

Committee: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Sub-Committee	Dated: 01/10/2020
Subject: COVID-19 Recovery Plan Update	Public
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
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Summary

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has presented public bodies and commissioned providers with an unprecedented challenge. On 22 March, the Government formally announced its social distancing policy and, on 26 March, the new COVID -19 Taskforce launched the 'Everyone In' initiative to support local authorities in helping rough sleepers to access accommodation.

This report updates the summary provided to the June Sub-Committee relating to: action taken in supporting rough sleepers through the adaptations and additions to our service delivery; the benefit of partnership work with the Greater London Authority (GLA); and some indications of the impact of this work.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. In Quarter 4 of financial year 2019/20, a total of 172 individual rough sleepers were seen bedded down by the City of London (CoL) commissioned Outreach team.
2. In January 2020, a total of 45 individuals were counted as part of our bi-monthly street counts.
3. The first UK cases of COVID-19 in the general population were reported towards the end of January, and infection rates escalated throughout February and March.

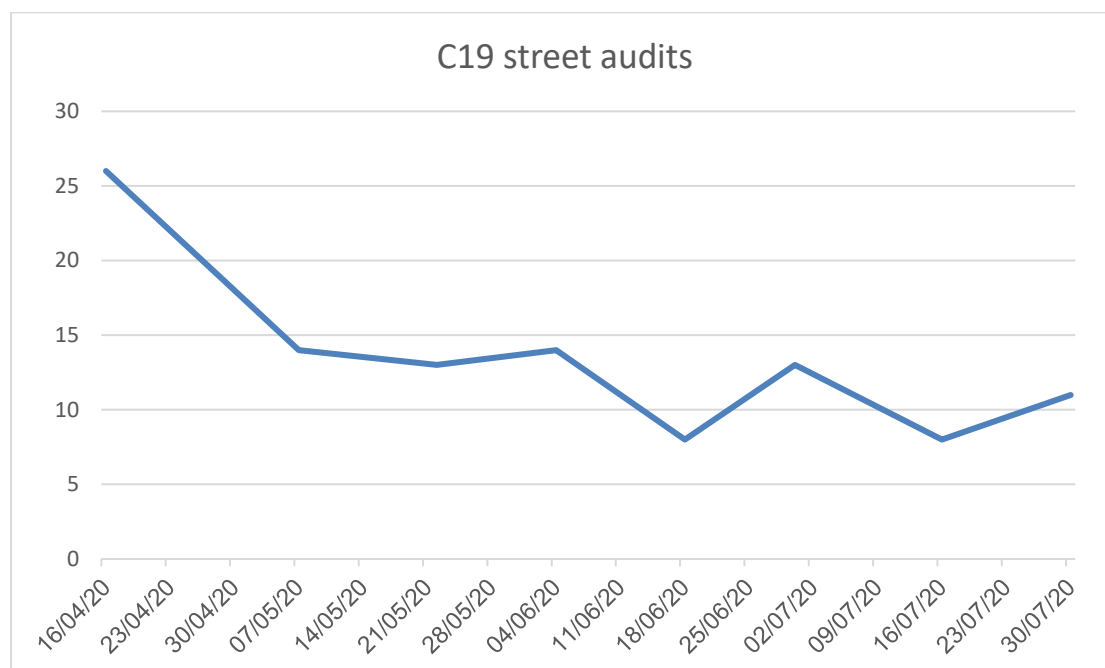
4. Towards the end of February and the beginning of March, there was an indication that COVID-19 posed a significant risk to those rough sleeping, particularly in densely populated areas such as the CoL, due to its rapidity of infection and the indicated effect on those with pre-existing health conditions.
5. While a vulnerability to COVID-19 remains inherent in this cohort, infection rates have remained very low. Our COVID-19 Recovery Plan and related activity therefore continues as a set of preventative measures, and to sustain and build on the reduced level of rough sleeping we have witnessed in the Square Mile.

Street Audits

6. The CoL Outreach team and partners provide regular street audit shifts, visiting all hotspot sites and known individuals across the CoL to capture an accurate 'on the night' figure of rough sleeping in the authority area.
7. Street audits are akin to street counts. Pre-COVID-19, CoL had committed to operate street audits on a bi-monthly basis, using fewer personnel to enable a high level of regularity with as low an impact as possible on operational services.
8. The last street count took place on 31 January 2020, and 41 individuals were seen rough sleeping on the night.
9. Audits conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic show that this figure has reduced to an average of 14 individuals currently rough sleeping on a given night.
 - a) The following table shows all audit shifts carried out and the number of individuals seen bedded down on the night.

Date	No. of rough sleepers
16/04/2020	26
07/05/2020	14
22/05/2020	13
04/06/2020	14
18/06/2020	8
30/06/2020	13
16/07/2020	8
30/07/2020	11

- b) The line graph below shows the downward trend of the number of rough sleepers seen on each of the audit shifts.



10. Regular audit shifts will continue as part of the CoL COVID-19 response, to ensure that the City has a good insight into any potential changes to the known rough sleeping population in the City.

CoL COVID-19 emergency assessment service

11. The St Paul's Youth Hostels Association (YHA) building at 36 Carter Lane is leased to the City until March 2021. It plays a vital role in the CoL COVID-19 response. For several months the hostel has accommodated approximately 20 of the City's well-known, street-attached rough sleepers; for many, this was the first move off the streets for several years.
12. On 12 August 2020, the YHA building began to accept new residents, which was carefully managed in partnership with City Outreach and the YHA support provider, Providence Row Housing Association (PRHA). Since mid-August the booking system has staggered a maximum of two new residents each day, affording a gradual adjustment for the existing guests and staff.
13. Careful consideration and consultation with Public Health England (PHE) has taken place, and the new COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for homelessness hostels have been shared with the City Assessment Service (CAS) to ensure that all possible recommendations are implemented.
14. The implementation of the required SOP recommendations are being reviewed on a weekly basis with PRHA and all other contractors.
15. As of 1 September 2020, a total of 39 individuals have been placed at the YHA, with 35 individuals currently residing at the service. The remaining bed spaces

are available as emergency bed spaces (EBS) for outreach workers to use as needed.

16. The CAS support team is provided by PRHA at the YHA. CAS provides 24/7 support to residents, with the aim of stabilising individuals, working collaboratively with other support services to ensure that residents needs are met, and jointly preparing clients for the move from the YHA.
17. It has been recognised by the City that, as the hostel population increases, the focus and resource inevitably shifts to the move on and resettlement of YHA residents. To enable a steady flow of new guests into the hostel, and for those who are ready to move out of the hostel, the CAS team needs more capacity.
18. The City has agreed that, along with an enhanced service specification, it will fund a further two posts for the remainder of the financial year – bringing the total workforce to 15.
19. Key to this new enhanced staff structure is the recruitment of a contracts manager who will have oversight of the service and staff, providing much-needed support to the co-ordinator role and the development of robust systems and processes. The new specification requires the CAS team to further develop personalised action plans for all guests within a set timeframe, and to aim to support a minimum of 25% of guests to claim Housing Benefits.
20. Early on in the CoL COVID-19 response, the importance of providing sustenance to YHA residents was identified as a way of encouraging rough sleepers to take up and maintain the offer of accommodation, and so to reduce residents' exposure to COVID-19. Recently a new catering contract has been confirmed with CH&CO. Catering Ltd to provide three meals a day to a minimum of 20 individuals, including weekends and bank holidays until March 2021.

Accommodation outcomes during COVID-19

21. Since late March 2020, the homelessness team has received regular live data from the CoL Outreach team and services operated by PRHA of accommodation outcomes secured for City rough sleepers.
22. Data submitted has included information that was not submitted to CHAIN due to some services not having access to the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN) database.
23. To ensure that this data is accurate, CoL officers have used live data submissions along with information recorded on CHAIN, and have maintained records of these data sets in an amalgamated localised system.
24. All data is reflective of data that has been made available to CoL officers, and it provides the best picture of outcomes related to rough sleeping from 1 March 2020 to 1 September 2020.
25. A total of 274 accommodation outcomes, affecting 130 individuals, have been recorded by the CoL Outreach team and support services commissioned by the GLA.

26. To date there have been 24 positive move-ons from City-funded COVID-19 accommodation, led by the City Outreach team and CAS.

- Hotel accommodation:
 - two international reconnections
 - four placements into long-term supported hostels
 - 14 moves to YHA
 - one move to family/friends
- YHA:
 - one private rented accommodation
 - one placement into long-term supported hostel
- Temporary accommodation:
 - one clearing house.

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG)

27. A submission was made to MHCLG's Next Steps Accommodation Programme on 20 August 2020. This fund makes a total of £105 million available to councils in England to help meet the initial cost burden of supporting the Government's Everyone In initiative. The fund covered COVID-19 activity delivered between August 2020 and 31 March 2021.

28. All submissions were co-produced with MHCLG advisors. The City of London submission totalled £941,600.

Conclusion

29. The COVID-19 Recovery Plan is well underway and remains an important focus of the CoL Homelessness team and commissioned services workload. The additional service delivery of the audit shifts, an increase in capacity at CAS/YHA and the potential of future funding through the MHCLG will enable the CoL to continue to provide a robust and considered response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Appendices

- None

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