

ITEM 5: EVERYBODY IN / A BED EVERY NIGHT- COVID-19 UPDATE

Greater Manchester Housing, Planning and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Date: 9th July 2020

Subject: COVID-19 Homelessness Update

Report of: Molly Bishop, Homelessness Strategic Lead, Greater Manchester Combined Authority

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This paper provides an update on the Greater Manchester response to COVID-19 for people experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping. It outlines the progress to move people on from Covid emergency accommodation or secure it for longer, as well as the opportunities to increase supply for long term, settled accommodation for this cohort.

CONTACT OFFICERS: Molly Bishop, Strategic Lead for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, GMCA and Jane Forrest, Director, Public Sector Reform, GMCA.

Molly.Bishop@greatermanchester-c.org.uk

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1.0 NEXT STEPS PROGRESS

- 1.1. Actions are continuing to progress well against the Next Steps Strategy, approved 13th April 2020 by GM Emergency Committee, which includes step down from hotel emergency Covid accommodation where necessary.
- 1.2. All individuals being moved on from Covid emergency accommodation have co-ordinated support planning in place, including health transition plans, and accommodation options. A number of Covid emergency provisions have now been fully stepped down, with all individuals moved onto further temporary or settled accommodation.
- 1.3. An assessment of accommodation demand and need due to Covid-19 has been undertaken by all Local Authorities at the request of MHCLG. Every Local Authority has submitted this information, highlighting supply and demand gaps and existing plans to mitigate them (see Appendix 1).
- 1.4. A number of Local Authority (LA) procured hotels have been kept on for an extended period to allow more time for planned move on.
- 1.5. The newly announced Everyone In funding (£105m) will be made available to councils to recover some of their ongoing covid emergency accommodation costs and ensure that a pipeline of sustainable and appropriate temporary accommodation is available for those who have been helped inside during the covid crisis.
- 1.6. Funding for longer term and settled accommodation has now been confirmed to help deliver against long term supply challenges. The Rough Sleeper Accommodation Fund will provide £160m for 3,300 properties to be online by March 2021. This is £130m capital and £30m revenue.
- 1.7. Greater Manchester Housing Providers have played a significant role in providing social rented tenancies to homeless households throughout lockdown, and ensuring prioritisation and recognition is given where LAs are facing extreme pressures with trying to ensure that no one has to return to the streets. The commitment to a series of new pledges further emphasises their dedicated role in opening up supply for homeless households (see Appendix 2.)

2.0 A BED EVERY NIGHT

- 2.1. The third phase of ABEN is live as of 1st July 2020. This sees an expanded, fully single room provision stood up across GM for people who are rough sleeping or at imminent risk.
- 2.2. Total capacity from 1st July will be 453, with 180 of these beds as new capacity. We expect this to be filled quickly with move on from emergency Covid hotels and people currently sleeping rough or at imminent risk.
- 2.3. 60 beds and specialist support are available for people with No Recourse to Public Funds, owing to the funding from the Greater Manchester Mayor's Charity.

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2.4. ABEN will be able to support people who came inside through lockdown and require move on to more sustainable temporary accommodation, and existing rough sleepers. However, it is clear that those who are continuing to rough sleep often require different and more specialist accommodation and support than ABEN can provide to them. Options to respond to this are being explored as outlined below.

3.0 FURTHER EXPANSION OF SUPPLY

3.1. Short term/interim accommodation supply will be provided by councils (using A Bed Every Night and the Everyone In funding) to ensure that no one returns to the streets from temporary accommodation brought online through covid lockdown where it is no longer viable. This will be through a variety of models:

- Hotel leasing or block booking extensions
- Private rented HMO property leasing as temporary accommodation
- Commissioning of new premises (and support providers)

3.2. There is ongoing dialogue with government as to whether this funding can be used for suitable interim supply for people who are still currently rough sleeping.

3.3. Long term/settled accommodation supply (via Rough Sleeper Accommodation Fund) is open to a wide variety of potential models, impacted by the scale and nature of capital and revenue funding available and the cohort needs.

3.4. There is an expectation that this fund will be aligned with other capital investment. GMCA is exploring the use of the Housing Investment Fund to provide additional investment, and engaging with existing and new social investment partners to provide further avenues for collaboration.

3.5. New supply could be sought against any of the following models:

- Buy, refurbish and lease to vehicle that provides LHA / suitable rents
- Contract third party companies to acquire and managed PRS properties and provide support for a set period of time
- Explore non-viable new homes schemes than can be transferred into use for this purpose
- Explore de-commissioned supported housing

3.6. The welcome inclusion of £30m revenue funding provides opportunity to meet the wider needs of clients to sustain accommodation and live well. However, full costings against cohort needs will be needed to demonstrate how far this will go to providing what is needed.

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- 3.7. MHCLG is clear that bids can be designed by individual LAs, collectively, or be led by Registered Providers and other investors.
- 3.8. Initial conversations across GM indicate that collaborative working, when cohort and property needs are clear, could result greater scale and value for money. Innovative and shared use of the Housing Investment Fund, Ethical Lettings Agency vehicle, and pre-existing investor/developer relationships will support this.
- 3.9. Local Authorities will also be pursuing their own bids which do not require collaboration across GM partners, and it is essential that visibility of bids is maintained to ensure there is no unintended gaps or competition within the region.

4.0 PEOPLE WHO ARE ROUGH SLEEPING

- 4.1. There remain a number of people who continue to sleep rough, many of whom have not accepted accommodation since the start of lockdown (32 people known to have refused entirely). 28 people have been in and out of hotels due to issues with behaviour and compliance and are now rough sleeping again. In the city centre, around 90 people are known to be rough sleeping.
- 4.2. A Bed Every Night and Housing First will continue to provide options for people who sleep rough, but this will not be able to meet the need fully as some people will need different options.
- 4.3. New street sleepers will be supported but people who are not residents of Greater Manchester will be re-connected.
- 4.4. With the risk of infection from Covid still very much live, it is essential that extended supply meets the needs of this group, who often need more specialist solutions. While that supply is being stood up, a focused Covid-care response needs to continue to be delivered via outreach. Consultation with frontline teams is continuing to identify what they need to safeguard and support this cohort.

5.0 CURRENT KEY RISKS

- 5.1. Delivery of supply - accessing enough one-bed properties of the right kind for single people is extremely challenging and subject to multiple competing housing need priorities beyond this cohort (people supported due to Covid into emergency and temporary accommodation). Ensuring that this cohort are able to move on, will require extraordinary effort and co-ordination from all of the city region's partners to increase the supply of one-bed properties. Purchase, retrofit and lease models are being explored at scale via the Ethical Lettings Agency, as are new agreements with Registered Social Landlords in the region.
- 5.2. Cold weather planning (PHE guidance) -MHCLG have noted upcoming Public Health England Guidance that will not support any shared sleeping arrangements. Urgent clarity is being sought, as shared sleeping arrangements make up a small part of A Bed Every Night and are usually critical for winter pressures. Allowance is being

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sought for shared sleeping accommodation that is low density, has Public Health infection control plans and assurance, and only accommodates those at low risk of Covid. GMHSCP is engaged with MHCLG and Public Health England to clarify their advice and support a flexible approach.

- 5.3. Newly granted refugees also present a demand risk once Serco evictions resume. Lifting the ban on evictions from asylum accommodation is being considered in light of the recent decision to extend the ban on private evictions to 23rd August. We are aware across GM there are currently 350 people with a positive decision residing in asylum accommodation. There are also nearly 4,000 people in asylum hotel contingency nationally and so the pressure on homelessness services as the backlog of cases is managed presents a consistent challenge to GM owing to Serco stock levels in the city region.
- 5.4. We will continue to engage with all relevant stakeholders to reach solutions on these issues and mitigate risk in Greater Manchester.