



Preston
City Council

Report by the Task and Finish Group - Homelessness



November 2018 - March 2020

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Appendix A - Scoping Document

Appendix B - Council's response to Covid-19

Minutes of Meetings:

[26 November 2018](#)

[14 January 2019](#)

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[3 September 2019](#)

[7 October 2019](#)

[28 January 2020](#)

[9 March 2020](#)

1. Chair's Foreword and Acknowledgements

This Task and Finish Group was set up to look at all areas of homelessness and rough sleeping to see what Council officers and other organisations are already doing, and to examine what else could be done using the Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) approach.

We met with representatives from a number of organisations and undertook three site visits. Members not only spoke to officers who worked with homeless persons but also to some who had personal experience of the issue. The Group gained valuable insights into the difficulties and challenges faced by homeless persons and rough sleepers.

As our study progressed it also became apparent that our Housing Advisory Service team, under the excellent leadership of Liz Mossop, work incredibly hard towards preventing people from becoming homeless. As we all know, prevention is better than cure.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the organisations that contributed to our study including those that kindly allowed us to visit their premises. I wish also to place on record my thanks to members of the Group and officers for their support.



Councillor Henshaw

Chair of the Homelessness Task and Finish Group

Membership

Membership 2018/19 Municipal Year

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Councillor Henshaw (Chair) | Councillor Grisdale |
| Councillor Saksena (Vice-Chair) | Councillor Hawkins |
| Councillor Mrs Brown | Councillor Swindells |
| Councillor Cartwright | Councillor Woollam |
| Councillor Mrs Gildert | |

Membership 2019/20 Municipal Year

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| Councillor Henshaw (Chair) | Councillor Hawkins |
| Councillor Saksena (Vice-Chair) | Councillor Mein |
| Councillor Duckworth | Councillor Warren |
| Councillor Gregg | Councillor Woollam |
| Councillor Grisdale | |

2. Recommendations to Cabinet- Specific/ Measurable/ Achievable/ Realistic/ Timely

| | Recommendation | Date to be implemented | Officer & Organisation Responsible |
|-----------|--|--|---|
| | To develop measures to prevent people becoming homeless or rough sleeping see recommendations below | | |
| 1. | Hospital Discharge protocol – to stop people being discharged to “No Fixed Abode” | June 2020 | Preston City Council (PCC) Mandy Stitt Bev Lyon |
| 2. | Strengthen the work the Resettlement Panel is doing by linking to the developing Integrated Offender Management agenda to assist people being released from Prison to have appropriate accommodation with the correct support in place. (also delivers on the reducing reoffending agenda) | Ongoing to be reviewed December 2020 | PCC/NPS/CRC Bev Lyon Sonia Turner Phil O'Donnell |
| 3. | Develop eviction protocols with all Registered Providers in Preston | June 2020 | PCC Bev Lyon John Cameron |
| 4. | Promote the Duty to Refer with all partner agencies. | Ongoing to be reviewed December 2020 | PCC Bev Lyon John Cameron |
| 5. | To work with Lancashire County Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group to develop dual diagnosis pathways in Preston between Substance Misuse Services and Mental Health Services | To be reviewed September 2020 | PCC/LCC/CCG Mandy Stitt Liz Mossop Lee Harrington Rosemary Cowell |
| 6. | To develop more accommodation options for single non-priority people | To be reviewed December 2020 | PCC/Housing Advice Bev Lyon John Cameron |
| 7. | To work with Registered Providers to assess their affordability criteria and challenge where appropriate | Ongoing to be reviewed in December 2020 | PCC/Housing Advice Bev Lyon John Cameron |

| | | | |
|----|---|---|--------------------|
| 8. | To assess the impact of the lack of access to public toilets on people rough sleeping | Ongoing to be reviewed in December 2020 | PCC Mandy Stitt |
| 9. | Ensure access to Doctors surgeries | To be reviewed December 2020 | PCC |

3. Background/ Aims of the Study

3.1 At the Priority Setting Workshop held on 15 May 2018, Homelessness was selected as one of the topics to be the subject of a Work Plan Study. It was agreed that this would be a larger study. At the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 21 September 2018, the topic was agreed and approval was given to the draft scoping document.

3.2 On 26 November 2018, the Group considered the draft scoping document. The Head of Community Services reported on the Rough Sleeper Initiative and on recent counts. Members added to the list of organisations and individuals to be included in the study.

3.3 On 14 January 2019, the Group visited the Foxton Centre, Knowsley Street. Members met with staff of the centre and discussed issues such as the establishment of the centre and ongoing and future projects.

It was noted that, this year, the Centre will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of its opening. The Group were given background details of its establishment as a youth centre by Brian Foxton from the Minster. It has developed over the years and now runs a variety of schemes including:-

Homelessness/Housing First

Housing First provides long term support for homeless people including help with accessing housing, benefits and health services. The Centre works in partnership with the Council and Mitec (a property management company) to deliver the scheme. The Centre also engages with rough sleepers through outreach workers and encourages them to access services including meals, showers and advice.

Streetlink

Outreach workers assist street sex workers through the Streetlink project working with clients with varied needs including the provision of accommodation.

Rough Sleeper Count

It was noted that the next Rough Sleeper Count would be held on 25 January meeting at the Centre at 3am.

Members also discussed plans for alterations to the centre to enable it to run the Somewhere Safe to Stay pilot expanding the centre to a 24 hour facility including an assessment room and sleeping quarters.

3.4 On 4 March 2019, the Group visited Emmaus Centre in Ribbleton, Preston. The Chair gave a brief overview of the purpose of the Task and Finish Group and the reason for visiting Emmaus. Karen Willis, Deputy Support Manager on site, gave a verbal report on the operations of Emmaus. Following a brief history of the organisation which had been founded in 1949 in Paris by a catholic priest Abbe Pierre who was passionate about helping homeless people. There are now 330 Emmaus communities around the world majority in France and the second largest number in UK which has 29.

Emmaus is a self-funded organisation which receives housing benefits for the people living in the Emmaus community. It finances itself through social enterprise and charity shops. Other income streams include:-

- Bike maintenance service and reselling
- Plastic welding
- LCC Crisis Support
- Talks to Students and at events

The Preston Emmaus community houses 26 people normally aged 25 plus. They are required to work 40 hours per week over 5 days with two days off during the week. For this work they are paid £47.50 per week (£7.50 retained for their move on fund), and they receive en-suite accommodation, all meals, toiletries, cleaning products and essentials. There is no time limit on the length of stay however support is provided to enable people to live out in the community when they were ready to do so. Emmaus has a zero tolerance policy on drugs and alcohol which were both banned on the premises. Those caught with drugs would be given 24 hours' notice and an alcohol related offence would result in 28 days' notice. Drug users were not taken in unless they were receiving support from other services to tackle their addictions. There was a disciplinary process and people were always given a fair chance.

Karen gave a personal account of Emmaus and how she is able to use her experience to help and assist others. It was confirmed that people could transfer from other Emmaus communities. The support provided is geared up to getting people ready to move on. Through a pot of money Emmaus are able to provide money towards tenancy bonds and help towards living outside the Emmaus community. In addition to employment there are many courses run to build self-esteem, skills, knowledge and CV's of people living and working at Emmaus. Areas of concern were discussed in respect of homelessness. One of the main concerns highlighted was in relation to people leaving prison without

accommodation to go to. There had been many discussions about a better structure and system to address the problem. Many had issues with having no connection in the area they move into following release from prison. It was reported that a Resettlement Panel was looking at options for when people are released from prison and what support is required. The Reducing Reoffending Strategy had been developed to bring about change. There was a pilot scheme running in Preston where those inmates who had showed willingness to change were housed in a property in the City. There was on-going work with the Prison Service including a pilot to allow women to apply for Universal Credit before they are released so that they do not have to wait weeks for benefits after leaving prison. Initiatives such as the Rough Sleeper Pathway Model is working towards making a difference but more involvement was required.

Mental health related issues were discussed and it was confirmed that Emmaus helped people with mental health problems working with other agencies. Emmaus tried to help as many as they could but some people did not take up the support offered when they found out that they had to give up their benefits. There were two solidarity beds available for those who were unable to get any public funds including housing benefits. It was stated that currently there were five spaces available in the Emmaus community.

3.5 On 15 July 2019, the Group held its meeting at Mill Bank Court, Edmund Street.

The Chair provided Members with an update on the work carried out so far. She gave a summary of the visits made to the Foxton Centre and Emmaus Preston. She also reported the Group had been invited by Mr Lawrence Kenwright of Signature Living to visit the location of one of his homeless projects in Liverpool. It was agreed that, before the visit, the Group wished to identify an empty building in Preston which could potentially be used on a temporary basis. Ms Liz Mossop, the Head of Community Services, summarised the Housing First Initiative and A Place to Live Pathway. She also reported that she would be attending the next meeting of the Homeless Forum.

The Group then met with Ms Caroline Terry, Support Services Manager for Places for People and Ms Becky Mayman. The Group were informed that Mill Bank Court is one of the biggest schemes in the area administered by Places for Peoples. It comprises of 36 units based around homeless families/parents with a range of complex needs. Ms Terry also gave details of how the scheme is administered and plans for the future.

Ms Mayman reported on another property used by the organisation and the rationale behind it. She also gave details of recent security improvements undertaken at Mill Bank Court and its improvement to the wellbeing of residents and visitors.

A resident of Mill Bank Court met with the Group and spoke of her experiences of homelessness and how moving to the premises had positively affected her life and that of her son. She also discussed her involvement in the 25 year anniversary celebrations for the centre.

Members were given a tour of the building and gardens and viewed the emergency flat.

- 3.6 On 3 September 2019, Councillor Khan, Cabinet Member for Communities and Social Justice, attended the meeting for interview in relation to the work plan study. Liz Mossop, the Head of Community Services and Bev Lyon, Accommodation and Administration Officer were also in attendance. Councillor Khan provided updates on various matters including:-

Provision of Meals

Councillor Khan reported on the provision of meals by three different faith groups. She also gave details of other items such as sleeping bags which were donated to those in need. It was suggested that the Council examine the possibility of providing a location for the food distribution.

Health Matters

Members discussed various health issues relating to homeless persons. The Group was informed there was access to a dentist at the Foxton Centre. Officers also reported that there was medical provision available at Avenham clinic.

Methodist Action

Councillor Khan reported on issues relating to Methodist Action following the recent decision for it to go into liquidation. She, along with Liz Mossop, gave details of the work being carried out with private landlords, tenants and registered social landlords. Members were also updated on the future of the Fox Street shelter.

Other Issues

The Group discussed problems with the lack of one bedroom accommodation with affordable rents. It was agreed that it would be useful to invite representatives from Registered Social Landlords to future meetings. Members also raised concerns on the lack of public conveniences in the city.

- 3.6 On 7 October 2019, Mr Lee Harrington from Public Health, Lancashire County Council and Ms Claire Garry and Ms Fiona Fisher from Community Gateway Association attended the meeting for interview.

Mr Harrington gave a brief overview of the changes to services following the Health and Social Care Act 2012. He also reported on the work with Change Grow Live (CGL). The organisation has different approaches for a variety of issues including mental health problems and substance abuse and sometimes a dual diagnosis is appropriate. This is being addressed aided by Pan Lancashire Dual Diagnosis Joint working in conjunction with NHS services. Many of those working and volunteering for CGL have lived recovery which provides a great motivation for others. The Group were informed that Central and North Lancashire was split into four teams.

He reported that it was felt that the homeless and rough sleepers were not being reached and a segmentation approach was required. Officers work with Recovery Housing when people are being released from prison or returning from rehabilitation.

Councillor Grisdale referred to a help pack put together by a security team at Lancashire Teaching Hospitals. Mr Harrington agreed to refer this information to CGL.

Ms Garry and Ms Fisher reported that, following restructure of some services at CGA several years ago, there is now more service provision and outreach work in relation to homelessness. Homelessness and social isolation are key priorities to be addressed in the next five years.

The Group received an update on the work with the Fox Centre following the liquidation of Methodist Action. The CGA now employs the team there and has advertised some additional posts. A long term scheme is being investigated.

- 3.7 On 28 January 2020, Mr Gavin Bachelor, Neighbourhood Delivery Manager, Onward Housing attended the meeting for interview. He gave details of the three main regions covered by his organisation namely Lancashire, Mersey and Greater Manchester with Preston being included in Lancashire Central. He reported that the company's criteria was based on the right to rent using a choice base lettings system. They attempt to quickly let vacant properties and have a supported housing team. He also reported that the company was attempting to become more visible and had introduced neighbourhood specialists together with First Touch. This is a mobile system so vacancies can be updated on iPads. Whilst people are expected to engage using these methods, one to one contact is available if relevant.

Mr Mark Greaves, Lettings and Marketing Team Manager, Places for People also attended the meeting for interview. He reported that the company has had to let properties which are placed on Select Move. He was unsure why the properties were proving difficult and was attempting to engage with officers from the Council. The company currently has 3000 properties in Preston and has its own website. Mr Greaves also gave details of partnership working with Homes England. The company has a tenant support service and an emergency service which are contactable at all times.

The Group discussed how better to locate and engage with young rough sleepers and it was noted that this could be a particular problem in stairwells of high rise flats. Issues regarding difficulties by persons under 25 years old in obtaining tenancies was also raised.

- 3.8 On 9 March 2020, the Head of Community Services submitted the draft recommendations for the work plan study. The Group discussed and agreed the recommendations with the addition of a recommendation on access to Doctors surgeries which Ms Mossop reported had been omitted.

Members also discussed issues for homeless persons of the Covid-19 virus and, in particular, difficulties with self-isolation. Ms Mossop reported that there was high hygiene standards at the Foxton Centre but that homeless persons were vulnerable due to existing health issues. It was also noted that persons dropping off donations were not entering the building.

In relation to recommendation 8 – To assess the impact of the lack of access to public toilets on people rough sleeping- it was agreed to inform homeless persons of toilets that they can use.

Post meeting note: please see Appendix B for a briefing on the Council's response to the Covid-19 situation regarding housing rough sleepers and homeless people.

3 Corporate Management Team Comments

We welcome the report and recognise the importance of the work the Authority undertakes in relation to Homelessness and rough sleeping.

We fully support the recommendations and are aware that the Housing Advice Services is working in partnership with other organisations to deliver on these recommendations.

We recognise the team is working productively with the Ministry of Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to implement measures to prevent people becoming homeless or rough sleeping.

Response from the Cabinet

Summary

Councillor Henshaw, Chair of the Task and Finish Group for Homelessness presented Work Plan Study report by the Group. Cabinet expressed their gratitude for the efforts of the Task and Finish Group and Officers involved. The report and recommendations were very comprehensive and it was agreed that it was an important study especially post Covid-19.

Decision Taken

That Cabinet

- i) Noted the report; and
- ii) Endorsed the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group

Appendix A

Work Plan Study – Homelessness

Scoping document (draft)

Scope

The Council is legally obliged to provide advice and assistance to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The Homeless Reduction Act also places new duties on councils to prevent and relieve homelessness.

Housing Advice Service (HAS) has been working closely with a number of partner agencies to develop a housing and support pathway for those in Preston with the most complex needs. This has been developed under the “Making Every Adult Matter” (MEAM) approach.

| | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 1a. | Scrutiny Chair: Councillor Carol Henshaw | Contact Details cllr.c.henshaw@preston.gov.uk |
| 1b. | Member Services Officer Ms Jacqui Pollock Scrutiny Support Manager | j.pollock@preston.gov.uk 01772 906305 |
| 1c. | Departmental Link Officer: Mrs Liz Mossop Head of Community Services | l.mossop@preston.gov.uk 01772 906419 |
| 2. | Which of our Corporate Priorities does this topic address? <p>Your City – Securing investment to improve the assets and infrastructure and create high quality jobs</p> <p>Your Council – Delivering well run, value for money services, valued by the public; demonstrating good governance, openness and transparency and a strong democratic process</p> <p>Fairness for you - Fairness at the head of our decision making. Building an economy which supports prosperity and promotes fairness in working lives and practices. Accessibility to affordable energy and decent affordable living.</p> | |

| | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 9. | <p>Who can provide us with relevant evidence?</p> <p>Service providers – Council partners and non-Council partners</p> <p>The Foxton Centre Emmaus Places for People</p> <p>MEAM Partners (Lancashire County Council, Preston Police)</p> <p>Councillor Nweeda Khan, Cabinet Member for Communities and Social Justice</p> | <p>What areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence</p> |
| 10. | <p>What processes can we use to feed into the review? (site visits/observations, face to face questioning, telephone surveys, written questionnaires etc.)</p> <p>Site visits to the Foxton Centre, Emmaus Centre and Mill Bank Court</p> | |
| 11. | <p>Diversity – How will we address the diversity standards in order to uphold the Council’s Single Equality Scheme?</p> | |

Appendix B

Briefing on Housing Advice (HAS) response to Covid-19

Lockdown timeline

9th March onwards – beginning to receive information about people not being able to share, advice and guidance coming from Public Health Authorities regarding shared accommodation. In response Bev Lyon Senior HAS Manager begins conversations with Hotels and B&B Managers.

On w/c 23rd March the Prime Minister announced that England was going into lockdown to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Accommodation that had been commissioned:-

Purpleroomz 42 rooms in Leyland also accessed by South Ribble and Chorley Councils

Whitburn Hotel 15 rooms

AirB&B 10

Other ad hoc arrangements with other B&Bs

On the 27th March Dame Louise Casey, who is heading up a Homeless Task Force on behalf of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHCLG) released an edict that everyone who was rough sleeping was to be housed immediately.

3rd April The Box – empty student accommodation was commissioned to move the people who had been sleeping rough from Purpleroomz – this was 23 people supported by Foxtan Staff through the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) into this separate accommodation.

HAS housed 108 people in a direct response to Covid 19.

This is not a static number as some people have left the accommodation on their own volition. Some have been asked to leave because their behaviour was putting other people in danger due to not socially distancing etc.

There have been numerous costs associated with this, accommodation, food, security etc. We are currently carrying out an exercise to assess how much of these costs can be covered by HB and DHP. The Government has announced a number of funding packages for Local Authorities which has mentioned to assist with costs associated with homeless, however this funding is not ring fenced and is also to assist with other costs the Council has incurred during the pandemic.

We have had no cases of Covid 19 in any of the accommodation to date and currently have no-one displaying the symptoms or self-isolating.

A sub group of the Lancashire Resilience Forum's Humanitarian Cell was established to focus on Housing/Homelessness and the response to the situation across Lancashire. From this another sub group was established to look at the health needs of those people in Covid 19 accommodation. A health audit was undertaken and this has led to a multi-disciplinary team meeting twice a week chaired by Bev Lyon to deal with all health aspects. This has been very positive and something good that will continue after the pandemic has passed.

Move on plans

There has been regular contact with MHCLG via the RSI advisor and the HAST advisor looking at the number of people we have housed and the fact that we still have 22 people sleeping rough. During Covid-19 the Outreach Team have still been operating – although observing all social distancing rules – so we know who these people are and some we will be able to assist once the move on plans are able to be put in place.

There are detailed plans for those moving out of The Box and HAS are working as flexibly as possible to find offers of alternative accommodation for as many people as possible. However we must acknowledge that not everyone will have a positive outcome from this situation.

Problems arising from the accommodation solutions

It was found that the mix of people, in Purpleroomz, between those who had come in straight from the streets and those who had presented themselves to HAS as

- having being sofa surfing which was no longer acceptable to their friends,
- in a relationship which had broken down
- living with family who had now asked them to leave

was not sustainable. The majority of those who came in direct from the streets were reportedly very scared of catching the virus and therefore were following the social distancing rules much better than other people in the other accommodation. Which was why The Box was commissioned to separate the two.

Purpleroomz is too big and although there has been security at the premise there has been a number of incidents of ASB etc.

Housing Advice Service – delivery of statutory duty during Covid 19

HAS staff started to work from home from 23rd March, this was with a mixture of using their own equipment and the Council's equipment. As this is classed as a priority 1 service very shortly all staff were using Council Laptops etc. At all time staff had access to all the relevant systems via the google authenticator app.

HAS operates with a reception triage service that deals with most enquiries and simple housing advice – anything regarding someone who is roofless that night or is more complicated is passed through to the Duty Officer. This is a team of Housing Advice Officers who work on a rota system to provide duty cover for a full day each week.

The main face to face contact is during reception triage and appointments with the Duty Officers and then ongoing appointments with cases that are open to each officer.

During the Covid-19 period the above process has continued via the phone, with any evidence being required scanned in via phones etc. Any need for accommodation has been referred to Sue Redmond electronically and Sue has been able to place into any vacancies that were available.

Our out of hours service has continued as usual and they have usually contacted one of the Managers most weekends with an issue – this is normal practise. Both Managers have been keeping in regular touch with their staff and have reported that most people have enjoyed working from home and have continued to fulfil the Council's statutory duty in full.

Note prepared by Liz Mossop
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17/06/20