

Homelessness Topic Review

Key notes from the witness interview session - Tuesday 16 July 2013

The topic review working group identified a series of witnesses to take part in a witness interview session which was held on 16 July 2013. The aim of this session was to gather more applied, anecdotal and direct evidence from experts within the Council and key partners delivering a range of different services for the homeless in the city.

The topic review working group heard evidence from a total of 11 witnesses over six sessions. Sessions were recorded in full and the key points raised and included in the following notes.

Session 1 – Derby City Council Housing and Advice Services

Lisa Callow, Head of Housing Options and Advice Services

Matt Palmer, Single Point of Entry Manager

Matt Palmer – Single Point of Entry Manager (SPE) at Milestone House, deals with housing advice, information guidance and homelessness for single people and couples who don't have children and are over the age of 18. 16 or 17 year olds and families or single parents with children who need re-housing are dealt with at the Council House.

Lisa Callow- Head of Housing Options and Advice Services – this role covers homelessness assistance in the city, housing advice, welfare rights and money advice to any Derby resident.

Single Point of Entry

When an individual comes in contact with the SPE team they do an assessment of the individual's needs and their circumstances. This includes looking at why they are homeless, what previous accommodation provision they have had through the housing related support programme or other support programmes, and appropriate referrals. The SPE also look into other issues which may be attached to a individual such as drug or alcohol issues, mental health issues or a past of offending, and link them to the other agencies to try and get them to access support, help and treatment for those issues as well.

The SPE team work Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. In the mornings they are usually doing case work and visits and supporting customers in cross-agency meetings (such as drug and alcohol, mental health or adult social care meetings) and then 1pm-4pm the service is open to see people for assessment. Out of hour services are picked up by Care Line. If there is a bed space at Milestone House somebody approaches out of hours they will directly go in that room until they can be assessed. Care Line are social workers who will do an assessment when staff at Milestone House are not on duty. They start at 5pm and work through the night until the SPE team starts.

Homelessness prevention in Derby

There are a number of tools that are being used at the moment but there is always more that can be done with regards to preventing homelessness.

- Money advice - Some of the tools used include advocating and negotiating with lenders (mortgage, debt, utility) to prioritise or re-prioritise debts. For example, if an individual at risk of becoming homeless and has a large amount of their income going out and this is not sustainable, officers will negotiate with lenders about priority debt or non-priority debt and renegotiating down an affordable payment which will enable the client to remain in their accommodation. The Council's money advice worker has written off £728,000 debt in the city since this scheme has been in operation and has brought in £195,000 to clients through income maximisation and has therefore helped to prevent homelessness.
- Mortgage rescue scheme – had around 45 successful completions. This is possibly top in the East Midlands in terms of city activity, and the scheme is hailed by the DLG as being very pro-active. The scheme helps people who can't make their payments and are threatened with repossession due to being unable to make payments. Officers will negotiate with a delivery partner (in our case this is currently East Midlands Housing Association) to look at whether they can enter a shared ownership with half and half ownership. The scheme is quite complex, time consuming and lengthy with negotiation and casework involved, but it is successful. The mortgage rescue scheme is not successful in helping a client they go back through the money advice route to reprioritise debts so the debt issue is always looked at and resolved if possible.
- Homelessness prevention fund - there is a £50,000 fund which can be used for prevention activities. This can be mitigation/intervention activities (practical solutions), such as when a young person living at home is being deemed to be a 'nuisance' and they have having issues remaining at home they would trigger the priority needs legislation so the council would have a duty to put them in temporary accommodation and re-house. In these instances officers would look at what they can do with the fund. This could be as simple as purchasing earphones for a noisy teenager threatened with eviction by parents so they aren't disrupting the rest of the household and can remain at home.
- Bond bank scheme – this scheme underwrite a damage limitation clause for private landlords. We have issued 161 bonds to the value of around £80,000. It is a very successful scheme because the landlord gets a guarantee that should any damage be done during the first 6 months they can claim against that bond. There is a very low reclaim rate – 22 bonds that were claimed against with a total value of £9,200. It is a very good value for money prevention scheme for families and single people, so if a family approaches us we believe they're going to be homeless within 3 months and they've had notice to quit from a landlord mortgage provider then we would start to look for a property for them.

Our statutory obligation is that if an individual, couple or family is threatened with homelessness within 28 days through no fault of their own they are classed as homeless. They would then need to be provided with temporary accommodation and would start the SPE process. Temporary accommodation figures/costs can be very high for the authority if the right preventative measures are not taken.

Young homeless people

A number of providers have already been decommissioned this year and we are still going through decommissioning through Housing Related Support (HRS) funding reductions moving towards single providers. The most difficult group to deal with are the 16-24 year olds as they can't legally be provided with tenancy as they are unable to access housing benefit. If we can't negotiate with families to keep 16/17 year olds we have a joint responsibility with CYP services to re-house them.

No Second Night Out Derby and Derbyshire (NSNODD) and rough sleepers

The official number of rough sleepers in the city was 24, but the NSNODD scheme has steadily increased figures. So far the NSNODD figures for the city are:

- March - 36-38
- April - 38-40
- May - 59

However, because the SPE team had some additional resource to deal with fall out from HRS cuts there have been vacancies at Milestone House still. Milestone House was originally designed as emergency accommodation for up to 28 days with move-on after this time, but this has never really been effective. However over the last 2-3 months there has been resource to deal with the move-on from Milestone House. 60-70 % of people currently in Milestone House had entered during the previous two weeks, and every night there has been bed spaces at Milestone House and vacancies carried through Sunday to Monday. Although NSNO has increased figures, they have provided the capacity for move-on.

Rough sleepers in the Assembly Room Car Park that NSNODD, Gynis Hawkes (Single Point of Entry Senior Housing Advisor) and various other people (such as the Street Drinkers Case Manager) have been out trying to engage don't want to come in because they want to continue with their chaotic lifestyles.

No Second Night Out has had positive impact as each individual seen has had an offer of assistance and services. This could range from emergency sit-up accommodation, a bed at Milestone House or Centenary or a reconnection if they are not from the city.

Alcohol

There is a Street Drinker Care Worker who deals with street drinker issues. Alcohol is one of the most difficult issues to deal with (and overall in the city because it is legal) and high the sale of high strength lagers and ciders is a big problem. Milestone house have a number of residents who have health issues caused by alcohol consumption and dependency. After move-on they frequently get sent back to Milestone House because service providers are unable to deal with these client's issues and needs, and the clients refuse responsibility and continue to drink.

Alcohol abuse is an issue in the city generally and there has been a lot of work going on in this area with regards to reconfiguration of treatment services. There is a drug and alcohol death related panel to examine all sorts of things if someone dies from substance misuse.

Partnership working

There is a community psychiatric nurse who deals with homeless people so if mental health is one of the issues identified by the SPE team they would get the nurse to see them and refer them to mental health services.

There is also a GP surgery that runs out of Milestone House and they have very good links with the Police in terms of anti-social behaviour, street-drinking and begging. There are weekly meetings with the police around what they can do and how to get people off the streets, and very involved with complex needs workers that are currently staffed within the substance misuse teams.

Economic migrants

There is an issue with migrant workers coming over with a package of accommodation and work and then falling out of work within weeks and finding themselves in a situation where they are unable to make their rent payments and they are unable to find further work. Therefore the high number of economic migrants with no recourse to public funds is a large problem. The Street Drinker Case Worker has set up a reconnection fund which has enabled over 30 people to be reconnected back to Eastern Europe if we are unable to assist them into employment and self-financing. They are offered a reconnection and there is a bus service that they can be booked onto. The bus comes through Derby which comes from Sheffield and drives across Europe. Mark Evans (Street Drinker Case Worker) co-ordinates this for people in Derby. There has only been one failure of someone who hasn't turned up.

The costs of homelessness

Shelter have done some figures on how much it costs for people to access all of the different services and based around complex needs type cases, and it ranges from between 10,000 to 26,000 per person per approach. An independent evaluation carried out looked at the work being done by complex case workers and the costs of what would happen if individuals were not dealt with through these case workers. There were 3 pilot cities looked at (Derby was one) and the costs ranged from £10,000-£26,000 because people with complex needs will continue to require a range of costly services (such as health care services, police authority and custody costs, engagement teams and anti-social behaviour teams) if they are not properly managed.

The problem now is that supported accommodation in the city is dramatically reduced. Since the Housing Related Support reductions homeless acceptance figures have started to rise straight away, which is an indicator that this is going to impact on the ability to keep homeless acceptance figures down and the costs of placing people in bed and breakfast and other temporary accommodation will likely increase.

EET (education, employment and training)

Because we are now putting such a focus on dealing with people and their financial issues, some of the focus of EET has been removed at a time when benefits are being cut and when people are being encouraged to go into work. More needs to be done around those issues and to aid people into EET. If we don't give individuals meaningful activities we haven't set them up to be a success and if we don't put a structure and routine in place for them they may return to a chaotic lifestyle.

Session 2 - YMCA Derbyshire, Campus for Learning and Development, London Road

Rachel Morris. Head of Housing and Communities, Chair of the Derby Hostel Liaison Group and Chair of the Street Drinkers Reference Group
David Finn, Development Manager

The Campus

The Campus provides supported lodgings for single homeless people aged 16-64 years old. Currently they have about 30 under 18s and about 50 which would fall under adult services (between the ages of 18 and 65).

The Campus takes a holistic approach, providing independent living services and working closely with community mental health teams and substance misuse services who all come on site to provide services to residents. They also have an EET (education, employment and training) programme for all residents and younger people are provided with on-site training and volunteer opportunities (such as serving behind the counter in the canteen).

The site is a dry site and residents need a safe environment without drug or alcohol use going on around them. The Campus takes in a range of people requiring supported accommodation including individuals from child sexual exploitation situations, individuals in witness protection, male victims of domestic violence, and also individuals referred from Karma Nirvana (registered charity which operates nationally, supporting victims and survivors of forced marriages and honour based violence). The Campus also provides a night-stop service (emergency accommodation for 1-2 nights) through the Homeless Transition Fund, which is a 12 month grant and it is hoped that this will become self-financing.

Their supported housing is currently 99% full. In the crash pads they like to keep one bed free for emergencies. Single Point of Entry (SPE) at Milestone House hold their waiting system and inform them of new referrals through a list. However, after September The Campus will be an 88 bedroom facility with no funding for staff.

No Second Night Out Derby and Derbyshire (NSNODD)

Individuals are referred by NSNODD through the Single Point of Entry (SPE) team. On arrival individuals are taken through an independent living assessment by the staff at the YMCA. It was felt that for some of the referrals they have received, placement from Centenary to YMCA would work better (instead of direct to YMCA).

Welfare benefits

Finding accommodation is more difficult for young people due to the fact that they are only allowed a shared room rate which is quite low.

Also, for people to access job seekers allowance if they have been out of work and claiming JSA for over a year they need to be job searching for 35 hours a week, which is difficult to achieve. Individuals can be sanctioned if they fail to evidence this.

Further support

Support for people who have been living in a hostel setting should be continued for a short time to help them become independent. Often individuals have issues with cooking and budgeting and things like issues with pre-payment meters..

Session 3 - Riverside ECHG (Centenary House/No Second Night Out)

Reg Smith, Support Manager

Centenary House

Centenary house has 32 beds including a female wing and two wet units, which are more chaotic and challenging. All referrals come from Single Point of Entry. The wet unit residents have a 'drink plan' and a supervised drink unit. Move on for these individuals is often difficult due to their drinking issues and the need for residential care. A lot are only in early 50s so are unable to access traditional residential care. Flexible care packages or having someone based at the hotel to offer care would be better for these individuals. The hostel provides a beer garden from 8am which reduces a lot of anti-social behaviour issues out on the streets.

Individuals must have priority needs to get accommodation from the Single Point of Entry assessment, but Centenary manage more difficult clients than other service providers.

Centenary House has a room where you can have a dog and they have a special license for this. It was highlighted that many people with dogs have tenancies though and are not homeless.

No Second Night Out (NSNO)

Centenary House started preparing early on 01 March as they were resourced and wanted to be prepared for an April start. Although the NSNO team do not work out of hours they wouldn't turn people away of a weekend or out of hours when they are unable to be assessed, but would give an emergency bed and refer to SPE on Monday morning (or the next working day). Centenary have noted a recent increase in rough sleeping.

People have been reconnected to all parts of the UK and Europe. Those assisted are usually given up to 3 nights in a sit-up bed and are assessed during that time. Mediation attempts take place to try and get economic migrants back home instead of into supported housing if possible. Individuals helped through NSNO are fed, able to have their clothes laundered, given toiletries, towels and are allowed to shower.

NSNO Referrals

- 38 – April
- 24 – May
- 32 – June

Emergency bed spaces/NSNO

- 4 Centenary
- 4 Milestone

Health service issues

There are some examples of health services not taking proper responsibility for patients. Centenary House had a terminally ill client who went into hospital for temporary care. On coming out of hospital health services wanted to refer him back to Centenary for palliative care, which was completely inappropriate. Staff at

Centenary House are not trained or qualified to deal with this, nor is it the purpose of Centenary House.

Other points

Homelessness impact on Accident and Emergency would be higher without Centenary intervention, as would the impact on crime.

Eastern Europeans (economic migrants) – many are legally here but can't claim benefits. There are a number on Friargate Goods Yard which we have offered reconnection to (to go home to their country of origin) but they have refused. Now the council and their partners are looking at how to assist them, helping them into property, improving their health and getting them into and employment.

It was also raised that most users of soup kitchens and lots of street drinks have tenancies.

Move on

- assessment in 1st two weeks
- look at housing needs
- see if appropriate for Homefinder
- many peoples tenancies would fail (??)
- no float support services (anymore)
- high eviction rate expected in city over next 18 months

EET (Education, employment and training)

GROW (Giving Real Opportunities for Work) development programme. the 'GROW' programme offers training and skills for people moving into independent living.

What's needed:

- New strategy to deal with increased numbers of intentionally homeless.
- Floating support for the first few months of tenancies.
- Health services need to come to the table and assist – homeless providers have picked up much of their responsibilities in the past.
- Prison services – there is little help and support for people on re-entry (into society) for non-British nationals.
- Border agencies need to be engaged.
- Need to commission bed spaces i.e. mental health, A&E, reducing damage through alcohol programmes in hostels and reduced hospital stays.
- Need somewhere for hospital detox patients to go.

Teenage Parents

- Teenage parents – through engagement with the council's Children and Young People directorate. This was funded in the past but it is not included in the new HRS contract.
- Currently 7 teenage parents at 16-17 year olds in dispersed properties around the city.

Session 4 - Derventio Housing (incorporating notes from the Derventio Housing Milestone House Visit – 7.30pm Wednesday 27 March 2013)

Mark Menzies, Housing and Support Director
Jackie Carpenter, Head of Communications and Strategy
Alicia Reid, Operations Manager, Milestone House

Present at visit:

Councillor Redfern – Planning, Housing and Leisure Board Scrutiny Chair, Derby City Council
Alicia Reid – Operations Manager, Milestone House, Derventio Housing
Clare Harrison – Scrutiny Officer, Derby City Council
Sarah Koniarski – Constitutional Services Officer, Derby City Council

Background

Derventio Housing was formed out of Derbyshire Housing Aid. They have 250 units of accommodation, mainly in shared housing. They are housing benefit claim funded, and provide move-on accommodation with some supported accommodation.

Milestone House

At the end of September the contract for delivering services at Milestone House will be going to Derby Homes. Staff are expected to TUPE across from Derventio to Derby Homes to continue delivering services under the HRS contract.

Milestone House is essentially a 35-bed temporary accommodation hostel. The spaces are allocated by Derby City Council's Single Point of Entry team who assess individuals turning up as homeless or imminently homeless based on their priority need. The Derventio staff at Milestone House who manage the operational side of the hostel do not have access to existing detailed assessment information so are unable to check this information for individuals turning up and wanting to be placed in temporary accommodation.

Individuals who have been allocated a bed in the hostel are booked in for 28 days and individuals with accommodation at the hostel are expected to be in the hostel between the hours of 2am and 6am or face eviction from the hostel. During this time they are supported to find or be allocated move on accommodation into supported housing or into a tenancy if appropriate. This is reviewed after 28 days. The longest an individual has stayed in Milestone House is around a year, due to the individual being banned from other hostels. This individual was eventually moved into Derventio shared housing.

No Second Night Out (NSNO)

At the visit it was thought by staff that the No Second Night Out scheme being introduced in April would take over from the severe weather provision and that these spaces would then be managed by the No Second Night Out team for use throughout the year.

There is also a possible conflict between severe weather provision and NSNO conflict. Lots of people who accessed severe weather provision will not be able to access NSNO (they are not new clients) and therefore the practicalities of NSNO appear to be lacking. The Operations Manager at Milestone House was concerned

that the scheme would also mean that a lot of existing clients, long-term street drinkers and the intentionally homeless and still need a lot of help and support would not be prioritised.

NSNO activities take place from 7am to 3pm with no weekends, bank holidays or night-time work. An overlap is needed during the night instead of just 7am to 3pm to capture as many individuals as possible.

Severe weather provision

Derventio staff co-ordinate the severe weather provision. Clients turn up in the afternoon at 4pm and if there are no beds available in the hostel they are put on a reserve list for the emergency accommodation (sit-up beds). They are told to come back at 8.30pm for a space allocation, and usually start to arrive from 7pm.

There are 4 spaces allocated at Milestone House, 2 at Centenary House and 2 at the Padley Centre. Derventio staff based at Milestone House also co-ordinate the provision at the Padley Centre and Centenary House and call both service providers to allocate their spaces. Those not allocated a space would have to find somewhere else to sleep.

EET (education, employment and training)

Derventio run an innovative farm project, which is an organic horticultural farm in Kirk Langley which individuals can work out to gain confidence, skills and experience.

Session 5 - Padley Group - Day Centre and Hostel

Pat Zadora, Chief Executive

Background

The Padley Centre consists of a hostel and a day centre.

Day Centre

The day centre is open at times when it was felt the service users needed it most. The opening hours are currently 8am to 3pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, 8am to 2pm on Wednesdays, 10.30am to 2pm on Saturdays and 1pm to 4pm on Sundays.

It costs roughly £8 a visit to the centre plus food costs which are around £35,000 a year in food donations. The Padley Centre has a development centre in Normanton at which volunteers sort, wash, peel, dice, freeze and store food for future use. NFT (logistics firm for Morrison's) donate surplus of close to end date produce. If there is more than can be used quickly or frozen they disseminate it to other hostels.

Services:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|---|
| - Toilets | - Ironing | - Letter writing |
| - Showers | - Mailing address | - Benefits advice |
| - Food | - Phone calls | - Help with the criminal justice system |
| - Clothing | - Hair cuts | - Social services interaction and support |
| - Support work | - Opticians | - Budgeting help |
| - Laundry | - Clinics | |
| - Help with repatriation | - Advice | |
| - Mental health care | - Form-filling | |

Hostel

It is much easier to provide support to clients in the hostel than in the day centre as they can have a proper assessment and are providing with a support plan and a way forward. They have no tenancies at the hostel, they have licenses with conditions written by Padley. As a condition of the license the residents have to engage with key workers and have 'move on' strategies.

The hostel is an all male 10-bed hostel. It is all male in order to maximise space. They only take men who are 18 or over because they also take schedule 1 offenders. Support workers are trained to do assessments, find out as much as possible about their situation and double-check information. 33-40% of residents have mental health needs and some have multiple/complex needs such as drug and/or alcohol dependencies as well as physical and/or mental health issues. People need to be in receipt of housing benefit to get a hostel bed. Usually the length of stay is 3 months.

The Padley Centre work closely with a range of other service providers, partners and authorities. They also do talks to young people on homelessness in colleges, schools and the university. Since April they have also been involved in the local assistance programme for food parcels and toiletries.

Funding

The Padley Centre receives a Voluntary Community Service Grant of £24,500 from Derby City Council and £30,000 from the NHS so their current level of funding is £54,468. They used to get £101,152 from the Supporting People Fund which ceased in April 2013. Housing Benefit pays for the accommodation/hostel facilities.

It costs £195,000 a year to run the day centre but they have managed to receive enough from donation, legacies, grants and fundraising to operate as normal this year, however there will be impacts on their service provision from 2014. In order to increase funding support through donations in 2013 The Padley Centre ran the 'Padley 4000' Campaign saying that they could continue to run if 4000 people gave £2 a month. The campaign was launched in Jan/Feb and achieved its aim.

What is needed?

- Interpretation services (European)
- Floating support - helping people with tenancies and maintaining tenancies
- Fuel poverty (last year The Padley Centre relaxed the rules on emergency food parcels due to increased hardship paying for heating bills).

Session 6 - British Red Cross

Guy Freeman and Damon Musgrove – Refugee Services – Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Funding

The work they do is currently lottery funded to September 2015. At the end of the funding period they are likely to resubmit for continuation of funding for a further 5 years.

Homelessness

They don't directly do work related to homelessness, but through their refugee work they do food distribution work which overlaps with the work of the city's homeless providers. They co-ordinate the Food Networking Forum in the city.

Food services

- Costco – 6 days a week they distribute food close to the sell by date through city groups and organisations.
- Good networking forum - All food distribution groups get together once a quarter to share information and discuss what groups and service providers are doing.
- Fareshare – costs each organisation £800. The hub is in Leicester and once a fortnight they come and distribute food to Derby organisations. Simon Cartwright of St Thomas' Church organises this for Derby.

Interpretation and language services

The British Red Cross has close links with some service providers who deliver useful language and interpretation services. NC Fusion (helping new communities) of the Madeley Centre provide some interpretation services and assist economic migrants in communicating with service providers in order to access assistance and support. The British Red Cross also provided a list of service providers who offer funded language courses which can help individuals to take a course in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to adjust to life in the UK.