

Housing and Economy Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 2 November 2017

Homelessness – Winter Readiness Update Report

Item number	7.12
Report number	
Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	
Council Commitments	

Executive Summary

An update on the services that are available over the winter period, for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Homelessness – Winter Readiness Update Report

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Committee notes the content of the report.
- 1.2 An update on the use of services will be provided to the Housing and Economy Committee on 18 January 2018.

2. Background

- 2.1 To ensure that rough sleeping is minimised in the city, particularly during the winter months, the Council and its partners work together to provide a range of service to support vulnerable people.
- 2.2 In 2016/17, 3,386 households were assessed as homeless in Edinburgh. Eighty-one of these people reported having slept rough the previous night.
- 2.3 The Council is committed to minimising rough sleeping and have scheduled a series of rough sleeping counts to assess the levels of need in the city. In August 2017, a rough sleeping count was conducted jointly with Streetwork, Cyrenians and Turning Point and 53 people were identified as rough sleeping. All rough sleepers with whom the teams engaged were provided with information about local services and how to access support.
- 2.4 Following this rough sleeping count, there was a significant increase in the number of people presenting as homeless, following a period of rough sleeping, which highlights improved access to services.

3. Main report

- 3.1 The Council operates an out of hours homelessness service, with a free phone number. This service operates outside standard Council opening times and ensures that people can access temporary accommodation, if required, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, year-round.
- 3.2 When people access the out of hours service, a short assessment is completed, and where eligibility for service is established if required and capacity allows, accommodation will be offered.

- 3.3 During periods of cold weather, the Council operates a winter contingency where if the temperature, or the “feels like” temperature, reaches zero degrees Celsius or below, then accommodation will be offered to anyone who is homeless and requires it, even if they are not eligible for a service.
- 3.4 During the period 9 October 2017 to 22 April 2018, Bethany Christian Trust will operate care shelters.
- 3.5 A range of church halls will be used for this purpose and generally the capacity provided will be around 45 beds. However, Bethany is actively looking to increase the capacity for the peak period, 1 December 2017 to 28 February 2018, to around 60 beds if possible.
- 3.6 People can access the shelters from 9.30pm and will be provided with a two-course hot meal, a bed space and breakfast, before the shelters close at 7am.
- 3.7 To provide support to people using the shelters, a range of partner agencies provide staff who regularly attend, such as:
- Streetwork – will engage with existing service users or people new to the city. They will also direct people to the Holyrood Hub where they can access showers, laundry facilities and storage, in addition to further advice and support.
 - Edinburgh Access Practice – a practice nurse and Community Psychiatric Nurse visit the shelters. They provide medical advice if appropriate and will encourage people staying in the shelter to register with a GP.
 - Shelter – will attend to provide legal advice to shelter users and support appeals around their rights to housing.
 - Homelessness Services – council officers will attend the shelters, where they will provide housing options advice and advise people on their eligibility for services.
 - Rock Trust – will support any young people accessing the service. They will also provide information around their Night Stop Service which would positively divert them from future use of the shelters.
 - Crisis – will attend to offer support services that can assist in getting people into accommodation, claim benefits and finding work.
 - General Practitioners – will engage with shelter users on site, providing advice where required and signpost to relevant GP and medical services.
 - Bethany Visiting Support – available to provide advice at the point of contact but also to work with any service users, who are willing to engage in support, to ensure that they receive an appropriate service from the right provider.
- 3.8 The Council will work with partner agencies to ensure that anyone who requires a statutory homeless service or housing advice is routed from the shelters to the Homelessness Services teams and we ensure that we hold appointment spaces each morning to ensure staff are available to provide this service to people who have accessed the care shelters the previous night.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 A reduction in rough sleeping.
- 4.2 Care shelters operate within capacity.
- 4.3 An increase in people who are rough sleeping accessing statutory services.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 N/A

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 N/A

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 N/A

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 N/A

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 N/A

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 N/A

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11. Appendices
