

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: September 2020

Subject: Homelessness COVID-19 Update

Report of: Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, and Paul Dennett, Portfolio Lead for Housing, Infrastructure and Homelessness

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide an update on the ongoing homelessness response to Covid-19 and highlight pressures to ongoing service capacity, with recommendations for further collective action to be considered.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The GMCA is requested to:

- 1. Note the pressures on homelessness services and ongoing response activities, support next steps and a further detailed report in November on specific measures**
- 2. Assess and identify the impact of this work as an inequalities priority. Commit to collect, analyse and report on data to understand this impact.**

CONTACT OFFICERS:

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Equalities Implications:

Previously existing and newly arising inequalities in our society have been clearly evidenced by the coronavirus pandemic. People experiencing homelessness, especially in the form of rough sleeping, commonly face multiple social and economic inequalities that contribute to their experience. This group can face exclusion from access to basic services such as healthcare and safe housing due to complex presenting needs, resulting from and manifesting as a result of their experiences of inequality. This paper recommends activity to address the risk of growing inequalities as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Referenced at 1.4.

Climate Change Impact Assessment and Mitigation Measures –

Actions to reduce carbon emissions from this activity is not included no new activity is suggested that does not fall under existing Local Authority Climate Change Impact Assessment and Mitigation Measures.

Risk Management:

N/A

Legal Considerations:

N/A

Financial Consequences – Revenue:

The activities within this update are being carried out using existing resource. The update does seek recommendations for further activity which may require additional resources from Government, and/or distribution of existing funds to support the strategic ambition of ending rough sleeping in Greater Manchester. Referenced at 3.3.

Financial Consequences – Capital:

N/A

Number of attachments to the report: 0

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

TRACKING/PROCESS	
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Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution		No
EXEMPTION FROM CALL IN		
Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?		
GM Transport Committee	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
N/A	N/A	

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Greater Manchester's response to the 'Everyone In' directive from National Government has been robust and supported infection prevention and control for people who sleep rough or are at ongoing risk. In doing so, the scale of temporary accommodation has expanded considerably and is at risk of reaching capacity in some localities unless rapid move on accommodation can be secured.
- 1.2. Greater Manchester Authorities are awaiting grant funding confirmation from the Government's Next Steps Accommodation Programme which will be critical to enabling a further expansion of short term and settled accommodation. This funding is targeted specifically at enabling the 'Everyone In' policy to be maintained. To date there have been significant personal outcomes for beneficiaries regarding Covid-19 infection prevention and improvements in personal wellbeing.
- 1.3. The social and economic impacts of Covid-19 are being seen in new homelessness presentations to Local Authorities and in voluntary and community settings. Homelessness prevention is a critical response to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis to ensure safeguarding and statutory relief duties are maintained. This work is underway and builds on the unified public service model of integrated and preventative working.
- 1.4. Homelessness prevention and relief is committed to redressing systemic inequalities. The continued response to Covid-19 seeks to prevent a deepening of inequalities by achieving a quality service response where homelessness is only ever rare, brief and non-recurrent experience.

2.0 COVID-19 HOMELESSNESS ACCOMMODATION IMPACTS

- 2.1. As part of the 'Everyone In' response Local Authorities and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority opened up emergency Covid-19 accommodation in commercial hotels and other accommodation settings. Between March-June 2020 there were over 2,000 placements into this accommodation.
- 2.2. Since the end of June move on from commercial hotel settings has been taking place, into settled accommodation (327 people) and sustainable temporary accommodation settings (269 people). 485 people are still accommodated in emergency settings, and of these 132 people remain in commercial hotel settings.
- 2.3. Greater Manchester Housing Providers have been critical to enabling this level of settled moved on, and the standing back up of A Bed Every Night as a single room only service has enabled quick move on into further temporary settings.
- 2.4. It is a testament to Local Authorities and Providers that A Bed Every Night (Phase 3) is fully operational and Covid-19 compliant, with learning from 'Everyone In' carried forward, such as telephone support and harm reduction approaches. A Bed Every Night is currently at capacity with 450 beds in use.
- 2.5. Rough sleeping numbers are slowly increasing. 111 people were reported to be rough sleeping on the week of 9th August, up from 54 at the beginning of June. A full GM single night count will take place at the end of September.
- 2.6. All Local Authority homelessness services are working with their Infection Prevention and Control teams to ensure appropriate risk management is taking place in accommodation and outreach settings. Flexible testing regimes for this cohort have been stood up in some localities but not all, with further work to enable this underway.
- 2.7. Alongside this response, statutory homelessness temporary accommodation (TA) has been rapidly expanding (40% in singles TA, 20% in families TA June-August 2020). This expansion is due to stagnation of move on through lockdown and the increasing number of vulnerable people who are at risk of or becoming homeless. The statutory temporary accommodation estate stands at 3,592 households, as of the week of 9th August 2020.

3.0 NEXT STEPS

- 3.1. Preventing the flow of new households into homelessness and requiring temporary accommodation, and increasing the flow of households out of temporary accommodation into settled or supported homes is critical to avoid reaching capacity.
- 3.2. The following measures are targeted at this:

- Homelessness prevention activity regarding evictions; working with the Courts, Prisons and Probation services, co-ordinating communications to tenants and landlords, commitment from Greater Manchester Housing Providers for pre-action protocols, gathering data and intelligence from key agencies such as DWP/Jobcentres, connecting prevention assets and capacity in localities.
- Next Steps Accommodation Programme interim accommodation funding; 10 Local Authorities and the GMCA have been funded by MHCLG to expand interim accommodation for the winter period to meet immediate ongoing pressure (until March 2021). *See Appendix 1.*
- Next Steps Accommodation Programme settled accommodation funding; 10 Local Authorities and the GMCA are awaiting funding decision from MHCLG to secure settled accommodation for move on, proposals total 526 units. Grant term restrictions may limit this with spend and unit completions necessary by March 2021.
- Negotiation with the Home Office and SERCO regarding information sharing and support for Asylum Seekers receiving negative decisions during lockdown (estimated at 407 cases across Greater Manchester).
- Lobbying National Government for policy changes to alleviate the homelessness and housing supply crisis, including welfare changes to Local Housing Allowance, Housing Benefit, and No Recourse to Public Funds regime.

3.3. These activities alone are not expected to provide a whole solution to the immediate crisis. However, further solutions from within Greater Manchester are limited due to the capacity and financial resource available at this time. Further activity may require additional resources from Government, and/or distribution of existing funds to support the strategic ambition of ending rough sleeping in Greater Manchester

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

4.1. Leaders are asked to note the risks outlined and consider further collective action as appropriate.

APPENDIX 1

This interim accommodation funding through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme was confirmed on 17/09/20:

Authority	Interim accommodation funding
Bolton	£130,000.00
Bury	£81,391
Manchester	£2,000,000.00
Oldham	£147,114.00
Rochdale	£274,000.00
Salford	£417,440.00
Stockport	Non submitted
Tameside	£160,920.00
Trafford	Part of GMCA proposal
Wigan	£250,000
Greater Manchester Combined Authority	£220,000.00
TOTAL	£3,680,803.00