**Introduction**

The Government launched its Rough Sleeping Strategy in August 2018. It is based around three core pillars:

* **Prevention** - providing timely support before someone becomes homeless;
* **Intervention** – helping people who are already in crisis get swift, targeted support to get them off the streets;
* **Recovery** - supporting people to find a new home quickly and rebuild their lives via a new rapid rehousing approach.

The principles of this strategy are very much in line with those introduced through the Homelessness Reduction Act and the Government’s commitment is to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. The Government has introduced several funding bid rounds since the launch of its strategy to help local authorities devise innovative solutions to help deliver on the three core pillars explained above.

**National Context**

In terms of the current picture nationally, a total of 2,688 rough sleepers were recorded in 2020, of whom 44% were in London and the south east. This figure is down by 1,578 people or 37 % from 2019, and is likely to have been influenced by the success of the ‘Everyone In’ initiative in response to COVID 19 which is estimated to have accommodated 37,000 people since the start of the pandemic.

The sector is keen to build on the success of ‘Everyone in’ and to ensure that the opportunity to end rough sleeping is not lost.

The Rough Sleeping Initiative was first announced in March 2018 to make an immediate impact on the rising levels of rough sleeping and has provided an important source of funding to authorities. More recently, the DLUHC has announced an additional package of support for councils supporting people sleeping rough. This includes the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) which allocated £271 million of funding in two tranches (£105 million and £166 million) for 2020/21, to support councils to source 3300 units of move-on accommodation and support for the people accommodated under Everyone In.

**Sub Regional Context**

Across the Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and West Suffolk sub-region, the picture of rough sleeping varies greatly by district. To generalise, the numbers of rough sleepers are highest in the city areas or where there are large towns whilst numbers tend to be lower in rural areas. Therefore, the response and offer from each local authority area has differed depending on the demographic in each area.

The 2020 Annual Rough Sleeper count indicated that a total of 56 people were sleeping rough on the night of the count/estimate in the Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and West Suffolk sub-region (although the Ending Rough sleeping plans indicate the figure could be higher). Numbers across each local authority area range from a single rough sleeper up to 17. Fenland, in particular, has a high proportion of rough sleepers with no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

The ARC 4 report, which was commissioned and written pre-covid, makes some sub regional recommendations in respect of rough sleeping, including the suggestion of a standardised offer for all rough sleepers. Since the report was written, all districts have responded to the ‘Everyone In’ initiative and utilised funding to develop specific services that are appropriate to each area. Each authority has also developed an ‘Ending Rough Sleeping Plan’ which reflects the situation in each area.

In view of the differences in across the sub region, there is not currently a perceived benefit in developing a standardised offer for rough sleepers, although the sub regional Homeless leads group have agreed to keep this question under review based on the level of future need.

In addition, all authorities are offering rough sleepers the opportunity to complete a Personal Housing Plan and working to proactively prevent and end rough sleeping. Of particular note is the fact that Peterborough City are currently piloting a scheme which sees them make an offer to every rough sleeper, regardless of priority need. The authority will feedback to sub-regional colleagues about the success of this including any good practice, learning and costs. This feedback is scheduled for January 2022 and the group will consider whether there is any learning that can be applied to the rough sleeper offers in other areas. In addition, the group keeps the remaining ARC4 recommendations under review.

**Looking Back – Key Rough Sleeping Achievements during 2020/21**

The following are snapshots of some of the rough sleeping successes throughout the sub-region in 2020/21.

* The offer of a Street Outreach service to those experiencing rough sleeping, to support clients move off the streets (shared RSI fuding bid led by Huntingdon on behalf of East Cambs and South utilising P3 support services).
* Successful RSAP bids in Fenland have meant further opportunities for clients to find a settled home and move on with their lives in a positive way, including those who require support and prevent them from returning to rough sleeping. This includes 36 units of accommodation secured via Amicus Trust under NSAP funding and 3 Clarion properties with support from Ferry Project via NSAP. CGL tenancy sustainment was utilised as part of the settling in transition for up to 3 months.
* Through the ‘Everyone In’ response, Cambridge City developed its work with non-UK nationals, provided new self-contained accommodation for vulnerable rough sleepers (through NSAP and RSI) and improved on a strong, existing homelessness partnership. As part of this work, 60 units of new, primarily self contained, units of accommodation have been created in Cambridge City over the past 18 months.

**Looking Forward – Targets and plans for 2021/22**

In terms of addressing rough sleeping in each area, local authorities have been asked to complete an Ending Rough Sleeping Plan, setting out their targets for the year and basing interventions and actions around the three headings of prevention, intervention and recovery.

Table: Rough Sleeping Targets

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Local Authority** | **2020 Rough Sleeping Snapshot Figure** | **Rough Sleeping Operational target** |
| Cambridge City Council (City) | 17 | 8 |
| East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) | 1 | 0 |
| Fenland District Council(FDC) | 8 | 7 (this is the number of people with NRPF) |
| Huntingdon District Council (HDC) | 8 | 4 |
| Peterborough City Council (PCC) | 9 | tbc |
| South Cambridgeshire District Council (SDCD) | 3 | 0 |
| West Suffolk Council(WSC) | 14 | 5 |

Despite the difference in rough sleeping numbers in each area, there are some common themes that can be identified in the Ending Rough Sleeping plans. These include:

* Work with partner agencies to improve systems ie ensure protocols are in place relating to hospital discharge, prison release etc.
* Improving access to private rented sector accommodation ie via use of HMOs, tenancy training, tenancy sustainment schemes and improved access to rent deposit etc
* Development or acquisition of additional units for example, via Housing First or through other funding bids.

The following are examples of some of the specific actions contained in each plan:

**Prevention Actions:**

* Reduction in rough sleepers and homelessness through earlier intervention including the development of joint protocols including the criminal justice system, young people and care leavers (all authorities)
* Reduction in number of people with NRPF including the continued delivery of a Hub and Rough Sleeper co-ordinator post to support people with NRPF into work and work with Border Control (Fenland)

**Intervention Actions:**

* Continued offer of a Street Outreach service to those experiencing rough sleeping, to support clients move off the streets (shared RSI bid for ECDC, HDC and SCDC utilising P3 support services).
* With County Council colleagues investigate, propose and consult upon the creation of a 'streets to home' service for rough sleepers, bringing separate support functions together under a new, seamless service. (Cambridge City)
* Rough Sleeper Initiative year 4 funding being used to continue delivery of support to rough sleepers and former rough sleepers.  This includes outreach and resettlement workers, support workers, two navigators, substance misuse worker, mental health worker and rough sleeper coordinator (West Suffolk).
* Provision of 6 modular homes with RSAP funding (Fenland)
* Provision of HMO accommodation and a dedicated officer for this type of accommodation under the Council’s Private Sector Leasing Scheme scheme. (SCDC)

**Recovery Actions:**

* Design and deliver a programme of pre-tenancy work for people moving into PRS accommodation (City).
* Procure fourteen units of accommodation for the benefit of long term rough sleepers and two units of accommodation for hospital leavers at risk of returning to rough sleeping (City).
* Ensure Clients being supported through RSAP funding are receiving personalised healthcare being delivered by the Marginalised and Vulnerable Adults Service (West Suffolk)
* The establishment of a multi agency Homelessness Reduction Board for Suffolk which will oversee delivery of new accommodation options and joined up commissioning of support services.
* Work in collaboration with County to establish Housing First model in Huntingdonshire to provide six units of accommodation (HDC).

**Progress and Challenges**

It should be noted that the above actions, grouped under the three headings of Prevention, Intervention and Recovery, are indicative of the types of work underway across the sub region but do not represent the sum of all work currently taking place or in development. However, they do illustrate that a wide range of schemes and initiatives have been developed to provide support to rough sleepers across the sub region. Overall, authorities are proud of their progress in terms of tackling and reducing rough sleeping and the outcomes achieved, in conjunction with, partners during the pandemic.

Many of the actions in the Ending Rough Sleeping Plans are RAG rated green, particularly in relation to successful RSAP bids which have led to further opportunities for clients to find a settled home and to move on with their lives in a positive way. There are, however, aspects that continue to present a significant challenge to authorities in their ability to meet the targets set out in their plans:

Firstly, it should be noted that there continues to be a significant issue in relation to those without recourse to public funds, including a lack of joined up focus at a strategic level between MHCLG and Home Office. This is a particular challenge in the Fenland area where a high proportion of rough sleepers have NRPF.

It is also clear that, key actions across every Ending Rough Sleeping Plan, relies on multi agency working and engagement. Where this engagement exists, the desired outcomes are closer to being achieved. However, where agencies are unable or unwilling to commit resources and time, there is a greater likelihood of actions being RAG rated as amber or red.

Finally, it should be noted that the most significant challenge for all authorities is the year on year pitch to central government for funding, along with existing pressures on budgets. Many of the services currently in place are subject to fixed term funding bids and this provides a lack of stability and certainty about the extent and the nature of the services available. In addition, the plethora of funding and bid opportunities available (whilst appreciated) are sometimes opportunistic and require authorities to be able to respond promptly to ad-hoc opportunities as they arise.

Thus, whilst the success that local authorities have demonstrated in bidding for funds (both individually and collectively) is positive, the fact that so many rough sleeper services are reliant on short term funding poses an ongoing challenge for future service planning and delivery.

**Update provided by Heather Wood, Head of Housing Advice and Options, SCDC**