

## HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY 21 OCTOBER 2020

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### PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY UPDATE

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#### Purpose of the Report

1. For Members to consider progress against the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and receive an update on homeless services provision during the Covid-19 lockdown period.

#### Summary

2. The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was approved by Cabinet in July 2019. **Appendix 1** of this report provides an update on the Strategy's action plan.
3. The Covid-19 lockdown period has placed significant demands on the Council's Housing Options service with occupation of bed and breakfast and emergency accommodation in the first quarter of 2020-21 over five times the amount for the same period last year.

#### Recommendation

4. It is recommended that Members note the contents of this report.

**Ian Williams**  
**Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services**

#### Background Papers

Background papers were not used in the preparation of this report.

Janette McMain: Extension 6945

S17 Crime and Disorder	There is no impact on the Council's Crime and Disorder responsibilities as a result of this report
Health and Well Being	Protecting the health and well-being of homeless people and rough sleepers is a key focus for the Council's strategy
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	There is no impact on Carbon Impact and Climate Change as a result of this report
Diversity	This report supports the promotion of diversity
Wards Affected	All wards will be affected by this report
Groups Affected	Homeless people, rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The report has no implications for the Sustainable Community Strategy
Efficiency	Increased demands on the Council's homeless services will have budget implications
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

#### Covid-19 Pandemic

5. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council has had to cope with a significant increase in demand for Homeless and Housing Options services. Whilst these services would normally work in a proactive way with clients to prevent homelessness, the increase in presentations and demand for accommodation has meant that services had to be more reactive to ensure that no-one was left homeless or having to rough sleep as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The risk of infection and the risk of not being able to self-isolate or shield are high for people in this situation.
6. As part of the Council's "Everybody In' agreement, anyone who presented to the Council as homeless, regardless of their need, was placed in emergency temporary accommodation. Our existing temporary accommodation provision includes temporary Council housing, emergency supported accommodation and out of area placements. For the early period of lockdown, we procured additional hotel and bed and breakfast accommodation, however this resource has now come to an end with effect from 31 July 2020.
7. As a result of our commitment to ensure everyone who was homeless was offered accommodation, for the first quarter of 2020-21 we placed 147 households in emergency bed and breakfast accommodation compared to 131

for the same period last year, as well as increasing our self-contained temporary accommodation from 11 to 15 units.

8. Whilst the overall numbers requiring emergency accommodation has only increased by 12% compared to last year, the pandemic has presented different challenges to the Council. Ordinarily, a person placed in emergency accommodation would only stay a few nights, before moving to more permanent accommodation. This then frees up that emergency accommodation for someone else. However, more recently people placed in emergency accommodation have had to stay there for several weeks at a time to ensure they remain safe. Sourcing permanent move on accommodation during the pandemic for these people has also been very challenging. As a result, for the first quarter of 2020-21 there were 1,451 nights in emergency accommodation recorded, compared to 232 for the same period in 2019-20 (a 525% increase). This has meant that our existing emergency accommodation provision was rapidly used up, meaning that we have had to find several alternatives (such as more expensive hotel and bed and breakfast accommodation).
9. Between April and June 2020, there has been a 153% rise in the number of people being placed in out of area accommodation compared to the same period last year. In general, these placements are less suitable for most homeless clients as they do not meet the support needs of the individual. We have also seen 65 repeat presentations of those individuals who are entrenched rough sleepers and tend to have higher and more complex risks, making them more difficult to place.
10. Our approach is shaped by the belief that every person matters and can, with the appropriate intervention, move from rough sleeping into long-term, sustainable accommodation. During the pandemic, we have found the options available to rehousing people from temporary accommodation has decreased. With the extra precautions needed, it is taking longer to find and secure properties and ensure the provision is available to support individuals with complex needs.
11. Despite the significant challenges of the pandemic everyone in need of emergency accommodation has been provided with somewhere to stay. In addition, most of the people placed in emergency accommodation have now moved on to more permanent housing. Housing Officers have proved typically resilient in dealing with these issues and ensuring that people who find themselves homeless or at the risk of homelessness continue to receive an excellent service.

12. **Table 1 - Emergency presentations for April to July 2020 compared to the same period in 2019**

	2020-21					2019-20
	April	May	June	July	Total	Total
Placed in emergency accommodation	40	39	44	24	147	131
Advice and assistance provided	15	11	47	57	130	122
Not homeless tonight so a full Housing Options appointment made	12	8	30	14	64	59
Did not attend accommodation or refused accommodation	3	9	14	10	36	32
Open to another local authority	4	5	9	6	24	3
<b>Total emergency presentations</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>347</b>

13. **Table 2 – Outcomes for the people placed in emergency accommodation for April to July 2020 (as at July 2020)**

	2020-21				
	April	May	June	July	Total
Planned move on to permanent accommodation	27	15	21	2	65
Planned return home	4	9	8	3	24
Planned move on to supported accommodation	9	6	7	2	24
Still in emergency accommodation	0	9	8	17	34
<b>Total placed in emergency accommodation</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>147</b>

**14. Table 3 – Top 5 reasons for presenting to the Housing Options service for April to July 2020 compared to the same period in 2019**

	2020-21					2019-20
	April	May	June	July	Total	Total
Put out by family and friends	30	31	28	25	114	117
Loss of current accommodation (other reason)	10	10	14	9	43	59
Relationship breakdown (not domestic abuse)	9	8	13	6	36	26
Domestic abuse	7	3	11	8	29	27
Left hospital or prison	5	4	4	5	18	18

**Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy**

15. Section 1(1) of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires housing authorities to carry out a homelessness review for their area and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of the review every five years. Darlington’s Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2019-2024 was approved by Cabinet on 9 July 2019.
16. The strategy consists of four main sections to satisfy the requirements of the regulations: A review, strategy, action plan and a new requirement to have a specific statement on rough sleeping. In recent years the Government has become increasingly concerned about the growth of rough sleeping. In 2018 the Government published its Rough Sleeping Strategy and later in December its supporting guidance required homelessness strategies to be rebadged as Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies.
17. There are five key supporting objectives to the Strategy:
- (a) Those at risk of homelessness will be made aware of and have access to the services they may need to prevent it.
  - (b) Suitable accommodation and support options will be provided for people who are, or who may become homeless.
  - (c) Rates of repeat homelessness will be reduced.
  - (d) The right support and services will be provided so that no person needs to sleep rough.
  - (e) Strong partnerships will be built to deliver our aims.

18. The emphasis on prevention is not new but the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 introduced new challenges and a requirement for much greater co-operation across agencies.
19. The Strategy also sets out a “holistic” approach to assessing needs, recognising that a solution may not be directly related to housing and again requiring greater co-operation with other agencies. Consequently, an important element of the Strategy is to establish a new monitoring group to help provide a focus for co-ordination.
20. Progress on the Strategy’s action plan is monitored through the multi-agency Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Forum and reported to Members through this Scrutiny Committee.
21. **Appendix 1** of this report provides an update on the Strategy’s action plan. Of the 28 actions in the Strategy:
  - (a) 9 have been completed.
  - (b) 12 are progressing and are on track to meet the timescales for delivery.
  - (c) 7 are progressing but are not on track to meet the timescales for delivery.
22. Overall, progress against the Strategy’s action plan is satisfactory. The main reason for the actions that are progressing but not on track to meet the timescales for delivery is due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Appendix 1

**Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy action plan update****1. Those at risk of homelessness will be made aware of and have access to the services they may need to prevent it**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Status</b>
1.1 Establish an effective Duty to Refer	All information on the website and awareness raised with other partners	Complete
1.2 Improve Needs assessment to address individual issues	Gateway in place with holistic needs assessment	Complete
1.3 Improve information on the website	All information is on the website and regularly updated	Complete
1.4 Increase use of social media	Regular updates and information now available through social media	Complete
1.5 Address issues around discharges from hospital that lead to homeless applications	This work started prior to the Covid-19 and attendance at regular meetings with Health services is taking place	Ongoing and on track
1.6 Reduce risk of young people becoming homeless	Practice Support Programme and joint working protocol in place with Children's Services. The recommendations from the MHCLG needs to be fed back into the joint protocol and updated	Ongoing and on track
1.7 Improve Support to people with mental health issues	This was to identify any gaps in provision and will be part of the commissioning thematic review which has been delayed by Covid-19	Ongoing and on track

**2. Provide suitable accommodation and support options for people who are, or who may become homeless**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Status</b>
2.1 Develop the allocations process to meet the needs of the Homelessness Reduction Act	This will be delivered with the new Allocations IT system, due to go live in November 2020	Ongoing and on track
2.2 Maintain and if possible, improve access to private sector housing	Work is ongoing with the Private Sector Housing team around bringing empty properties back into use and improving property conditions	Ongoing and on track

2.3 Improve access to private sector housing for those who have difficulties funding a bond	Bond scheme in place and DWP to attend forum when required	complete
2.4 Address the housing and support implications of the Homelessness Reduction Act	This will be part of the commissioning thematic review which has been delayed by Covid-19	Ongoing and on track
2.5 Review existing support contracts	This will be part of the commissioning thematic review which has been delayed by Covid-19	Ongoing and on track
2.6 Support the development of appropriate supported housing	This will be part of the commissioning thematic review which has been delayed by Covid-19	Ongoing and on track
2.7 Address the challenges of Universal Credit	Effective links with DWP maintained and good quality information is available to those who need it	Complete

### 3. Reduce rates of repeat homelessness

Action	Comments	Status
3.1 Improve the chances of people avoiding repeat homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on the website.</li> <li>• No First Night Out initiative delivered.</li> <li>• Joint working with other services.</li> <li>• Regular begging meetings.</li> <li>• Good pathways from prison with Project Beta and Through the Gate</li> </ul>	Complete
3.2 Address the issues of those who have the most challenging behaviour	This will be part of the commissioning thematic review which has been delayed by Covid-19	Ongoing and on track
3.3 Identify and address the needs of those who are vulnerable but not eligible for additional support	Issues being addressed through regular meetings with Adult Social Care and Housing	Ongoing and on track
3.4 Analyse case management for occurrence of repeat homelessness	Ongoing monitoring taking place and highlighted an increase of repeat homelessness during the Covid-19 pandemic	Ongoing and on track



3.5 Analyse overall approach to repeat homelessness	Using the Gateway system to track “customer journey” and developing new responses to improve the process	Ongoing and on track
3.6 Recognise the specific needs of those with dual diagnosis	Currently working with Health services to address this issue	Ongoing and track

#### 4. Provide the right support and services so that no person needs to sleep rough

Action	Comments	Status
4.1 Reduce the number of people sleeping rough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular begging meetings</li> <li>• Street link service</li> <li>• Information on the website</li> <li>• No First Night Out</li> <li>• Have a heart campaign</li> <li>• Outreach service</li> <li>• Bi-monthly rough sleeper counts</li> </ul>	Complete
4.2 Reduce the number of people sofa surfing	Covid-19 has given us an opportunity to look at this cohort and try to work with them. All the services listed above are in place, including the Duty to Refer. Awaiting the new Allocations IT system, due to go live in November 2020	Ongoing and on track
4.3 develop a new preventative approach to those rough sleeping	All the services listed above are in place, including the Duty to Refer. Awaiting the new Allocations IT system, due to go live in November 2020	Ongoing and on track
4.4 Improve response to those who rough sleep	All the services listed above are in place. Housing First project in development	Ongoing and on track
4.5 Review pathways to independence	This will be part of the commissioning thematic review which has been delayed by Covid-19	Ongoing and on track

#### 5. Build a strong partnership to deliver our aims

Action	Comments	Status
5.1 Support and improve partnership development planning and information exchange	Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Forum established	Complete

5.2 Improve partnership working	As above. Further partnership working between third sector organisations and commissioning to be developed	Ongoing and on track
5.3 Improve internal Council joint working	Regular meetings taking place between Adult Social Care and Housing	Complete