 - (c) securing satisfactory provision of support for people in the borough who are or may become homeless, or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.
27. The Code also confirms that the Authority must consult public or local authorities, voluntary organisations, service users, specialist agencies who provide support to homeless people in the borough, or other persons, as they consider appropriate before adopting or modifying a homelessness strategy.
28. The Homelessness Strategy proposed by this report assists the Council in complying with the various statutory duties placed on it in relation to dealing with homelessness

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS CA 02/10/2019

29. There are no financial implications as a direct result of the Strategy and whilst the 3 Objectives set out what will be done differently in terms of approach and principles, the resulting actions will need to be further developed as part of the implementation, for example, where there is a commitment to review a specific issue or process, the outcome and subsequent recommendations will need to be properly costed and options for funding considered from within the partnership and from the external funding available to the wider programme.
30. Actions likely to give rise to a cost include the housing and legal advice to prevent evictions (if this cannot be met will through existing resources and upskilling) and the actual roll-out of training which will need to be addressed as part of the training plan. Again, there may be flexibility to use some of the external funding supporting the wider programme of activity.
31. There are no capital implications as a direct result of this report and where parts of the Strategy refer to "sourcing affordable rent properties", this is not about purchasing properties as such but about SLH acting as the managing agent with the private sector to provide more properties at an affordable rent, through negotiation and assisting private rented sector landlords to access external funds to bring properties back into use, provide bonds, top ups etc.
32. Actions to source suitable settled housing at an earlier stage for those in temporary accommodation should see an immediate reduction in costs to the Council, as temporary accommodation is usually more expensive and cannot always be met by Housing Benefit. There is likely to be a long term cost saving from earlier intervention and prevention but this has not been quantified.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS KG 02/10/2019

33. There are no specific HR implications arising from this report however, there may be Human Resource implications within specific projects arising from the strategy; these will be included in the appropriate individual reports.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS PW Date 30/09/2019

34. Where there are any technology requirements to support the delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, these would need to be considered and prioritised by the Technology Governance Board (TGB).

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS HC 01/10/2019

35. Poor health can be both a cause and consequence of homelessness and there is evidence to show that the health and wellbeing of those who are homeless is significantly worse than the general population. Living on the streets, in temporary accommodation or in an insecure tenure can have an impact on physical and mental health, drug and alcohol use and ability to utilise the health systems meaning, as a group, those whom experience homelessness also experience high levels of health inequality. The activity reported in this Strategy details a partnership response to those with the most complex needs that includes health and non-statutory partners, and a preventative approach for those at risk of homelessness. By reducing the number of people sleeping rough, homeless or at risk of homelessness it can be expected that there will be a positive health impact on this vulnerable population.
36. Although placements bed and breakfast accommodation can be necessary in some cases, it recommended that measures are taken to reduce the number of people, especially families, living in bed and breakfast accommodation. Providing a secure, healthy and appropriate home will have a positive impact on health and wellbeing. Homelessness is more likely to affect those in society who are most at risk of experiencing other inequalities and poor health, than the general population. Those with experience of the criminal justice system, BME young people, LGBT young people, gay, bisexual or transgender men, gypsies and travellers, sex workers, those who have experienced domestic violence, people with long term illnesses or a disability, people with substance misuse problems, refugees and asylum seekers, care leavers and young people from rural areas are at greater risk of being homeless (LGA, 2017). It is recommended that decision makers take into account the inequalities experienced by these groups and the barriers they may face during planning, delivery and evaluation.
37. It is recommended that decision makers closely monitor and evaluate the impact of this Strategy ensuring that it represents the best use of resources and provides the best health outcomes for Doncaster residents. It is recommended that prevention continues to be the approach of choice wherever possible. This is not only cost-effective, but also prevents our vulnerable communities developing more complex needs and experiencing further negative health impacts of homelessness and rough sleeping

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS MP 01/10/2019

38. The Due Regard Statement (DRS) contained within Annex B contains the Equalities implications along with the details of specific consultations in developing this strategy.

CONSULTATION

39. During February and March 2019, we worked with Crisis to provide consultation with lived experience including Complex Lives, Veterans, and Young People at risk of Homelessness. Consultation details are shown in the Due Regard Statement (Annex B)

BACKGROUND PAPERS

40. **Annex A** – Doncaster Strategy for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping 2019-2024

Annex B – Due Regard Statement for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

B & B = Bed and Breakfast
CAB = Citizens Advice Bureau
CCG = Clinical Commissioning Group
CLA = Complex Lives Alliance
DWP = Department for Work and Pensions
GP = General Practitioners (Doctors)
HOT = Home Options Team
HRA = Homeless Reduction Act
HRS = Housing Related Support
IBA = Imogen Blood Associates
LD = Learning Difficulties
MEAM = Making Every Adult Matter
MHCLG = Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
PHP = Personal Housing Plans
SPOA = Single Point of Access
TA = Temporary Accommodation
UC = Universal Credit
YP = Young People

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