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**Customer and  
Community Services**

Dr Adrian Boyle MD, FCEM  
Consultant Emergency Physician,  
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10<sup>th</sup> September 2013

Dear Adrian,

### **Capacity at Jimmy's Cambridge**

Many thanks for your email dated 5<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

I understand your concerns about the availability of accommodation for single homeless people in the City and the Council has acknowledged that rough sleeping has increased by around 25% in the last year. As you mention in your email there have been service remodeling and refurbishment changes at the Riverside English Churches Group hostel at 222 Victoria Road and this, more than the position at Jimmy's, is a significant factor in driving the rough sleeping increases we have seen of late.

We acknowledge that Jimmy's is having to turn away individuals who are looking for shelter. However, an analysis of Jimmy's records shows that, even under current pressure, the situation is a dynamic one in which people present for a few nights, get admitted and after a while are moved out, creating a space for someone else who had been presenting and been turned away.

The key problem is not an absolute shortage of beds, but that people are not being moved out of Jimmy's quickly enough. The maximum stay in Jimmy's should be 28 days. The most recent information I have seen is the weekly report dated 19 August, which shows a typical picture. Of 20 guests in Jimmy's on that date, no fewer than 8 had been there for longer than 28 days. One guest had been resident for 50 days because he could not get privately-rented accommodation, while another had been resident for over 100 days because there was no suitable place that could treat his substance addiction.

Of the remaining 12 guests, four of these had low support needs and should not have been in Jimmy's for longer than a few days, if at all. (On occasions nearly half the guests have low support needs).

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From this close analysis we conclude that, if there were adequate move-on accommodation and housing both for people with low and high support needs, vacancies at Jimmy's would arise more or less in line with demand. This conclusion is further supported when it is considered that in the case of people who are helped to return to their area of local connection (where, presumably, it is easier to find rented accommodation than in Cambridge), the average length of stay in Jimmy's is just 12 days.

A large part of the reason why it has been harder to move people on from Jimmy's is the temporary closure for refurbishment of 222 Victoria Road. 57 beds (30 high needs; 24 low needs and 3 emergency) are due to come back fully into use by the early part of next month. This will make a considerable impact on the current situation.

Consistent with our analysis that individuals with low support needs should be able to bypass the hostel system altogether, the Council is at an advanced stage in the development of the 'single homelessness service' (SHS). Starting this autumn, the SHS will take qualifying individuals off the street into short-term and then permanent accommodation. The SHS is expected to start slowly, but it should make a rising impact on the number of low-needs individuals seeking help from Jimmy's over the winter months.

You may be interested to read a report that went to our Community Services Scrutiny Committee in June of this year. See item 18 at <http://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/documents/g998/Public%20reports%20pack%2025th-Jun-2013%2013.30%20Community%20Services%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

The report outlines our strategic direction of travel in addressing single homelessness and rough sleeping in the City and the wider sub-region. Despite some limited reduction in bed space capacity Cambridge still has a large hostel population. The problem is one of shortage of permanent housing and the inception of a Local Lettings Agency (LLA) as outlined in the report is the subject of the Council's main strategic initiative to address this.

I am happy for this matter to be discussed further at the next Community Safety Partnership meeting and can ask for a representative from the Council's Housing Advice Service to be present to reiterate our strategic position and respond to any queries from partners.

Yours sincerely,

Liz Bisset  
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