

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Health and Housing Policy Development and Review Panel

Date **23 July 2015**

Report of: **Director of Community**

Subject: **ROUGH SLEEPER WORKING GROUP**

SUMMARY

This report sets out the findings of the Review of Street Homelessness Group set up by the Health and Housing Policy Development & Review Panel to look at the issue of rough sleeping/homelessness in the Borough, the impact on those sleeping rough and residents, and proposals on how rough sleeping can be tackled.

RECOMMENDATION

Members note the content of the report, agree that the Working Group has completed its investigations and confirm the suggested items for further actions.

INTRODUCTION

1. This report sets out the findings of the Review of Street Homelessness Group which was set up by the Health and Housing Policy Development & Review Panel to look at the issue of rough sleeping in the Borough, the impact on those sleeping rough and residents, and to feedback to the Panel with proposals on how rough sleeping can be tackled.
2. The Working Group were pleased to learn that despite the rise in the number of rough sleepers nationally, the number across Fareham is relatively low and they generally spend only a short time on the street before being helped by our Outreach Worker or finding their own solutions. Eight rough sleepers were identified in the latest round of national statistical gathering (single night snapshot of the number of people sleeping rough in local authority areas between 1 October and 30 November 2014). This is the same as in the same period the previous year, whilst nationally the figures have increased by 14%¹.
3. It is widely recognised that homelessness is a highly complex issue and one that can best be reduced and managed through the successful partnership between related services. The Working Group acknowledged the good work already being undertaken to help people rebuild their lives, such as the Council's Housing Options Team and Homelessness Strategy, Supporting People projects and other dedicated services for homeless people across the Borough.

DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

4. Homelessness encompasses a range of degrees of homelessness to include those living in inadequate, poor quality or overcrowded housing, hostels or other forms of temporary accommodation and those who are sleeping rough.
5. The legal definition of homelessness is given as: *".....where there is no accommodation that a [person] is entitled to occupy; or if a [person] has accommodation but it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy this accommodation"*.
6. The review carried out by the Working Group focussed purely on rough sleeping in the Borough rather than the wider issues of homelessness.
7. Rough Sleepers are defined as²: *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, 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" which are makeshift shelters, often comprised of cardboard boxes).*

¹ DCLG; Rough sleeping in England 2014

² For the purposes of national rough sleeping counts and estimates

PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

Background

8. At a meeting on 17 July 2014, the Health and Housing Policy Development and Review Panel agreed to set up a Member/Officer Working Group to review the issue of rough sleeping/homelessness in the Borough.
9. The group comprised the Chair & Deputy Chair of the Health and Housing Policy Development and Review Panel, Cllr Marian Ellerton and Councillor Dennis Steadman, together with Councillor Susan Bell and Councillor Katrina Trott. They were assisted by Caroline Newman, the Head of Housing, Revenues and Benefits, and Sara Head, the Housing Options Manager.

Scope of the review

10. The topics for review were as follows:

- Is street homelessness on the increase?
- Why are people homeless and living on the street? Do they have a local connection? Are they local people, or are they migrating here from other areas?
- What attracts them to Fareham? (safety, friends, the hostel, community support/generosity, begging, Basics Bank)
- What risks and challenges do they face living on the street?
- How do they live on the street? Where do they eat, wash, sleep, and or go to the toilet?
- What impact does living on the street have on their health? How are their health needs being met?
- What help is available to street homeless people to access pathways to housing?
- Is there a need to provide a wet hostel in Fareham? If so, where should it be located? Who should fund it?
- What impact do rough sleepers have on the Town Centre?
- How do rough sleepers impact on local residents?
- What more could be done to reduce street homeless in Fareham?
- How can other agencies help? – do we need a multi-agency approach involving the Police, Offender Management, Churches, Basics Bank – should we host a multi-agency conference to discuss and agree actions?

- How do other Towns or cities respond? (Society of St James in Southampton, and Stone Pillow at Chichester).
- Is there any legislation available to help address the problem? Are we making best use of current byelaws (drinking ban, begging) etc. What additional enforcement powers are needed? (Are they reasonable and proportionate).

What the Working Group did

11. The group held a series of meetings and received presentations and written information from a variety of partner agencies and organisations. They attended a meeting of the multi-agency Rough Sleeper group (hosted at Fareham Police Station) and considered various statistical information and reviews undertaken elsewhere in the country

FINDINGS OF THE WORKING GROUP

The causes of rough sleeping

12. Local authorities' duties towards homeless people are contained in Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended). Local authorities have a duty to secure permanent accommodation for unintentionally homeless people in priority need. If a homeless single adult or couple approaches a local authority for assistance and, following an assessment, is told that they are unintentionally homeless but not in priority need, the duty on the local authority is to "*ensure that the applicant is provided with advice and assistance in any attempts he or she may make to secure accommodation that becomes available for his or her occupation*". Therefore homeless people who are not successful in obtaining alternative accommodation, despite advice and assistance provided by local authorities, or who do not approach an authority for assistance, may find themselves sleeping rough.

13. Homelessness can arise in different situations, such as:

- Loss of accommodation – through rent or mortgage arrears, loss of employment and accommodation that is tied to it
- Relationship breakdowns/family disputes (can include domestic violence)
- Bereavement
- Difficulty in accessing or keeping accommodation due to a lack of literacy skills, learning difficulties, mental health issues, unemployment, a history of offending behaviour resulting in prison terms or addiction to drugs and/or alcohol
- Care leavers

14. A large number of the homeless population have suffered some form of complex trauma in their life. They generally have chaotic lifestyles that

include bad decision making and acceptance of dangerous and unhealthy situations. Isolation and fear often mean that rough sleeper's find it difficult to trust other people and the longer they remain in this cycle, the more excluded they can become from society.

Are they local people or are they from other areas? What attracts rough sleepers to Fareham?

15. The vast majority of street homeless people in the Borough have a historical family connection. Usually this is from growing up in the area but relationships and work do bring a small percentage of people to Fareham.
16. A number of other contributing factors lead to street homeless people coming to Fareham. Being a relatively affluent Borough, there is high number of people visiting the town centre who give generously to those begging. Additionally, the structures and areas around the town centre allow for rough sleeping, such as the multi-storey car parks and The Gillies.
17. There is no doubt 101 Gosport Road has an impact by bringing rough sleepers together at a particular location. The hostel is a shared facility with Gosport Borough Council and we have reciprocal nomination rights to facilities within Gosport. Due to the referral process and the daily assessment for an overnight bed it also means that any unsuccessful clients are left to look in the immediate area such as the town centre and quayside for somewhere to bed down. Also those that may have originally had a Gosport connection and not frequented Fareham may gravitate to 101 Gosport Rd and then 'adopt' Fareham as a temporary home with it sometimes then becoming more permanent.

Risks and challenges to rough sleepers

18. The group heard the story of one rough sleeper and how it felt to live on the streets. *".....at first sleeping rough had a kind of novelty to it. Many people were so kind. Even if they had no money, they'd stop and talk with me. People giving their time had a value of its own. Not everyone was like that though. Some people would whisper and make comments and laugh about me. I tried sleeping in the bus station but I had beer cans and stones thrown at my head. They'd hurl abuse at me calling me things like "crack head". Nowhere on the streets is really safe. I became extremely paranoid and very aware of the danger, sleeping with one eye open and waking up from the slightest noise of somebody walking by.....the streets reward you with fear, loneliness, spiritual death, poor health and hopelessness. It never gets better out there....."*
19. Rough sleeping is not only dangerous and damaging to health, but those sleeping on the street face other challenges such as places to eat, wash and go to the toilet. The hostel at 101 Gosport Road allows rough sleepers to use their washing, bathing and toilet facilities.

Impact on health

20. The health of homeless people is a significant issue. The average life expectancy of a rough sleeper is 47 years for men and 43 years for women, compared to 77 for the general population³
21. Rough sleepers are four times more likely to have musculoskeletal problems, six times more likely to have respiratory problems and twenty five times more likely to have eye complaints⁴ than the general population. They are five times more likely to visit A&E, with admissions three times more likely and stays three times as long.⁵ They are forty times less likely to be registered with a GP⁶ and nine times more likely to commit suicide (42% have attempted suicide⁷).
22. A third of all homelessness is associated with mental health problems – rough sleepers are 11 times more likely to have mental health problems.
23. Drugs and alcohol are major causes of death amongst homeless people. The links between drug and alcohol abuse and homelessness are well established and drugs and alcohol are known to be both a cause and consequence of homelessness. Four out of five people start using at least one new drug since becoming homeless⁸.
24. The hostel at 101 Gosport Road arranges for a local GP to visit regularly therefore access to general health care is available to those living at the hostel and those that are still sleeping rough.

Impact on the Town Centre and local residents

25. The vast majority of street homeless people have other support needs and addictions. Indeed homelessness can often be seen as an indicator for other underlying issues that are not always recognised or addressed such as mental health or alcohol/drug misuse that can have negative impacts on the wider community. Anti-social behaviour, visible drug and alcohol use, theft, shoplifting and public disorder as a result of homelessness will occur in and around the town centre.
26. A key location for rough sleeping is outside the Post Office in West Street. The Housing Team occasionally receive reports from concerned residents/town centre visitors about individuals using this area for sleeping. It is likely that this is because it is a sheltered area and a convenient location for begging as it is next to a cash point.

³ "Homelessness: A silent killer" Crisis 2012

⁴ Dept of Health 2012

⁵ McCormick, B, 2010 & NHS North West London, Review of rough sleepers; February 2013

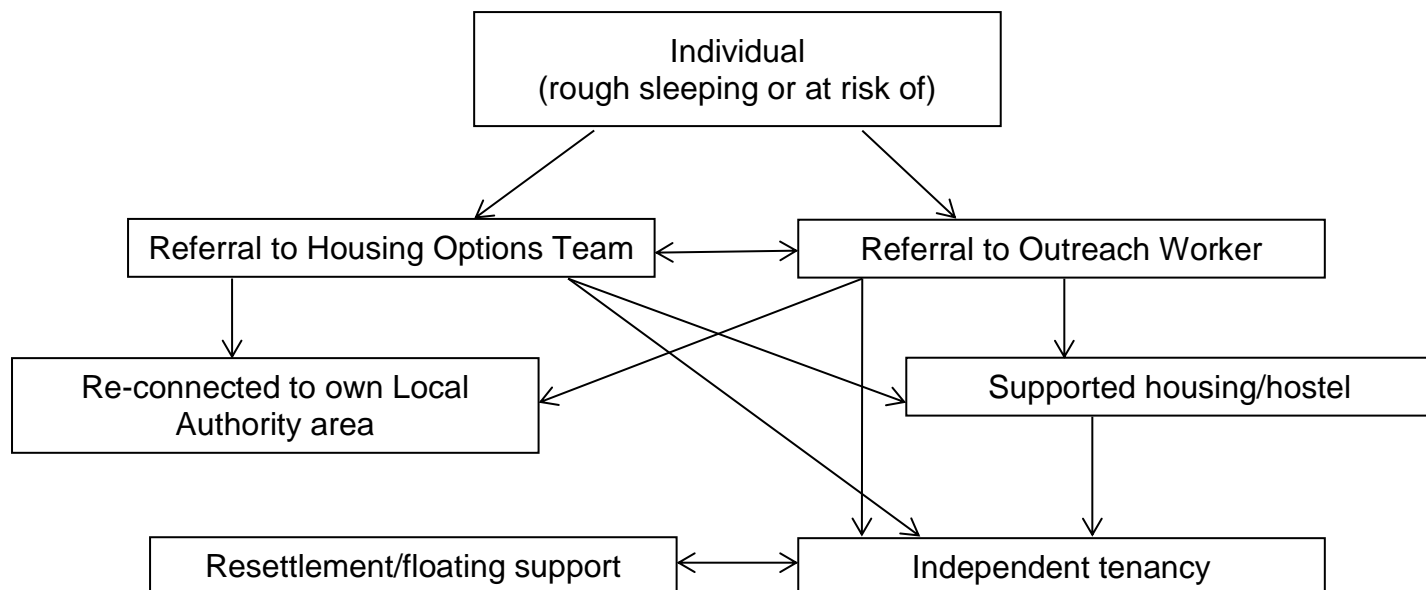
⁶ Inclusion Health Board 2009 and DH report 2012

⁷ The Salvation Army 2008

⁸ "Home and Dry" Crisis 2012

HELP AVAILABLE TO ROUGH SLEEPERS

27. A typical pathway for rough sleepers in relation to accommodation and advice would be (this does not include access to specialist provision such as substance misuse):



Housing Options Team

28. The Housing Options Team here at Fareham undertake a number of activities to assist those who are sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough. These activities include:

- Homelessness assessment and provision of accommodation for homeless people (subject to qualifying criteria)
- Provide advice and assistance for those seeking accommodation including accessing social housing, private sector housing and specialist/supported housing
- Give advice relating to rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords
- Mediate to help families stay together by resolving issues that may result in family members becoming homeless
- Mediate between landlords and tenants to resolve disputes
- Make referrals to support services such as tenancy support or money/debt advice

Homeless outreach service

29. As part of the national roll-out of “No Second Night Out”, Fareham

Borough Council in conjunction with Gosport Borough Council, Havant Borough Council and Two Saints Housing Association, successfully bid to recruit a full-time Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker. Working out of 101 Gosport Road (direct access hostel), the Outreach Worker engages with rough sleepers across the three boroughs. The Outreach Worker ensures that referrals are made to appropriate support agencies for issues such as drug/alcohol dependency, debt problems, and mental & physical health problems. The post also has a key responsibility to develop and maintain good relationships with the local community and to reduce anti-social behaviour through inter-agency working.

101 Gosport Road

30. The hostel at 101 Gosport Road is an 18 room direct access hostel run by Two Saints. There is 24 hour support on site and all residents are supported by a Key Worker for the duration of their stay. The team are dedicated to ensuring that every resident has the best possible chance of finding and maintaining appropriate accommodation and offer a range of support, advice and help including:

- Housing
- Numeracy and literacy
- Maximising income and help with managing money
- Access to specialist services including medical advice, addictions counselling and self-help groups
- Access to training, education or employment, participation in accredited life-skills programmes

31. Once ready for move-on, residents may move to their own privately rented accommodation, be housed through the Council's Housing Waiting List, live temporarily at Acton Lodge (see below), or supported lodgings where help and advice continues until they are ready to move onto a home of their own.

Acton Lodge

32. Run by Two Saints, Acton Lodge is a 10 room second stage supported housing move-on hostel. All residents are supported by a Key Worker who teaches budgeting, nutritional and cooking skills to prepare them for a return to independent living.

Kings Road

33. This 9 room hostel run by Two Saints provides a 'clean and dry' service for residents who wish to remain abstinent of alcohol and/or drugs following a detoxification programme. Again, supported by a Key Worker throughout the duration of their stay, residents are expected to participate in a structured programme of activities to learn appropriate skills to live an independent life and access to housing.

Informal Drop-in Centre

34. Some rough sleepers are unwilling to engage with services and will form social networks with others who choose to live on the streets, which can lead to issues such as begging, harassment and anti-social behaviour. The Outreach Worker faces real difficulty engaging with this group as they have formed close alliances with others who do not wish to address their issues. Two Saints have been awarded £5000 from the South Hants Regional Rough Sleeper Group Small Grants Programme to set up an informal drop-in centre which will aim to tackle some of the barriers faced by the Outreach Worker. Their proposal is for a one-stop access point, at least one day per week where rough sleepers can speak to the Outreach Worker and other agencies (such as Avalon and local faith and community groups) in an informal setting. The first steps to engagement will be to work with the rough sleepers, even if under the influence of substance, to build relationships and understand why they choose not to engage. It is hoped that this different approach will lead to some rough sleepers leaving the streets and moving into accommodation.

Basics Bank

35. The Basics Bank is run by The Friends of the Homeless which is a church run organisation and registered charity. It provides short term practical support to anyone in crisis by providing food and other items including toiletries and nappies. They also keep a small supply of clothing, sleeping bags and blankets.

36. It operates from a small office in the town centre between the hours of 1pm and 3pm, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The service is accessed via a referral system from organisations that come into contact with people who may require assistance, such as Citizens' Advice Bureau, Job Centre Plus, Social Services, Local Authorities, Mental Health services, Two Saints and the Probation service. People can access the service up to four times in one year – the Basics Bank advise that is this to prevent them from becoming dependant upon the service and also ensures that they can support as many people as possible.

37. The Basics Bank also provides hot food for rough sleepers through the provision of a voucher which they can exchange at the Fareham Traditional Fish and Chip shop for a meal and drink (approx. 2 per week). Additionally, in conjunction with Christians Together, they provide a free lunch every Sunday at the X-Perience Centre in the town centre which is attended by around 9 people each week.

Clothing Bank

38. Whilst no formal clothes bank exists in the Borough, the You Trust accepts donations of clothes, duvets and blankets at their unit in Fareham Shopping Centre. The donations are given to anyone coming to them in crisis i.e. fleeing domestic violence with no personal possessions, as well as those who are sleeping rough. They have also established links with a local major supermarket who donate their unwanted clothing stock. Two

Saints are keen to hold a store of underwear and socks that the Outreach Worker can access for rough sleepers however they are limited on space. Therefore we have linked the two organisations as the You Trust unit in the shopping centre has storage capacity.

Streetlink

39. www.streetlink.org.uk is a website that allows anyone to report the whereabouts of a rough sleeper by logging the details which are then forwarded to the Local Authority for that geographical area.
40. We have received a number of alerts via Streetlink and our initial response is to contact the Outreach Worker to establish if they are already known to him. If they are not known, the Outreach Worker will visit the reported location of the rough sleeper and offer advice and assistance to access accommodation and support.
41. To raise the profile of Streetlink, we arranged for adverts about the service to be displayed on all the Borough noticeboards, in libraries and community centres.

LEGISLATION

42. Members of the public and business owners in the town centre raise concerns about 'street culture' activities associated with rough sleeping such as begging and street drinking.
43. There are a wide range of enforcement measures available to the police and local authorities to tackle street culture, ranging from 'harder' forms of enforcement such as Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) and Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) contracts to 'softer' interventions such as Controlled Drinking Zones and Car Park Bans.
44. For those rough sleepers who persistently refuse to engage with services and continue to behave anti-socially, ASBOs have been sought and secured by our Community Safety Team and Fareham constabulary.
45. We have issued a number of banning notices to rough sleepers known to frequent the town centre multi-storey car parks to prevent those from sleeping, drinking alcohol and using drugs in these areas. These banning notices have proved to be successful as none of the recipients have returned to the car parks.
46. Fareham constabulary have created Public Protection Areas in and around the town centre where there are regular instances of anti-social behaviour caused by rough sleepers and/or street drinkers. These areas attract increased police patrols and subsequent robust action when anti-social behaviour is observed.

47. Fareham constabulary have a four step process to deal with begging. It was set up to be reasonable but robust. The four steps are:

1. Verbal warning
2. Written warning
3. Report for Summons
4. Arrest

48. This approach has proven successful and there are very few cases that have had to reach levels 3 and 4 as the majority of begging instances ceased at stages 1 or 2.

49. For enforcement to have a reasonable prospect of prompting a positive response from rough sleepers, it needs to be integrated with individually tailored and immediately available support. This must be in the form of interagency working and be articulated in such a way as to emphasise the positive options that are open to rough sleepers, such as appropriate accommodation and on-going support.

MULTI-AGENCY APPROACH

50. As detailed previously in this report, homelessness is a complex issue and many rough sleepers have a combination of needs. For example mental health problems combined with drug use which is then financed by begging and crimes such as shoplifting.

51. There are many key support services available, but these services, however effective, cannot work in isolation and the Working Group was interested to learn how these services interact.

52. The Group attended a meeting of the Town Centre Rough Sleeper Group. This group was set up by the Outreach Worker and Fareham Constabulary and comprises representatives from the Probation Service, Integrated Offender Management Team, Avalon drug and alcohol service together with Fareham Borough Council's Housing and Community Safety teams. This joint agency approach enables information to be shared and as a result has led to positive outcomes for many rough sleepers.

53. It has also been a valuable forum for discussions and actions relating to enforcement however it has been recently decided by the group that as the issues around rough sleeping have decreased, there was no longer a need to hold the monthly meetings.

54. The Member/Officer Working group, Fareham Borough Council's Housing Options Team and Two Saints however, are of a different opinion. It is felt the reason why street homeless has decreased and there are no major issues, is because of the co-ordinated approach by all the different agencies and the regular exchange of information.

GAPS IN PROVISION

55. The Group learned that there is no significant evidence to support a 'wet hostel' or 'wet day centre' in the Borough (such services are for street homeless heavy drinkers who aren't willing or able to stop drinking and whilst they can access hostel accommodation, they can have difficulty remaining in it as they are unable to adapt to the rules).
56. As detailed at point 22 above, people sleeping rough are 11 times more likely to have a mental health problem, which makes engaging with services and accessing accommodation even harder.
57. The Working Group was keen to hear from the Southern Mental Health service to clarify the services available for rough sleepers. Unfortunately, no one was available to address the group during the time of the review.
58. Maintaining regular contact with people suffering with a mental health problem can be difficult even when they are suitably housed, and can be almost impossible when they are of no fixed abode. Therefore access to outreach support and being linked in with support groups is vital for rough sleepers.
59. The services, support and pathways available to rough sleepers with mental health issues remain unclear, but it became apparent to the Group that work needs to continue to raise the need for more engagement from the mental health services.

ACTIONS

60. The Working Group agreed a set of action that they would like officers to progress:
 - i. The post of Outreach worker is seen as key to preventing and addressing rough sleeping in the borough and ideally this needs to become a permanent post and if possible not shared with Havant and Gosport.
 - ii. Following the Basics Bank presentation, the group talked about how we could offer advice and assistance to those that needed more than just the food parcels to help them. Therefore officers will explore producing an A5 leaflet with the contact details of agencies that can give help and support which can be put in the bag with the food.
 - iii. Raise knowledge and awareness of the Health and Wellbeing Centre in Fareham.
 - iv. Whilst it is currently not financially or physically viable to increase the number of bed spaces available at 101 Gosport Road, it is important to ensure that the best use of this resource is made. Fundamental to this is having successful 'move-on' plans. It is therefore essential that available funding is used for deposits, fees, rent in advance etc for those moving into the private rented sector. The Group recognised how our current Allocations Policy

aids 'move-on' and stressed that this must be taken into account when considering any future changes to the policy.

- v. There was a perception in the Group that the provision of mental health services to rough sleepers was weak. Therefore officers are urged to keep trying to engage with mental health service providers gain a full understanding of pathways for rough sleepers
- vi. The town centre multi-agency working group must continue to meet to ensure that rough sleeping remains high on the agenda of all agencies and the issue continues to be managed. It is recommended that the multi-agency working group meetings continue to be held, and be chaired/ organised either by the Council or the Outreach Worker.

61. Progress against these actions will be monitored by the Head of Housing, Revenues & Benefits and reported to the Panel in conjunction with the regular reporting mechanisms for the Homelessness Strategy.

CONCLUSION

62. It is unlikely that there will ever be a time where there are no rough sleepers in the Borough. However, in undertaking the review, the Group were satisfied that there is a significant amount of good work already being done to help those who wish to engage.

63. There are initiatives being put in place to try and remove some of the barriers which prevent some rough sleepers from engaging and the success of these will be monitored through the existing liaison arrangements between the Housing Options Team and Two Saints.

64. Some rough sleepers will continue to display behaviours which concern local residents and business owners in the Borough. These behaviours are likely to be linked to drug and/or alcohol dependency and/or mental health issues and can only be dealt with by a continued collaborative approach by relevant organisations and agencies.

65. The Homelessness and Housing Options Strategy 2014 – 2017 includes an action to adopt the No Second Night Out approach and aims to achieve this through the continuation and extension of the Outreach Worker post. Bids will also continue to be made to the Regional Rough Sleepers Group to support initiatives aimed at helping people to get off the streets.

Background Papers:

Reference Papers:

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Caroline Holmes. (Ext 4645)