



Committee and Date

**Communities Overview
Committee**

28 October 2020

Item

Public

Support for people sleeping rough in Shropshire

Responsible officer

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1.0 Summary

1.1 This report provides an overview of homelessness in Shropshire and a summary of the support being provided to those individual sleeping rough within the county borders.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Committee members to:

Note the contents of the report especially the Next Steps Accommodation Programme and work planned to safeguard those sleeping rough during the winter.

3.0 Background – Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation

3.1 The Housing Options Team workload has increased steadily for approx. 2 years. This is in part due to the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 and an additional duty to all clients who require advice and assistance as Priority Need and Local Connection is invisible during Prevention stage.

3.2 Number of households presenting to Council in housing need
(Sept 2019-Sept 2020) = 3369

3.3 Number of households placed into temporary accommodation
(Sept 2019-Sept 2020) = 613

3.4 Number of households to whom the Council accepted a full homeless duty
(Sept 2019-Sept 2020) = 177

3.5 Top 3 reasons for homelessness in Shropshire:

- Relationship breakdown
- Family eviction
- Loss of private rented accommodation

3.6 As of 05.10.20 the number of households in B&B = 127.

- Of these 10 are families and 107 are single households.
- At the peak of C19 lockdown we had 183 households in B&B.

3.7 As of 05.10.20 the number of households in temporary accommodation = 101.

- Of these 60 are families and 51 are single households.

3.8 As of 01.04.20, for the financial year 2019/20, the loss of subsidy to Shropshire Council using B&B and temporary accommodation was £949,064.

3.9 Looking at a midyear estimate for 20/21, the prediction is that homeless expenditure by the Council will be £3,585,588 with a loss in subsidy of £2,251,447.

4.0 Background – Rough Sleepers

4.1 Rough Sleeping is the visible side of homelessness, although is only a small part of the work that Housing Services undertake.

4.2 In 2019 Shropshire Council was successful in being awarded funding from MHCLG Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) Funding. This meant we were able to set up a dedicated rough sleeper team consisting of 1 x Coordinator, 3 x Inreach / Outreach Workers and 1 x support worker from Temporary Accommodation who works across both teams.

4.3 The RSI funding was in part due to a year on year increase in the numbers of rough sleepers across Shropshire. The figures below are taken from the snapshot estimate undertaken each year by all Local Authorities. Our count this year is taking place on 5th/6th November 2020.

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
10	13	10	12	10	7	13	13	21	16

4.4 As of 05.10.2020 we had 22 verified rough sleepers on the streets of Shropshire. 17 of these are in the Shrewsbury area. We have an additional 9 clients who were rough sleeping but were accommodated under Covid19 ‘Everyone In’ and who are still in B&B waiting to be moved on.

4.5 Of the 22 individuals on the streets there are 17 males and 5 females. 4 individuals have issues with their Mental Health, 5 with Substance Misuse, 3 with Alcohol and 8 with a mixture of all 3. There are 2 individuals who do not need support with any of these aspects (as far as we know at the moment).

4.6 Referrals into the Rough Sleeper Team has been steadily increasing with 80 separate individuals in the last 6 months

- Streetlink – 36
- Referrals – 44

5.0 Support for Rough Sleepers

5.1 The Shropshire Council Rough Sleeper Team operate out of 70 Castle Foregate. This is an 11-bed hostel leased from Severnside. We currently operate as a 9 bed hostel due to need for office space and limited sharing of bathroom facilities due to C19.

5.2 The aim of the hostel is to operate as a short-term base for rough sleepers to be housed whilst we assess their needs and ensure they have the support needed. The aim will be to move them into either a temporary accommodation unit or their own accommodation where in reach support can be provided ongoing.

5.3 During the C19 lockdown, Shropshire Council and Shrewsbury Ark worked with the Prince Rupert hotel in Shrewsbury to house all rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping under the Governments ‘Everyone In’ Scheme.

- 5.4 At the peak there were 33 individuals housed at the Prince Rupert. Some of these individuals have opted to leave the accommodation as the restrictions lessened and unfortunately some have been asked to leave due to their behaviour. However, there has been a significant number of positive moves and support is still being provided by both Shropshire Council and Shrewsbury Ark where required.
- 5.5 At appendix 1 of this report is a number of links to national and local reports of the work undertaken by Shropshire at The Prince Rupert.
- 5.6 Shrewsbury Ark and Shropshire Council operate an Outreach Service 5 days a week. This involves members of staff and volunteers attending reports of rough sleepers across the county to offer advice and assistance. Attendance is expected within the next working day.
- 5.7 There is also a weekly operational meeting jointly chaired by Shropshire Council and Shrewsbury Ark where all known rough sleepers and those who are continuing to be supported are discussed by the relevant agencies. The aim is to ensure that everyone is up to date with current circumstances and that the correct support can be provided when needed.
- 5.8 We are aware that sometimes people will not want to work with the Council as we are authority. In these instances, they often have a positive relationship with Shrewsbury Ark staff. As much as possible we allow individuals to work with who they are comfortable with as the outcome is more important than who does what and when.
- 5.9 There is also a monthly managers meeting held between agencies and I am in the process of setting up a task force forum which will cover homelessness in general and meet on a quarterly basis.

6.0 Shropshire Council's Homeless App

- 6.1 Shropshire Council's housing Services and ICT teams developed an app to help arrange support for the people who are homeless. The app has been developed internally using Microsoft's PowerApps platform, that is part of the Microsoft package many councils already buy into
- 6.2 The Homeless app allows housing outreach workers to add information about a person's situation (in real time) when they encounter them rough sleeping on the streets: a central team then use the information to seek support.
- 6.3 Previous methods for supporting those in need relied on two outreach staff recording details of the homeless person on paper, with that piece of paper then returned to the office at the end of their shift for another team to find support. The previous process was far slower than the new, with the main and most important difference being the time taken to provide a package of support – which can be as little as 10 minutes.

7.0 Shropshire Recovery Partnership

- 7.1 Support for rough sleepers who are dependent on drugs and / or alcohol is provided by Shropshire Recovery Partnership (SRP). SRP are commissioned by Shropshire Council.
- 7.2 SRP provides pharmacological and psychosocial treatment for people who are dependent on drugs and / or alcohol. There is a dedicated outreach worker in Shrewsbury who works with the homeless population and the Shrewsbury Ark. The primary function of this worker is to develop relationships with the homeless and break down barriers to treatment, offering a range of support including harm reduction, Hep C treatment and support to overcome dependence on drugs and alcohol.
- 7.3 Following the announcement of the national lockdown SRP worked quickly to risk assess all those who were currently on prescribed medication for opiate substitution treatment (OST). Due to the outreach work it was known that a number of people in this cohort were drug and /or alcohol dependent were not currently accessing support. It was recognised the lockdown could reduce the supply of drugs and /or alcohol leading to withdrawal, which in the case of alcohol, if not managed to correctly, could lead to serious illness or even death.
- 7.4 Working closely with the Shrewsbury Ark and Shropshire Council, SRP ensured staff were available to support the homeless in the Prince Rupert, as well as those housed temporarily in other accommodation. Several people who had not been known to service before the lockdown entered service during this time. Due to the lockdown, face to face assessments could not be conducted and social media and telephones were used. Where a medical appointment was needed the person was directed to a face to face medical appointment with the local clinical lead at Crown House, all services are COVID secure.
- 7.5 All staff operating in the Prince Rupert were trained in the use of naloxone, a drug that is used to temporarily reverse a drug overdose, in order to allow medical treatment and save life. Clean needles and syringes were also provided to reduce the spread of blood borne virus, such as Hepatitis C. The provision of naloxone and training was also offered to those staff in other accommodation used to support the homeless and those temporarily housed. Since the reopening of services, a substance misuse nurse provides a clinic on a weekly basis at the ARK.
- 7.6 A further pathway to treatment was strengthened for women who were fleeing domestic abuse during this time, with a dedicated worker allocated to the women's refuge. Again, this had to be undertaken by a digital assessment. This has also proved to be very successful with several referrals from the refuge and treatment started.

8.0 Safeguarding and Mental Health Support

- 8.1 The Adult Safeguarding Team (ASG) has the function of providing a countywide service to deal with referrals that involve harm to any person over the age of 18 in which the following criteria is met:
- The adult has care and support needs
 - The adult is experiencing or at risk of experiencing abuse or neglect
 - As a result of their care and support needs, they are unable to protect themselves against abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

The team works closely with partner agencies such as the police, CCG, providers, social work teams, the NHS etc.

8.2 The Community Mental Health / AMHP Service (County Wide) is committed to promoting positive mental wellbeing, independence and resilience in our community within the framework of the Care Act 2014, Mental Health Act 1983 & Mental Capacity Act 2005. They continue to work closely with the Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust (MPFT), and other partners. The Mental Health Social Work Team provide social care assessment for people with functional mental health difficulties.

9.0 Working with voluntary and community organisations – Shrewsbury Ark

9.1 Shrewsbury Ark are a volunteer led charity governed by 10 volunteer trustees. They have 2 patrons (Marcus & Jenny Bean and Chris Walker.)

9.2 The Shrewsbury Ark operate a day centre for rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping from 10 Castle Foregate in Shrewsbury. The Day Centre services consist of everything from individual support, a listening ear, supporting people to attend appointments and applying for ID ... The list is endless.

9.3 They work in partnership with individuals who access the Ark & support them to engage with other services such as 'We are with you', Medical care, Housing Options, SALUTE, Counselling, Social Work teams, Probation, Solicitors and local police.

9.4 They provide breakfast, lunch, shower facilities, emergency clothing/underwear, sleeping bags, ruck sacks, toiletries, emergency food parcels and ladies & men's welfare packs. They assist with help to access transport to reduce barriers attending hospital, court and visiting family. There is access to services such as telephones, computer, printers and a photocopier as well as operating as a c/o address where needed.

9.5 Shrewsbury Ark operate a number of inhouse support services – these are listed below:

- GP Clinic – must be registered with Riverside medical practice but will see individuals as a temporary patient, people who are homeless and accessing the Ark are registered with the practice if appropriate to do so.
- SALUTE – Therapeutic support service (funded by the Ark)
- Counselling – The Ark fund counselling sessions for people accessing and registered with our service
- Shropshire Recovery Partnership – Drug & Alcohol Service Nurse Practitioner

9.6 They also arrange several mindful activities such as:

- Kyles Allotment – an allotment open to anyone who is interested in gardening, growing vegetables or just wanting to escape for an hour and be at one with nature. The allotment provides fruit and vegetables for the Ark Day Centre and also Palmers. The small project is supported by volunteers and staff.
- Football – football skills held at Shrewsbury Town Football club all are welcome supported by Shrewsbury Town in the Community
- Boxing – boxing skills and training held at The Grange all are welcome
- Art – Currently held away from the ark due to space all are welcome and they are currently planning an exhibition to coincide with mental health awareness' day & also world homelessness day in October.

10.0 Cold Weather Provision and Severe Weather Provision

- 10.1 Shropshire Council and partners are working through plans to ensure rough sleepers are supported in the coming winter months. All rough sleepers will be offered accommodation.
- 10.2 Between November and March, as temperatures begin to drop, the council along with The Shrewsbury Ark and other key partners will activate the Cold Weather Provision (CWP) plan, to support rough sleepers. Those who are sleeping rough, will have access to hot food, support and a warm place to stay both day and night when the cold winter temperatures kick in. This is not a Council statutory duty yet is something Shropshire Council has provided for many years.
- 10.3 For those who refuse the offer of CWP there will be an offer of Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) during times when the weather is considered severe. SWEP is run by a team of volunteers comprising of staff from both Shropshire Council and partner agencies such as Shrewsbury Ark and Shropshire Recovery Partnership. Each evening, housing officers visit all rough sleepers to remind them that this provision is available, and to encourage them to come in from the cold. Police, council, street pastors and others are also helping to ensure everyone is made aware that they do not need to be outside. Taxis are available for those who may be unable to travel easily to this facility.
- 10.4 However, despite every effort being made, some people will still choose to remain outdoors, and while we will not judge anyone's reasons for this, it is important to note that during this bitter weather, we will do everything possible to ensure that all rough sleepers are aware of this provision.

11.0 Funding

- 11.1 Due to the positive outcomes delivered by the 'Everyone In' Scheme during C19 Central Government has launched the Next Steps Programme (NSAP). The Programme makes available the financial resources needed to support local authorities and their partners to accommodate rough sleepers and provide long term ongoing support. It includes capital for property costs and an attached long-term revenue stream to ensure people are supported in their new tenancies.
- 11.2 In the first round of funding, Shropshire Council was successful in being awarded £123,500 to fund additional staff until 31.03.2021 as well as provide private rent incentives. The aim is to develop 75 new bedspaces through this funding.
- 11.3 We have also requested funding for 2 capital projects. The first being a renovation of a 13-bed hostel in Shrewsbury and the other being purchase from the open market of 5 one bed units. These will be in partnership with Severnside and STAR. There is also revenue funding attached to these projects to enable support to be provided.
- 11.4 There is expected to be additional funding rounds of the NSAP which Shropshire Council hopes to bid for, enabling additional bedspaces to be developed, reducing the use of B&B. This will mean better outcomes for those vulnerable people we support as well as a less expensive option for temporary accommodation for the authority.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

None

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Cllr Robert Macey – Portfolio Holder for Housing and Strategic Planning

Local Member

All

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Our work during Covid 19

Appendix 1 – Our work during Covid – The prince rupert

Videos:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWhn5GN_Muo&feature=share
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0aPoh8P8Ec&feature=share>
- <https://youtu.be/WtdAQ-VGmSs>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XgCfpcEd7fk&feature=share>

Articles:

- <https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/health/coronavirus-covid19/2020/08/22/locked-down-in-an-oasis-of-care-how-shrewsbury-hotel-became-a-lifeline-to-towns-homeless/>
- <https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/local-hubs/shrewsbury/2020/06/23/hotel-pledges-to-continue-helping-homeless/>
- <https://www.thecaterer.com/news/hotel-for-homeless-vows-provide-accommodation-as-long-as-needed>
- <https://supportshrewsbury.co.uk/in-the-headlines-the-prince-rupert-hotel-housing-shrewsburys-homeless/>

Radio:

- <https://www.google.com/amp/s/amp.lbc.co.uk/radio/presenters/eddie-mair/coronavirus-prince-rupert-hotel-housing-homeless-covid-19-awe/>