

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Update – June 2020

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Solutions**



The Challenge – pre COVID



Welfare Reform




Housing and
Planning Act 2016



Inaccessible
Private Rented
Sector

Losses as a result
of Welfare Reform

£ 640 households
capped



Service Specific Challenges – pre COVID

- Previous high levels of temporary accommodation and B&B use – high of 126 in Temporary Accommodation (TA) in August 2019
- High homelessness demand compared to the size of the council – presentations of around 100 per week pre COVID
- Main homelessness demand comes from private rented section (PRS) eviction, family/ friends no longer willing accommodate and Domestic Abuse
- Supply and demand issue for longer term housing creating homelessness and reducing move on opportunities
- Private rented sector not easily affordable for those people on Local Housing Allowance rate
- Entrenched rough sleepers with complex support needs
- Silo's remain across the wider economy on preventing and relieving homelessness



COVID Challenges

- Protecting rough sleepers and providing suitable emergency accommodation
- Providing rapid response and support for hospital discharges to ensure beds are freed up
- Moving people from accommodation with shared facilities to self contained when in our own TA or someone in a household has COVID
- Providing interim accommodation for people awaiting asylum decisions
- Accommodating where friends and family no longer willing to accommodate due to COVID risks/ concerns
- Supporting PRS tenants who are in arrears and at risk of illegal eviction or will be subject to evictions when the freeze ends
- Ensuring people in Bed and Breakfast (B&B) have access to food during the lockdown
- Planning for demand from prison release programme
- Keeping the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) process moving where possible to minimise stay in TA to provide housing for those most in need
- Planning move on options for those now placed in TA
- Change to operational practice to maintain business as usual



COVID Response

Planning

- Started planning very early on and before lockdown restrictions came into effect
- Held void properties to ensure we had sufficient emergency accommodation
- Contacted all customers in accommodation with shared facilities and B&B to advise them of support and to encourage early contact if symptoms start
- Transition of operational service practice to homeworking with little impact on the customer
- Planned to reduce CBL and property lettings but not to stop at any stage

Rough Sleepers

- Provided emergency COVID information and supply packs to all known rough sleepers
- Engaged with all known rough sleepers to ensure they had somewhere safe to stay – we accommodated an additional 9 rough sleepers during COVID on top of ensuring the 17 already housed were safe (41% increase in engagement)
- Worked with CCTV, Police and Environmental Protection Officers to immediately respond to reports of rough sleepers with an offer of TA
- To date we have provided a longer term housing offer to three of the nine rough sleepers newly engaging



COVID Response

Hospital discharge

- Worked with hospital colleagues to develop fast path referral process
- Provided mobile phones to all acute hospital sites in Sandwell to enable the customer/ staff to contact us directly
- Provided 24 hour contact details
- Dealt with all requests to support discharge in a timely manner

Asylum and Immigration

- Seen demand from around 12 households who had historically received negative decisions and have now presented needing accommodation. We have supported these with 7 requiring emergency accommodation whilst awaiting section 4 appeal decisions
- Continued to support four individuals who were accommodated under Severe Weather Emergency Planning (SWEP)
- Working in partnership with SMP and Serco to ensure we are supporting people. We are planning for an influx of demand when current freeze ends and households need to be accommodated from SERCO accommodation



COVID Response

Domestic Abuse

- We have a key worker who picks up all Domestic Abuse related cases and checks capacity with refuges and providers on a daily basis.
- We have had sufficient capacity to date with some spaces still available – demand has not increased to date
- Worked with education to ensure children have access to appropriate learning material and home schooling support – delivered packs to around 100 children in all TA

Temporary Accommodation

- Ensured sufficient capacity to deal with the predictable demand areas including Rough Sleepers, Hospital Discharge end of NASS and Homeless on the day.
- Secured an additional B&B provider who is remaining open and secured a second who will reopen if we have sufficient demand.
- Overall, we have reduced the use of TA and B&B and have options in place to further reduce TA use.
- Holding a number of properties of own stock and Home Options West Midlands as contingency and this can be flexed as required

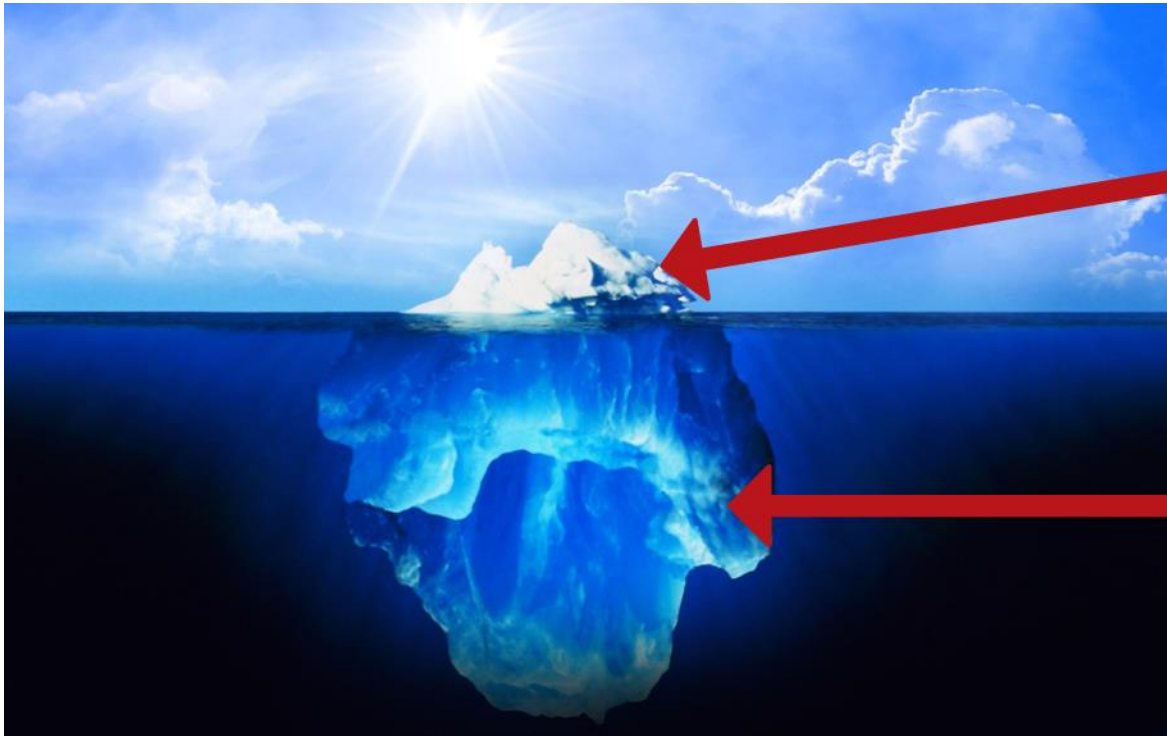


COVID – positive outcomes

- Due to reduced demand in homelessness presentations, the service has been able to reduce backlogs/ open caseload by 50%
- Engagement from rough sleepers has increased by 41% and we have been able to house an additional three rough sleepers during this time
- Opportunity to build on relationships with the PRS and are providing pre-emptive support to all parties with arrears issues due to COVID
- Improved working with PRS and wholly accommodated a 13 bed House of Multiple Occupation served a notice with offers of new accommodation in PRS properties. These households required TA for a handful of days only
- Working with landlords on an incentive model (Secure and Sustain) and currently exploring an offer of 100 properties
- Due to maintaining CBL and property listings (reducing to fortnightly at the peak and returning to business as usual in May) we have been able to continue on our TA reduction journey during the pandemic. This is in contrast to many other councils.
- We have reduced TA from a high of 126 in August 2019 to 74 as at the latest position
- B&B is at the lowest level in the last two years and has halved from the peak level



Homelessness Next Steps – changing our approach



Rough Sleepers
Homeless Presentations
At risk of homelessness

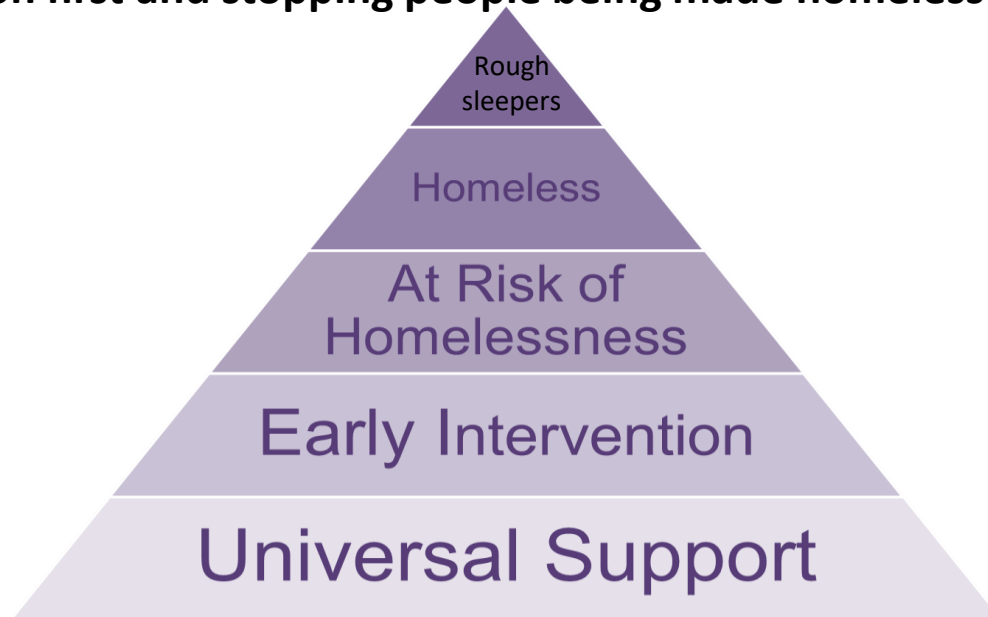
Early intervention/
prevention



Homelessness Next Steps – Strategic Vision and what we need from you

We cannot fix a national housing crisis alone. What we can do is deploy our collective assets and capacities in a different way:

Putting prevention first and stopping people being made homeless in the first place



Homelessness Next Steps – Strategic Vision and what we need from you

- Not just a housing issue
- Closely linked with complex and chaotic life experiences:
 - Mental ill health, substance misuse problems, prison/ care system experience
 - Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) are part of most street homeless people's life histories
 - Severe health inequalities, poorer health and wellbeing, and lower life expectancy
 - Worklessness and skills and education



Homelessness Next Steps – Progress so far

- Developed a PRS incentive model (Secure and Sustain) to develop increased housing options for our customers
- Developing a new Prevention and Move on Toolkit – we will need help from our partners in pulling this capacity together
- Exploring IT solutions to reduce bureaucracy and to ensure our time with customers is focussed on support
- Understanding the real problems to solve so we can tailor effective personalised housing plans
- Developing a new Rough Sleeper operating model to create single piece end to end flow – based on key worker model
- Mapping of all rough sleeper provision (3rd sector and agency) in the borough to carry out a gap analysis and to identify a future roadmap to meet needs



Homelessness Next Steps –

Developing and enhancing partnerships

- Continue work to improve relationships with internal and external partners – the Homelessness Forum will support this
- Work to understand the whole homelessness system through building a whole system picture – cross economy
- Understanding customer case studies to identify commonality and root cause
- Work with partners to design an early intervention/ real prevention model
- Join up commissioning across the wider economy to improve value for money and impact



Homelessness Next Steps – The emerging role of partners

Managing demand for services

Encourage people to do more for themselves

Connect up support – holistic view

Identify issues across services earlier

Change the way we deliver services

Review everything across council and partners

Ensure policies, procedures and strategies are aligned

Flexible and Timely Commissioning

Working together

Working with communities to design services together

Share data and intelligence

Supporting people to work differently



Any Questions?

