

Health and Wellbeing Board Meeting

Item Title – Homeless Reduction Act 2018

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SUMMARY:

Rough sleeping can have a significant impact on someone's physical and mental health. It is the most serious and obvious form of homelessness, exposing people to physical hardship and can greatly affect mental health. Prolonged experiences of rough sleeping can increase the likelihood of a person developing additional complex needs, which can act as a barrier to moving away from street homelessness. The more complex needs someone has, the more support the person may require to secure accommodation.

REPORT:

Shropshire Council's Housing Options Team are the lead member of the Rough Sleeper Task Force, a multi-agency response to support those identified as rough sleepers. The task force relies on partner agencies and the public for intelligence, working with task force members to ascertain vital information. The task force members collaborate to explore the intelligence provided in order to plan a front-line response to those identified as rough sleepers, with the aim supporting someone rough sleeping into a safer environment away from street homelessness. The Housing Options Team commission a Rough Sleeper Outreach Service, a key member of the taskforce and are a rapid response to reports of rough sleepers with specialist support workers who work to engage with those reported and provide ongoing support to address barriers that the complexity of rough sleeping can pose.

Annually, Local Authorities are required to provide rough sleeper figures to Central Government. Following the recommended guidelines, Shropshire conducted a rough sleeper estimate on the 22nd November 2017, being a 'typical night'. Due to the rurality and significant rough sleeper intelligence through the Rough Sleeper Task Force, Shropshire Council felt confident in conducting an accurate estimate. On the 25th January 2018, the Department for Communities and Local Government released the 2017 rough sleeping figures for England, which included 13 rough sleepers in Shropshire Council's Local Authority area. At the last Rough Sleeper Task Force group there were 20 verified rough sleepers known in the County, the majority of whom are in Shrewsbury.

Shropshire Council offer rough sleepers accommodation provision over the Winter months, outside of statutory obligations. This provision offers stability and security to rough sleepers identified by Shropshire's taskforce, presenting different opportunities to engage with rough sleepers. Support is provided to explore a range of accommodation options in an attempt to find suitable, permanent accommodation away from street homelessness. During the winter months all verified rough sleepers will be offered accommodation, although some will still refuse and choose to spend their time on the streets.

The Homeless Outreach triage Service (HOST) is a multi-agency approach to rough sleeping. The team consist of numerous agencies including Housing, Shrewsbury Ark, Mental Health, Police and Shropshire Recovery Partnership. We also hope to have a GP based service on board in the future. The team visit Rough Sleepers daily in the week, with Shrewsbury Street Pastors assisting during weekends. Each agency committed to HOST has offered a designated day per week to cover. The aim is for a small group of 2 or 3 officers to be attending every day, with the agencies being responsible for replacement staff during times of leave or sickness. It is imperative there is no lone working with this cohort of clients. It is recognised that no one agency can meet the needs of those rough sleeping. The team attend those verified rough sleepers who may already be known to services as well as those who have been reported via Streetlink. The aim is to build a relationship and work with individuals to get them the help and support they require as quickly as possible. It is recognised that just having a roof over your head is not enough, hence the multi-agency approach. The team will discuss an individual's needs as well as the impact they may be having on local residents and businesses. The team reinforce the need to engage with agencies that can help them off the streets and visit daily to ensure the individuals realise the support is there ongoing. The key members of HOST recently received a West Mercia Police Superintendent's Commendation in recognition of the outstanding work undertaken to date.

Shrewsbury Street Pastors is a volunteer-based initiative with a mandate to be a tangible Christian influence in Shrewsbury. The 34 Christian volunteers are drawn from 17 churches from eight different denominations, and work in partnership with Team Shrewsbury, the Rough Sleeper Task Force and HOST. It was started in November 2011 to help prevent further river deaths. They voluntarily patrol the streets of Shrewsbury until the early hours, coming to the rescue when people are most vulnerable. For some it is a listening ear and somewhere to shelter from the cold, while for others it's a pair of flip flops and a lollipop. Now Shrewsbury Street Pastors have been recognized for their work and handed The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service is the highest award given to local volunteer groups across the UK to recognize outstanding work done in their own communities. It is the MBE for volunteer groups. The Shrewsbury Street Pastors will receive the award from the Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire Sir Algernon Heber-Percy later this summer.

The Rough Sleeper Task Force group have developed an Alternative Giving scheme within Shrewsbury town centre. The aim is to utilise funding from the Alternative Giving scheme to support projects that work with homeless people in the county to help them off the streets. All money given will be spent on charitable work to help those in need and have to date been used to fund deposit and rent in advance for a number of rough sleepers wanting to access private rented accommodation. The scheme seeks to change the way people donate money to those who are rough sleeping and to support those charities which help the homeless, rather than to give directly to people on the street.

The Housing Options Team remain committed to ending rough sleeping within the County and whilst it is recognized that this is not a simple task, will continue to explore housing initiatives and provide support to meet the needs and complexities of those sleeping rough.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

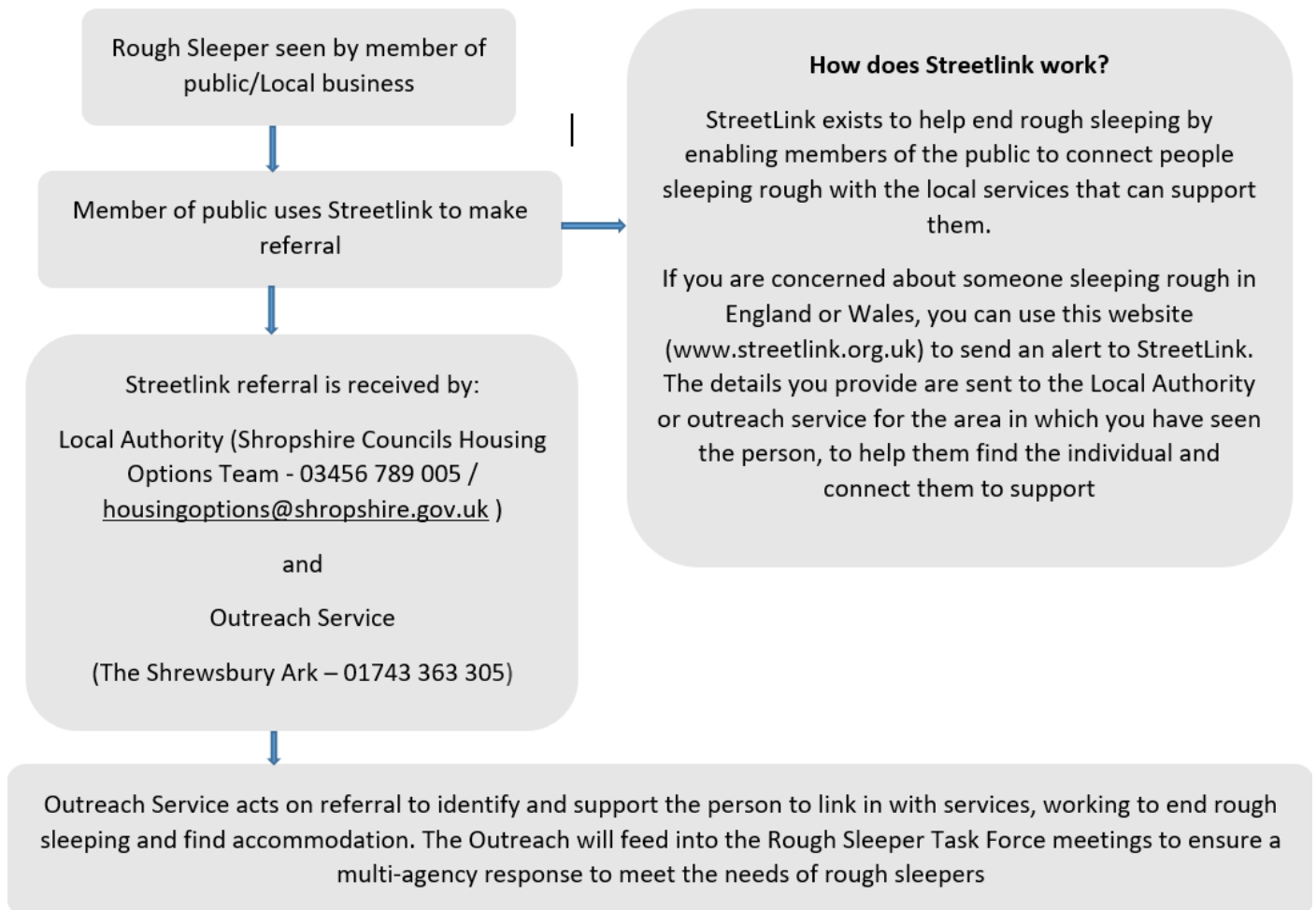
This report is being distributed for information only. Therefore, the HWBB is requested to note the work being undertaken in regard to rough sleeping in the county. There is a hope that all agencies will seek to work with the Rough Sleeper Task Force group and HOST through multi agency partnership working. All agencies are always welcome to form part of the HOST rota and attend rough sleepers daily to assist and support.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Lee Chapman
Local Member n/a – relevant to whole county
Appendices Appendix A – How to report a rough sleeper

APPENDIX A

Rough Sleeper Referral Tool for public and professionals

If you are a member of the public or a local service and wish to make the Local Authority and services aware of a rough sleeper, please find the process below:



The role of the Outreach Service

The Shrewsbury Ark Outreach Service aims to help people who are sleeping rough within Shropshire by going into the community, responding to referrals and supporting rough sleepers to try to secure accommodation. The Outreach reacts to reports of rough sleepers on the next working day, locating the person of concern, providing support and connecting them with vital services with the aim of ending the lifestyle of rough sleeping.

Information taken from Shropshire Council resources, Crisis and Homeless link.