



**CORPORATE & ENVIRONMENTAL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

MEMBERS UPDATE 2020/21
Issue: 4

Article of: Corporate Director of Place & Community

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SUBJECT: ROUGH SLEEPER SUPPORT SERVICE

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF ARTICLE

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the Rough Sleeper Support Service that has been developed in partnership with the Birchwood Centre.
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2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The impact of Covid-19 on the homeless community has been significant. Government restrictions put in place on 17 March 2020 required extensive contingency planning alongside operational support and investment in answering the call to "bring everyone in".
- 2.2 Due to the success of the "everyone in" approach, Government launched the Next Steps Accommodation Fund. This enabled local authorities to bid for funding for short-term interim accommodation, long-term accommodation and support costs. The funding was to be ring-fenced for accommodation specifically for rough sleepers.
- 2.3 A bid was submitted and the Council was awarded £74,500. £37,000 to secure hotel provision to 31 March 2021 and £37,500 to fund the repair and furnishing of 5 units of temporary accommodation specifically for rough sleepers.
- 2.4 Whilst this funding is welcome, the bid also requested funding for a support worker to work with those placed in temporary accommodation. This element of the bid was not successful.

- 2.5 The Council and our wider partners recognised that whilst success had been achieved in accommodating so many people during the pandemic, there had been a lack of support for those in temporary accommodation, many of whom had complex support needs.
- 2.6 To address this, a bid was submitted to the Governments Cold Weather Fund 3. Each Council had already been allocated an amount but bids were required before the allocation could be approved. The Council's allocation was £6,400. A bid was submitted on the basis that the money would go towards funding a part-time support worker to work with the 5 rough sleepers placed in the dedicated temporary accommodation funded through the Next Steps Accommodation Fund. The remaining funding needed for the post would be funded through the Homeless Prevention Grant funding that is provided to the Council on an annual basis.

3.0 ROUGH SLEEPER SUPPORT SERVICE

- 3.1 The Council has worked with the Birchwood Centre to develop a rough sleeper support service that will be operated as a 12-month pilot project. If successful, a tender exercise will be entered into (funding permitting) to secure a partner agency to provide this service on a longer term basis.
- 3.2 Birchwood has delivered services across West Lancashire for over 30 years to prevent and reduce homelessness and will provide the management infrastructure required for quality delivery. Birchwood have a proven management track record of successfully supporting homeless individuals in their Heversham supported accommodation setting as well as in their own tenancies via their outreach services. Birchwood also has extensive experience in successfully engaging with clients who are in crisis, present challenging behaviour issues and who may struggle to live within boundaries and engage in support.
- 3.3 The service will be designed to support the 5 individuals placed in the Council's dedicated rough sleeper temporary accommodation. The support provided will be available for the period the person remains in temporary accommodation and will include but will not be limited to support with addressing substance misuse issues, engaging with relevant specialist services and preparing to live independently.
- 3.4 The support service will provide 20 hours support per week (4 hours per person) from a dedicated complex needs support worker. The support model used by Birchwood is based on the nationally recognised WRAP model (Wellness, Resilience & Action Planning) and provides:
 - Strategies integrated into support plans which promote self-esteem, confidence and positive self-image
 - Recognition and celebration of success and progression in achieving milestones
 - Calm, consistent staff approach using motivational language and model positivity
- 3.5 Each individual will have access to:
 - A named support worker
 - A fully trained counsellor through the Birchwood Hub

- One to one work based on cognitive behaviour therapy approaches to promote self-reflection and changes in thinking patterns that affect behaviour
- Planned supported group work sessions tailored to individual needs delivered by support staff and partner organisations

3.6 All staff are trained in:

- Cycle of Change
- Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults
- Drugs Misuse
- Mental Health and First Aid
- Diet and Nutrition
- Health Champion training (RSPH L2 Understanding Health Improvement),
- ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) screening tool
- WRAP

3.7 Individuals will benefit from access to the local Birchwood Hub. The Hub is fully staffed 24 hours/365 days a year, giving high quality support out of office hours and throughout the night. The on call system ensures staff and customers have access to skilled back up at all times.

3.8 Birchwood will provide considerable added value to the contract. The new service will benefit directly from their:

- Mediation service enabling issues such as conflict resolution and re-building relationships with family members
- Tenancy sustainment support whilst in temporary accommodation
- Move on tenancy sustainment support
- Junk Food Café providing opportunities for volunteering and work experience

4.0 CONTRACT EXEMPTION

4.1 In order to bring the scheme into operation within the funding deadline, a contract exemption has been authorised. This exemption allows a service level agreement to be drawn up with Birchwood without the need to obtain three quotes.

4.2 If the scheme is successful and further funding can be allocated, a formal procurement exercise will be carried out.

5.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The proposal will have an effect on the level and fear of crime. Many rough sleepers with complex needs resort to crime to fund addiction or engage in anti-social behaviour. By providing accommodation with tailored support, such behaviours can be addressed and resolved.

5.2 The proposal will also help reduce the number of homeless people forced to sleep rough and address the cycle of those who do so on a regular basis. It will also have a beneficial impact on the health of those who rough sleep by providing safe, secure accommodation from which they can engage with health services.

6.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The cost of providing a part-time support worker at 20 hours per week for 1 year is £20,000 (includes all costs).
- 6.2 The Council has received £6,400 from the Cold Weather Fund 3 and this is to be used towards the cost of the post and must be spent by 31 March 2021. The remaining £13,600 will be funded from the Council's Homelessness Prevention Grant which is allocated on an annual basis. The GRA will not be impacted by providing this match funding.

7.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The project presents an opportunity to provide a much needed support service to help rough sleepers with complex needs to address the challenges that prevent them from sustaining and successfully maintaining independent accommodation.
- 7.2 The main risk to the Council is that funding is provided to Birchwood for the service but insufficient numbers of rough sleepers accept the offer of temporary accommodation. In order to mitigate this risk, the service will work with anyone placed in temporary accommodation to ensure there is always a caseload of 5 people receiving support.

8.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The proposal will have a positive impact on improving the health and wellbeing of people in vulnerable, deprived and disadvantaged communities, prevent and tackle the causes of ill health, encourage and enable people to take a role in identifying and addressing barrier to improving their health and wellbeing and increasing their independence to lead full active lives.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Article.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders, therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix to this report, the results of which have been taken into account when undertaking the actions detailed within this article.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Equality Impact Assessment