



Crisis Local Authority Practice Network

Practice Exchange Session 14/12/2021
SWEP and winter provision? What does 2021/22 look like.

Notes from Practice Exchange 14/12/2021

Theme: SWEP and winter provision. What does 2021/22 look like?

Topics

1. How are we tackling this year's SWEP planning?
2. Can we share any ideas or ways of working that could prove useful in the current climate.

Actions:

LN to circulate notes prior to the next exchange

Local Authorities in attendance:

- Northampton
- Southwark
- Norwich
- Bristol
- Sheffield
- Coventry
- BCP
- Manchester
- Oxford
- Central Bedfordshire

Manchester has extended its offer, taking referrals from 1 December. Looking collectively with partners and outreach teams. Currently have 80 rooms in hotels, with en-suites. Its challenging to 'pop up' and expand, finding spot purchase spaces in Manchester is difficult. It was easier to work with commercial hotels last year.

Central Bedfordshire is very rural. Working hard to keep people in the towns they are rough sleeping, difficult when people have already abandoned temporary or settled accommodation. Small group of people, needs well known, Rough Sleeping Initiative 2022-25 will target.

Norwich has consulted Public Health colleagues to set up a winter shelter outside SWEP provision (SWEP too adhoc.) Used as a last resort for rough sleepers and trying to move people on as quickly as possible, 20 spaces but seeing six at a maximum at any point. 40 people moved through so far. Useful for people with NRPF to try and engage in services. Using security.

BCP was setting up communal accommodation, with the new variant moved to single rooms only. Has been difficult to find anything suitable. Much more prepared this year as partners ready to work together and using existing stock and supported housing beds.

- **Oxfordshire** has seen an increase in numbers of people rough sleeping. Rolling out Housing First in the city. Continuing to use part of the YHA unit for SWEP provision. Currently, 14 people staying there – people with fewest options, looking for bespoke offer to solve homelessness. Part of YHA will be an interim ‘Somewhere safe to stay’ offer. Had 17 people come in on first activation (high number). Looking to obtain another 12-bed hotel for winter offer, running through to April 2022.
- **Northampton** has significant challenges finding nightly provision. Difficult to stop-start, particularly when you don’t know how local the accommodation is. Everyone In provision was successful last year, finding a lot of resource going into supporting people who are repeat and long-term rough sleeping – will be treating these as a target group in Rough Sleeping Initiative 2022-25. Have exhausted other options and need better support. Using ‘Covid containment management’(?) fund to support new provision. Using unused University buildings. Worked with Infection management and Environment health colleagues to make application.
- Action: Lisa to circulate information about the fund: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/containment-outbreak-management-fund-2021-to-2022>

- **Sheffield City Council** continued Everyone In with a winter plan for people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). Potential problem with people coming from other areas. Overall rough sleeping numbers have gone down but increase on numbers of people with NRPF, particularly EU citizens who missed EU settlement scheme deadlines.
- **Norwich** are using church type provision for customers no longer welcome at hotels but with new variant unsure if this can now continue. Need real guidance on what can be safely done with this group around social distancing etc. Options are very limited for those who have exhausted other types of accommodation **London Borough of Southwark** has seen rough sleeping numbers fall – as result of Everyone In progression, down to nine this month. Block booking provision for SWEP started beginning of December not yet needed but reassuring to have this ready. Moving well in Southwark, interventions and move-on options very successful. They have a 12 week offer for those with NRPF to try and find accommodation for them.
- **Northampton** are also using the uni campus and industrial units to try and get most entrenched RS off the street into some accommodation. They are working with PPC and environmental health to ensure that they are working safely with infection control.
- **Bristol** have worked on a partnership with public health colleagues to change their shared spaces to make these covid safe. Have now signed off on 40/50 spaces for this year. There has been anxiety around managing to get the hotel accommodation that was available last year with most already booked up. Huge demand and increase in demand for supported accommodation at the same time.

- **Manchester** trying to balance unused bed spaces with being prepared for increased numbers is very difficult and when there are potentially large numbers for areas such as Manchester it becomes very difficult to justify this cost if the beds are not being used all the time.
- **Are people seeing increase in EU citizens approaching?**
 - In Sheffield, one person has lost their passport after moving to the UK as a minor 20 years ago. Unable to return to home country due to minor misdemeanour. Some people stateless.
 - In Durham, no increases in relation to EU citizens with no settled status.
 - Coventry have seen an increased number of EU citizens
 - BCP have seen a slight increase (from a low number) their church hall provision for SWEP had low take up but take up seems to increase if better accommodation is offered.
- **Norwich** have provided a winter night shelter using volunteers and security morning and evening. This is instead of hotel accommodation but should the government guidance change, hotels would then close to the public making access to them easier and the model would just slide over from church to hotel. They have 46 volunteers altogether using around 7/8 each morning to perform welfare checks. Council staff, social services and drug and alcohol services are all involved. It has a max capacity of 15. It is a place of last resort and work because of the flexibility of staffing.

Main takeaways:

1. Uncertainty around future restrictions is making planning difficult
2. Hotel accommodation difficult to find in current climate
3. Working with public health colleagues can be useful when looking to make arrangements covid safe.
4. Knowledge has grown as a result of Everybody In
5. Using volunteers and linking with partner agencies can improve flexibility.

Thank you



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