

## Greater Manchester Planning and Housing Commission

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Subject: Homelessness COVID-19 Update

Report of: Mayor Paul Dennett and Steve Rumbelow, Portfolio Leads for Housing, Homelessness and Infrastructure

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide an update on the ongoing homelessness response to Covid-19 and outline the approach into winter, with recommendations for further collective action to be considered.

### CONTACT OFFICERS:

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. One in three people experiencing homelessness are clinically vulnerable or extremely clinically vulnerable<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Lewer D, Aldridge RW, Menezes D, *et al.* [Health-related quality of life and prevalence of six chronic diseases in homeless and housed people: a cross-sectional study in London and Birmingham](#), England. *BMJ Open* 2019;9:e025192. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2018-025192

- 1.2. The additional public health risk of severe weather exposure for rough sleepers through winter months overlaps infection prevention and control management across homelessness services, and requires an updated approach.
- 1.3. The second wave preparedness plan (Section 2) outlines the headline approach across Greater Manchester Local Authorities. Leaders are requested to approved this plan and discuss the approach to further measures being taken to meet ongoing risks in the context of Covid-19 and severe weather threats (Section 3).
- 1.4. Local Authorities are providing temporary accommodation on a scale not seen before in Greater Manchester. There are currently just under 1,000 people in rough sleeper relief/emergency accommodation (including A Bed Every Night and legacy Everyone In accommodation) and 3,600 statutory households accommodated (of which 2,285 are families).
- 1.5. A new funding programme from Government (Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme) will support the supply of affordable and supported move on accommodation, alongside the existing Housing First and Ethical Lettings Agency pathways. However, demand is expected to continue to far outstrip supply, with the extended temporary accommodation estate needing to be maintained and even expanded further to meet this.
- 1.6. Despite a sharp decrease in street sleeping through the March-June lockdown, down to 54 people in April, there are now currently 106 people known to be rough sleeping on any given night (September GM Count data). Many of these are people have entrenched behaviours and complex vulnerabilities, with current services unable to meet their need, including sustaining safe accommodation. A proportion are new to the streets and this is being tracked weekly by local outreach teams.

## **2.0 SECOND WAVE PREPAREDNESS PLAN**

- 2.1. The following actions and commitments are being taken up across Greater Manchester Local Authority teams, following nationally defined best practise to meet local demand, as part of the Second Wave Homelessness Covid Preparedness Plan (Appendix 1).
- 2.2. This has been developed with Local Authority Homelessness Leads, Greater Manchester public service leads across Public Health, Police, Probation, Substance Misuse, and in conjunction with the Greater Manchester Health and Homelessness Task Group, and the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network.
- 2.3. Emergency response structure: maintaining direct link into GM Strategic Coordinating Group via GM Homelessness Cell, alongside weekly Housing Needs Group meetings and advisory support from GM Health and Homelessness Task Group.
- 2.4. Testing: where access to a Covid test is not appropriate via Pillar 2 online booking, other options will be in place to ensure rapid access to testing for individuals displaying symptoms. A range of flexible options have been agreed by Testing Leads and will be implemented against local requirements, including on street Lateral Flow testing capability.

- 2.5. Track and Trace: working principles are being developed to set out an effective Track and Trace mechanism for this population. It will seek to outline approaches that enable identification of individuals who may not be easily contactable through established Track and Trace routes.
- 2.6. Self-isolation for people in temporary accommodation: isolation support will be available including food packs, welfare and harm reduction support.
- 2.7. Self-isolation for people rough sleeping: accommodation and isolation support will be made available, including food packs, welfare and harm reduction support. Additional clinical support is being planned for those requiring additional out of hospital care.
- 2.8. Accommodation placements: priority will continue under the legal framework to accommodate households with the greatest vulnerability, alongside A Bed Every Night accommodation for people sleeping rough, with priority (if capacity is reached) for those who are Covid symptomatic or positive, clinically vulnerable, or where there is severe weather exposure risk.
- 2.9. Accommodation standards: All accommodation will be self-contained or single room with shared facilities (where shared facilities are used by those who are not clinically vulnerable). Shared air sleeping arrangements (night shelters) should not be used where there are other alternatives available as per PHE guidance.
- 2.10. Ongoing street sleeping: outreach will continue with regular screening of individuals who do not have or do not want to accept accommodation offers. Street sleeping humanitarian assistance will continue through lockdown situations – supported through continued opening of Covid-safe facilities.
- 2.11. Workforce resilience: coordination of re-deployment, training and frontline communication is being established to maximise the capacity and resilience of the support workforce.

### **3.0 INCREASING A BED EVERY NIGHT CAPACITY**

- 3.1. The current position across Greater Manchester is of nearing accommodation capacity. This is impacted by increased demand, slowing move on, and crucially the resources available to expand further, both financial and infrastructure based.
- 3.2. Whilst the A Bed Every Night principle still stands, it is not able to meet demand in some boroughs. There are just over 100 people street sleeping on any given night across Greater Manchester.
- 3.3. MHCLG are currently allocating £397,000 funding through the Cold Weather Fund (all GM LAs), and the Protect Programme (Manchester and Salford only). This funding is expected to bring up the capacity of available accommodation and ensure that people are not forced to sleep rough if they are clinically extremely vulnerable to Covid, symptomatic, or experiencing cold weather.

- 3.4. Despite these additional funds, there is expected to be unmet need in some areas with people sleeping round around periods of cold weather where this cannot be maintained for an extended period of time.
- 3.5. There is opportunity to make use of the Mayoral Precept where resources within Local Authorities are not sufficient, despite Cold Weather and Protect Programme funding, to continue to meet the 'A Bed Every Night' principle of ongoing emergency accommodation.
- 3.6. GMCA is working with all Boroughs to understand the scale of this gap and is seeking approval for use of up to £300,000 within the Mayoral Precept (20/21 underspend) to resource this.
- 3.7. This can be allocated in concentrated and supported provision, as well as dispersed settings, as suits individuals' needs. The provision of Covid-care setting with clinical support is being scoped with strategic and financial support from the Department of Health and Social Care.
- 3.8. Taking on new accommodation requires available financial resource until at least March 2021 and likely further if suitable move on cannot be secured. Measures should be taken to manage this risk, such as inclusion of ongoing costs to sustain any additional accommodation and support into A Bed Every Night and Rough Sleeper Initiative budgets for 2021/22. The lack of certainty with MHCLG Rough Sleeper Initiative budget allocation means that inclusion in the A Bed Every Night 2021/22 budget is preferable if possible.
- 3.9. This sustainability pressure should be appreciated alongside the upcoming need to sustain existing A Bed Every Night accommodation (currently at 480) from April 2021 for another 12 months at an existing cost of £5.6m. Commitment to sustain the ABEN budget 2021/22 from existing stakeholders is being sought imminently.
- 3.10. With or without additional emergency accommodation, outreach teams will provide an ongoing response to those who continue to street sleep. In most boroughs indoor daytime support within Covid-safe settings is available and is being coordinated to maintain face to face support to highly vulnerable people.
- 3.11. Not providing additional extended accommodation, is likely to result in accommodation being stood up and being stood down based on Covid outbreaks and severe weather instances throughout the winter months, with a varied approach across localities.
- 3.12. The risk of opening new accommodation with little impact on the number of people street sleeping can be met with a more targeted response than the previous 'Everyone In' policy and current 'A Bed Every Night' criteria.
- 3.13. A clear steer is required on accepting current capacity and working within this through existing or enhanced outreach responses and targeted move on, and/or taking an accommodation expansion approach with sustainability risks and the certainty that a small number of people may choose not to come in.

