



Thursday, 19 September 2024

Cllr Virginia Moran, Cabinet Member
for Housing

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Update

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a comprehensive update on the status of homelessness and rough sleeping within South Kesteven. This report presents the latest picture, what our homelessness duties entail and provides details of existing interventions to address homelessness and rough sleeping.

Recommendations

That the Committee notes the latest update on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping within the South Kesteven area.

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication? No

What are the relevant corporate priorities? Connecting communities
Housing
Effective council

Which wards are impacted? (All Wards);

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report, which is to note.

Completed by: Paul Sutton Interim Head of Finance (Deputy 151)

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 There are no significant legal or governance implications arising from this report, which is for noting. The necessary legislative framework relating to homelessness and rough sleeping is referenced in the body of the report.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 Homelessness and rough sleeping remain a significant priority for South Kesteven District Council. While various strategies have been implemented to address these issues, recent data both locally and nationally indicates a persistent need for targeted interventions.
- 2.2 This report details the current situation, explores the challenges faced by the Council, and details the innovations being explored to tackle this ongoing issue.

3. Key Considerations

3.1 Homelessness

From January 2024 to August 2024 the Council has experienced a 4% increase in the number of homelessness presentations compared with the same period in 2023 and a 17% increase compared with the same period in 2022. The total number of households presenting as homeless, at risk of homelessness or in need of housing advice was 1,362 from January 2024 to August 2024, with 369 being accepted as statutorily homeless.

- 3.2 The Council currently has 299 active homeless cases with 62 households in temporary accommodation. This is a slight increase from the same period last year where the Council had 57 cases in temporary accommodation.

3.3 In 2023/24 the expenditure incurred on temporary accommodation was £501k against a budget of £467k. For 2024/25 Full Council approved an increase of the base budget from £50k to £200k for Temporary Accommodation recognising the pressure being placed on the Council to fulfil its statutory homelessness duty. Additional Homeless Prevention Government Grant funding of £268k has been received in 2024/25 which has increased the total budget for Temporary Accommodation to £468k.

Rough sleeping

3.4 The Council's most recent Rough Sleeper Data Return identified 5 individuals sleeping rough within the district across the month of July 2024. Of which there were 4 males, 1 female and all were aged between 29 and 46. This represents a 50% decrease in rough sleepers when compared with July 2023 where the Council reported 10 people.

National picture

3.5 The gradual increase which the Council is experiencing in homeless cases, reflects the national picture. In December 2023, Shelter reported that nationally the number of homeless households had risen by 14% when compared to the previous year (https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/at_least_309000_people_homeless_in_england_today) This rise is considered to be due to a combination of underinvestment in social homes and the rise in cost of private rented accommodation

3.6 The report also states that the East Midlands saw the biggest annual increase of 33% in homeless cases.

Homeless Legislation and the Council's duties

3.7 The Homeless Code of Guidance for Local Authorities sets out the rules and regulations that must be followed by the Council when dealing with homelessness cases, this guidance ensures that the Homelessness legislation is adhered to.

3.8 A key part of the legislation is the definition of a 'Priority need' case which can be found at Chapter 8. This sets out the guidance that the Council must follow when determining if there is a duty to accommodate a client whilst we are assisting with their homelessness case.

3.9 If an individual does not meet the priority need criteria, this does not mean the Council will not continue with their homelessness case, or continue to seek long term accommodation, it just means that we do not have a duty to accommodate them during this process. This is national guidance, not just local to South Kesteven District Council.

3.10 This situation can sometimes result in people rough sleeping which is why the Council created our Change4Lincs Initiative. This is a discretionary service for

Rough Sleepers that was set up and designed to help support those who are still seeking long term accommodation but have no short-term accommodation options as they fall outside of the Council's statutory duties. This service provides help, advice and support to rough sleepers to transition them back into settled accommodation.

- 3.11 However, there are huge challenges faced when trying to support Rough Sleepers. Some have already exhausted all accommodation options available to them and have not been able to sustain accommodation. Some have severe drug or alcohol abuse issues, and some have mental health issues. This creates a huge challenge to source accommodation with providers who are willing to accept such challenging behaviour as staff in nightly paid establishments are not equipped to be dealing with these issues.
- 3.12 It is therefore essential that the Council work in partnership with recognised support agencies who have the expertise to support these individuals.

3.13 Initiatives being explored.

3.14 Investment in New Housing

- 3.15 As detailed in the New Build and Acquisition report the Council is investing in a number of new affordable housing units across the district which will increase the number of properties available to rent on the Housing Register.

3.16 Supported accommodation options

- 3.17 Supported accommodation is an initiative that provides tenants with low level tenancy related support with the aim of enabling individuals to move through the service and become ready to live independently.
- 3.18 There is a service established to provide this, however the demand far outweighs the supply of this type of accommodation. As a Council we are seeking to work in partnership with a local established support organisation to part-fund another supported accommodation scheme. At present the Council are exploring the funding options for this scheme.

3.19 Prevention and early intervention

- 3.20 As part of our homelessness case management process, the Council will focus on any possible prevention options. This includes mediation with family members if someone is being asked to leave accommodation, negotiations with landlords and consideration of incentives to allow households to remain in existing accommodation. The Homelessness team also ensure that income options are explored with individuals, for example, benefit maximisation.
- 3.21 The Council will signpost to advice agencies, including debt advice to ensure that if there are issues with rent arrears all options are explored to overcome this.

- 3.22 Internally, the Council has a Cost of Living team who can explore whether households are entitled to any financial assistance in relation to paying bills or the provision of food.
- 3.23 If people require support in managing their finances to sustain their existing tenancy, the Council will refer to agencies who can assist with tenancy support.
- 3.24 If homelessness can be prevented at the earliest opportunity, it prevents the need for crisis management.

3.25 Partnership working.

- 3.26 There are established partnership meetings in place, such as the Vulnerable Adults Panel and Homelessness Forum meetings. These meetings are designed to explore all possibilities when trying to support a homelessness client and include representatives from Local Support Organisations, Mental Health services, Social Care, the Police and Local Voluntary Organisations
- 3.27 Accommodation alone is not always the solution when a person is not able to sustain accommodation or perhaps even live independently, it is therefore essential to ensure that wrap around support is available.

3.28 The future of Change4Lincs

- 3.29 The Change4Lincs Initiative is funded by Government Grant until 31 March 2025, so the future of this initiative is unknown until the 2025/26 Finance Settlement is received from Central Government.
- 3.20 Given this uncertainty it was agreed at the Strategic Partnership Meeting in August 2024 that each of the four Council's will develop a Rough Sleeping Service Plan to determine whether future service delivery can be aligned across the partnership or whether each Council would be best placed to deliver their own service.
- 3.21 The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be kept informed regarding future funding and the Change4Lincs at future meetings.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 There are no other options available as this report is for noting only.

5 Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 This report is for noting only.