

CUMBRIA HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Meeting date: 20 November 2020

From: Cumbria Housing, Homelessness and Wellbeing Group

COVID RESPONSE: HOMELESSNESS AND HEALTH

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 *The purpose of this report is to highlight the work that has been done to protect the health and wellbeing of our homeless population during the pandemic. This paper will be complemented by a presentation at the HWBB regarding the work that is being undertaken to address the health and wellbeing of the homeless, rough-sleeping and temporarily accommodated population across Cumbria. The presentation will provide an overview of the work that has been undertaken during the first phase, the lessons learned and the work preparing for this winter and beyond to embed and strengthen this approach.*

2.0 LINKS TO THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

2.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board exists to provide strategic leadership and promote closer integration of health and care, through partners working together to ensure that everyone in Cumbria can benefit from improvements in health and wellbeing.

2.2 The Board has a responsibility to ensure a collective awareness of the major changes, pressures and risks across health and wellbeing services and provide opportunity to review, comment and consider the opportunities for collaborative approaches to address or manage these.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

3.1 *That the Board note:*

- i. The work that was undertaken during the first phase of Covid.***
- ii. The lessons learned in Lancashire and South Cumbria***
- iii. The work that is being undertaken to prepare for winter and the Covid second wave.***
- iv. The need to embed and expand the improved system working that has developed as a result of Covid response.***

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Cumbria Strategic Housing, Homeless and Wellbeing Group is an Officer led group reporting to the Cumbria Housing Group, which is Member led. The group is made up of a range of key partners who have a role to play in supporting housing delivery across Cumbria. There are several sub-groups that reports to this group including the Cumbria Homeless Forum. The presentation will set out the housing structure for Cumbria and providers further details on the Homeless response to the pandemic.
- 4.2 The aim of the Homeless Forum is to work together across Cumbria to prevent rough sleeping and homelessness, and to ensure every person has access to good quality advice, accommodation and support at the earliest possible opportunity in order to prevent homelessness”.
- 4.3 As the Strategic lead for Housing and Homelessness, and as a response to the pandemic a Covid 19 Homeless sub group was established and this reports into the Cumbria Tactical Co-ordination Group the aim of this group is to ensure that there is a co-ordinated response to keeping safe and where possible support into temporary accommodation.
- 4.4 On 26 March 2020, in a letter from Luke Hall MP, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to local authority leaders, the Government provided guidance on the joint responsibility to safeguard as many homeless people as possible from COVID-19. This followed on from the Prime Minister’s announcement on 23 March 2020 that the public should be staying in their homes wherever possible, making it imperative that rough sleepers and other vulnerable homeless people were supported into appropriate accommodation.
- 4.5 The aims were described as follows: “Our strategy must be to bring in those on the streets to protect their health and stop wider transmission, particularly in hot spot areas, and those in assessment centres and shelters that are unable to comply with social distancing advice. This approach aims to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on people facing homelessness and ultimately on preventing deaths during this public health emergency.”
- 4.6 Given the nature of the emergency, the priority was to ensure that the NHS and medical services were able to cope. The basic principles outlined were to:
 - focus on people who are, or are at risk of, sleeping rough, and those who are in accommodation where it is difficult to self-isolate, such as shelters and assessment centres
 - make sure that these people have access to the facilities that enable them to adhere to public health guidance on hygiene or isolation, ideally single room facilities
 - utilise alternative powers and funding to assist those with no recourse to public funds who require shelter and other forms of support due to the COVID-19 pandemic

- mitigate their own risk of infection, and transmission to others, by ensuring they are able to self-isolate as appropriate in line with public health guidance.

4.7 The following programme of actions was recommended:

- (1) Convening a local coordination cell to plan and manage the response to COVID and homelessness involving the local authority (housing, social care and public health) and local NHS partners together. This would then report in to wider local COVID structures.
- (2) Seeking to stop homeless people from congregating in facilities such as day centres and street encampments where there is a higher risk of transmission.
- (3) Urgently procuring accommodation for people on the streets if not already actioned.
- (4) Triaging people where possible into three cohorts driven by medical advice:
 - (a) **The symptomatic group:** people with a new persistent dry cough and fever / temperature over 37.8 degrees centigrade. This group was to be placed in **COVID care** sites.
 - (b) **The asymptomatic high clinical risk group:** people who are eligible for the flu vaccination and those who are extremely vulnerable. This group was to be placed in **COVID protect** sites.
 - (c) **The asymptomatic and low risk group:** people not included in either of the groups above. This group was to be housed using current service provisions or to be placed in accommodation to meet current guidance on self-isolation.
- (5) Getting the social care basics such as food, and clinician care to people who need it in the self-contained accommodation.
- (6) If possible, separating people who have significant drug and alcohol needs from those who do not.

4.8 The presentation will highlight:

- The initial and on-going Covid response led by the District Councils
- The partnership working that has taken place and is led through the Cumbria Strategic Housing, Homeless and Wellbeing Group and the Homelessness TCG cell
- Work to prepare for winter/2nd phase
- Lessons learned from within Lancashire and South Cumbria ICS where there has been coordinated work to ensure health system support. This is covered in Appendix 1.

- Next steps to ensure that the lessons learned during the pandemic are embedded in order to build more robust support for health and wellbeing of our homeless population.
- The work carried out in the South will be replicated and embedded across North and West Cumbria

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Lancashire and South Cumbria ICS Paper

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers.

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