

Homelessness PAG meeting 6th November 2019

Rough Sleeping Update

Annual Rough Sleeping Estimate

There is currently no national mechanism for recording every person who sleeps rough in England. Rough sleeping figures are collected annually either by a count-based or evidence-based estimate, and a 'typical night' takes place between 1 October and 30 November.

In recent years Dover has carried out an evidence-based estimate. This is a snapshot assessment, based on evidence from the local authority and a range of external agencies, about the number of people sleeping rough in that LA area on a particular night.

Last year we returned the figure of 20 rough sleepers, an increase of 7 from the previous year. There had generally been a rise across the county which reflected a countrywide increase according to the organisation Homeless Link who the MHCLG tasks to gather and verify the information.

This ongoing increase in rough sleeping resulted in the Government producing its Rough Sleeping Strategy in August 2018 and a number of funding streams were made available, including the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) and Rapid Rehousing Pathway (RRP).

As part of our successful rough sleeping bids – both RSI and RRP, in conjunction with Folkestone & Hythe Council, we have been required to carry out bi-monthly counts, so this year, for our annual assessment, which we report to the MHCLG, we have decided to undertake a count-based estimate.

This is due to take place on the night of the 26th November and will be resourced by Porchlight and a range of volunteers, mainly from agencies involved with rough sleepers.

Rough Sleeping Related Bids Update

Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) 19/20

This bid received £175,000 and is funding:

1 x full time Outreach/Inreach worker (Dover)

1 x full time Outreach/Inreach worker (Folkestone and Hythe)

Rough Sleeping Coordinator to manage both of the bids

Mental Health specialist resource for Dover and Folkestone & Hythe

Rapid Rehousing Pathway - RRP Round 2 – 19/20

This bid received £244,713 and is based on funding for two specific elements: Supported Lettings and Navigators.

The bid is funding:

2 x Floating Support Workers (Dover)

2x Floating Support Workers (Folkestone and Hythe)

1 x Specialist Navigator - Drugs and Alcohol (to cover both districts)

1 x Specialist Navigator - Vulnerable Women (to cover both districts)

Private Rented Sector (PRS) Access Scheme – 18/19 and 19/20 (joint bid with FHDC and Thanet DC)

This bid received £63,250 for 2018/19 and £308,000 for 19/20.

This fund is focused on schemes that will enable better access to new private rented sector tenancies and/or support in sustainment of existing tenancies, for those who are, or are at risk of becoming homeless and rough sleeping.

The money is to alleviate both the numbers in temporary accommodation and single homelessness, including rough sleepers. Interventions can include providing rent or deposit guarantees/bonds or non-financial elements such as procurement and mediation.

Since the introduction of the scheme, Dover has spent just over £40k assisting a total of 41 households, including 18 single people. Of the 41, 10 were moved out of temporary accommodation.

Dover is leading on the two rough sleeping bids and FHDC is leading on the PRS bid.

Future Funding Opportunities

Confirmation of further funding has recently been announced. This new funding round combines the RSI and RRP into a single streamlined funding programme. This should make the application process simpler, and more flexible to meet local need and we will be working with our Rough Sleeping Adviser to look at possible initiatives to bid for.

In addition to the latest RSI/RRP funding pot, a further £10 million Cold Weather Fund is being made available to Councils and their partners. This is to provide swift interventions to rough sleepers in their area over the winter period, as well as enhancing existing services.

The Cold Weather Fund can be used to provide additional accommodation, for example through the private rented sector, providing spaces in existing supported housing projects and funding interventions such as B&B accommodation and emergency shelters.

Up to £1 million of the Cold Weather Fund will be available to providers and services that are not commissioned by local authorities. This element of the fund will be administered by Homeless Link who will ensure that the interventions are effective in supporting as many people as possible off the streets.

Severe Emergency Weather Provision (SWEP)

SWEP arrangements are triggered when the night time temperature is predicted to be zero degrees Celsius or below or when there are other severe weather conditions forecast.

During periods of cold weather, the forecast for Dover is checked daily on the Meteorological Office website.

As soon as the protocol is triggered, we contact our voluntary and statutory sector partners to advise that the SWEP is in place, with details of who to contact if they identify any rough sleepers. Our out of hour's service is also contacted to advise that the SWEP has been triggered.

Dover Outreach Centre (DOC) Winter Shelter

The DOC will once again be operating their winter shelter provision, working in partnership with six local churches providing the space for up to 15 people per night. The winter shelter is available from the beginning of December until the end of February, with the option of extending into the first two weeks of March depending on the weather.

Last year (18/19), Dover Council agreed grant funding of £10k for the Winter Shelter from the homelessness budget and a further £10k has been set aside for this year.

Homelessness Service Update

Staffing

There are currently six Housing Options Officers employed in the team, carrying a caseload of between 50 and 60 cases. This is in line with other Kent LAs since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA). In addition, we have two excellent apprentices who are proving to be a huge benefit to the whole team.

Following a programme of buying mainly former Right to Buy properties, we currently have a DDC owned stock of 40 properties that we use for homeless families as interim accommodation. Agreement was recently been given for the purchase of more properties and as a result, we were given approval to create a new post of Housing Offer-Interim Accommodation. We have recently recruited, with the officer starting mid November.

This post will be responsible for the housing management function of our own interim accommodation as well as managing the movement of households within temporary accommodation generally.

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