

Rough Sleeping in Cambridge Briefing for Full Council 14th April 2016

Background

Rough sleeping numbers in Cambridge have increased significantly since November 2015. This briefing paper covers trends, causes and potential causes and responses from the Council and its partner agencies to tackle the problem.

Numbers

The Council had a longstanding target to maintain rough sleeping numbers at or below 10 on any single night. Since 2003 when this target was first set this target has been broadly met. There are two ways to assess performance against this target. Firstly, there is the method used by the Government to assess rough sleeping nationally; local authorities are required to conduct a count or estimate based on local intelligence on a designated night in the autumn. These figures are published by the Government at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics#rough-sleeping>. These figures show a 31% increase in rough sleeping from autumn 2015 to autumn 2016. The single night count in Cambridge rose from 10 in autumn 2015 to 18 in autumn 2016.

The street outreach team in Cambridge produces a weekly list of verified rough sleepers and so an alternative way of assessing performance against the target is to take an average of these weekly counts across the year. The figures for the last 3 years based on this method of counting are:

2013-14	9.75
2014-15	7
2015-16	13

In April 2014 the Council amended its formal reporting target and methodology. The above measures have not been abandoned, and the information is available, but counting the number of individuals affected by rough sleeping across the year is currently the preferred method. Figures for the last two years are as follows:

2014-15	135
2015-16	152

The 2015-16 figures represent an increase of 12.6% on the previous year.

Causes and potential causes

1. **Access to long term housing** - the private rented sector in Cambridge is difficult to access for single people on housing benefit. This is due in part to significant rises in rental values in Cambridge and in part to changes in the way the local housing allowance (LHA) is calculated (Since April 2011 LHA rates within Broad Rental Market Areas (BRMAs) have been based on the 30th percentile of local market rents (rather than the median) and the Cambridge BRMA

covers a wide geographical area including areas where rents are much lower than those found in Cambridge City). LHA rates will be frozen for 4 years from this year.

An analysis of LHA rates and average market rents in Cambridge (Source: Right Move) on the 13th April 2016 revealed the following:

Monthly Local Housing Allowance amounts		
Category	Type of property	Monthly amount
A	Shared accommodation	£348.92
B	One-bedroom self-contained	£546.21

Source: Cambridge City Council website

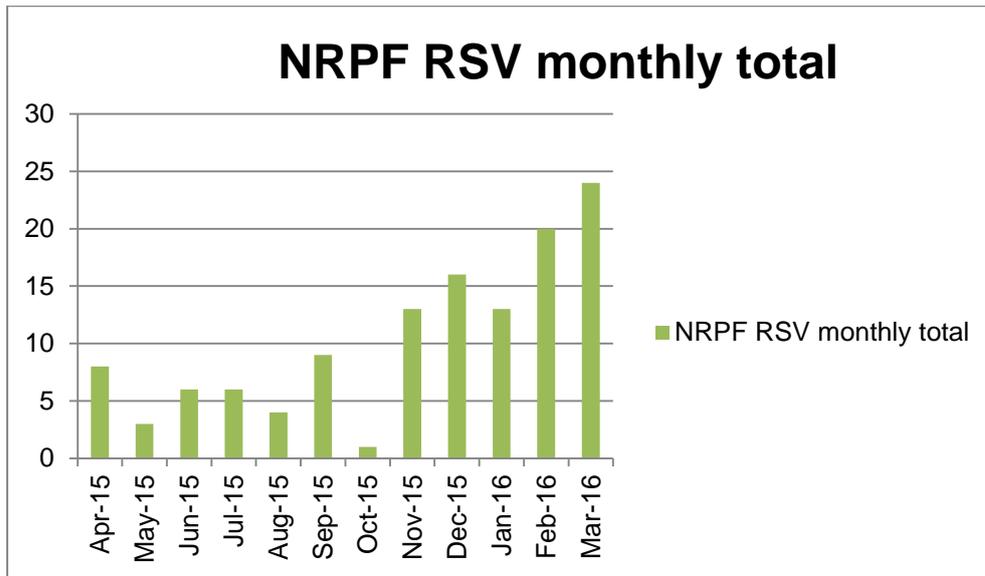
	Room	Self-contained 1 bed flat (including bedsits)
Lowest	£325	£650
Median	£525	£975
Highest	£700	£2730

Source: Analysis of figures on Right Move

This is allied to the fact that demand for one bedroom social or affordable housing in Cambridge far outstrips supply – 55% of the housing register in December 2015 consisted of applicants with a need for a one bedroom property and in the calendar year 2015 only 38% of all lettings to Cambridge City applicants on Home-Link were into one bedroom properties. This compares unfavourably in the same periods, for example, to 2 bedrooms (35% waiting, 44% of lets) and 3 bedrooms (8% waiting, 15% of lets): Source *Strategic Housing Key Facts December 2015* <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/content/housing-research> (Tables HL2b p30 and HL6 (b) p37)

2. **People with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)** – since November 2015 there has been a significant increase in the numbers of verified rough sleepers (RSV) with NRPF on the streets of Cambridge as the tables below demonstrate:

Month	NRPF RSV monthly total
Apr-15	8
May-15	3
Jun-15	6
Jul-15	6
Aug-15	4
Sep-15	9
Oct-15	1
Nov-15	13
Dec-15	16
Jan-16	13
Feb-16	20
Mar-16	24



Source: Street outreach team weekly rough sleeping reports

Securing accommodation options for those with no recourse to public funds is extremely difficult because if the individual is not in 'genuine and effective employment' and, therefore, not economically active they will not be entitled to benefits and will not be able to fund their stay in accommodation.

3. **Rough sleeping and mental health** - There is some evidence that the number of people rough sleeping who have mental health problems has increased. The figures below show a marked increase across 2015-16 in numbers of rough sleepers with mental health problems. These figures have been extracted from street outreach team quarterly reports and are presented as monthly averages:

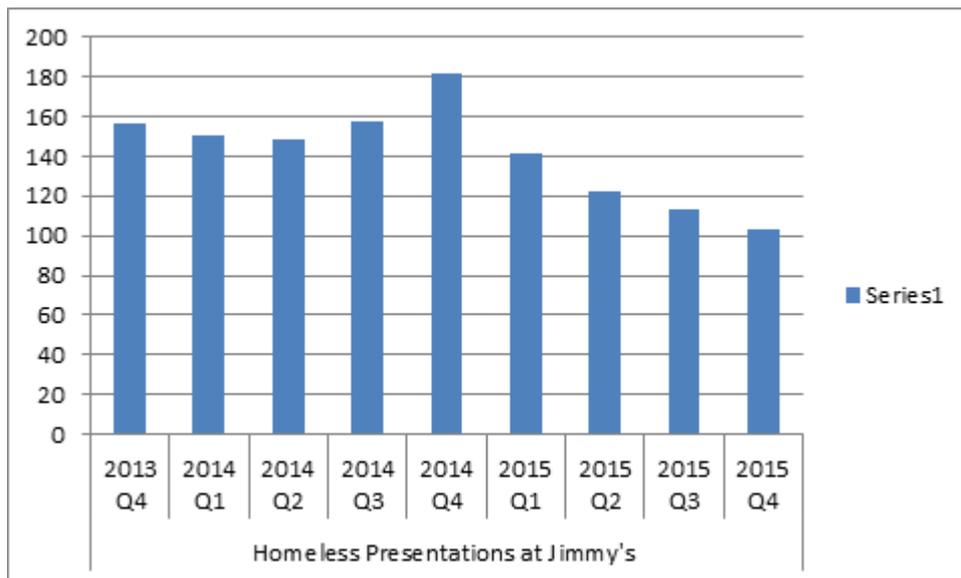
Q1 (April to June 2015)	3.66
Q2 (July to September 2015)	3
Q3 (October to December 2015)	19.66
Q4 (January to March 2016)	7.33

These figures need to be treated with caution as they reflect the position over quite a short period of time and they do not, without further research, lead us to any conclusions about underlying causes.

Responses to rough sleeping

At present the Council has identified a number of potential responses to rough sleeping. This is in addition to the single homelessness service, which since its inception in October 2013 has housed 176 Cambridge City referrals.

1. **Understanding more about the decline in presentations to Jimmy's Cambridge** - Across 2015 overall presentations to Jimmy's Cambridge have been going down (see table below). This may in part be explained by the higher numbers of people who have NRPF but the Council needs to understand more about the reasons driving this trend.



2. **Analysing hostel and supported housing move on performance** – The Council will be working with partners to see what more can be done to improve move on rates through hostels and supported housing and to assess whether there are more people currently within the hostel and supported housing system who would qualify to access the single homelessness service. The Council will be collating data on numbers of residents successfully moved on by housing providers in 2015-16
3. **Developing recommendations from the rough sleepers' survey** – the Council conducted a rough sleepers' survey in 2015 and published the results in January 2016. The purpose of the survey was to identify key themes and common characteristics amongst rough sleepers. The survey report produced some outline recommendations, which the Council and its partners are looking to develop further.
4. **Training flats** – the Council, in partnership with a registered housing provider, has developed a small number of training flats in the city. The County Council provides bespoke support to tenants of these flats through its chronically excluded adults' service. The Council will look to see if there is evidence that expanding provision of this nature could impact positively on rough sleeping numbers
5. **Shared housing** – the Council will be working with partners to identify a shared housing model that may be successful for rough sleepers or those at risk of rough sleeping. There are a number of key considerations to take into account before adopting such a model. For example, ensuring that there is no adverse impact on the immediate neighbourhood and that sharers are carefully selected and are suited to sharing with each other.

Further information

The list of potential responses above is not exhaustive and the Council is working with partners through the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group (HSIP) to develop a homelessness strategy action plan. This plan will form part of the Council's Housing Strategy and will form part of a wider report on homelessness scheduled for June's Housing Scrutiny Committee.

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