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**Title of meeting:** Housing Cabinet

**Subject:** Resources for Rough Sleepers in Portsmouth

**Date of meeting:** 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020

**Report by:** James Hill - Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services

**Wards affected:** All

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**1. Requested by** Cllr Sanders - Cabinet Member for Housing

**2. Purpose**

2.1. The purpose of this report is to provide information on the current strategic approach, and the resources in place, to respond to the needs of rough sleepers to reduce rough sleeping as outlined in the Street Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Partnership Strategy 2018-2020.

**3. Background**

3.1. Rough sleeping is a complex issue and Portsmouth, in common with other cities, has seen a significant increase in numbers of individuals who are rough sleeping.

3.2. Research has identified that rough sleepers commonly have a history of trauma, mental health and substance misuse issues. The combination of these issues mean that rough sleepers find it difficult to engage with services and to make the transition from rough sleeping into more settled housing. Rough sleepers also present with a higher need for mental and physical health services than the general population.

3.3. The number of individuals who sleep rough is measured by a nationally required annual count. The count is conducted by a team who search areas in the city known as rough sleeping locations and count all rough sleepers seen on an individual night. At the last annual count in November 2019, 26 individuals were identified as being rough sleepers. This is a reduction from 42 rough sleepers counted in November 2017.

3.4. Due to the complex needs of individuals, securing move on accommodation has been challenging. The key issues have been the availability of accommodation, and the motivation and challenges faced by individuals with complex needs to move into settled housing and sustain a tenancy or licence.

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#### **4. Strategic Approach**

- 4.1. The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 required local authorities to work with all homeless individuals to agree a personalised housing plan to relieve homelessness and sustain future housing.
- 4.2. The National Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 - 2027 outlines how the government is committed to halving rough sleeping by 2022 and sets out the 2027 vision to support every person who sleeps rough off the streets and into a home.
- 4.3. In response to the national strategy, the council agreed its own Street Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Partnership Strategy 2018-2020 in September 2018. Oversight and strategic direction for policy implementation is provided by the Street Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Partnership Board, which was established in December 2018 and provides strategic direction for policy implementation.
- 4.4. Since the implementation of the Street Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Partnership Strategy, some pre-existing services have been developed, and funding has been secured for new services to help address rough sleeping in the city. The resources available for rough sleepers are outlined within this report and summarised in Appendix 1.
- 4.5. A Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator post, based within the council's Housing Needs, Advice & Support Service, was created in December 2017 as a result of annual funding from Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). This role oversees the development of services and provides a coordinated response to rough sleeping across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors. The remainder of this report outlines the various services which are available for rough sleepers within the city.

#### **5. Night Bed Service**

- 5.1. Night Beds provide emergency shelter, and an opportunity for engagement with support for homeless individuals who would otherwise be rough sleeping. They have provided an important safety net for rough sleepers in the city.
  - 5.2. The Night Bed service was created in December 2017, being commissioned by Portsmouth City Council and provided by two organisations as follows:
    - 5.2.1. 27 beds at Hope House, Milton Road, Portsmouth provided by Two Saints Housing Association, and
    - 5.2.2. 30 beds at Kingston Point, Kingston Road, Portsmouth provided by the Society of St James.
- 5.3. The service initially provided 45 beds, (extended to 49 beds in February 2019 and 57 beds from 2 March 2020), and runs daily from 9.30pm to 8.00am. Beds are booked by the Homeless Day Service (see below).

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- 5.4. 45 of the beds are grant funded from the MHCLG - Rough Sleeping Initiative which is awarded on an annual basis. The remaining 12 beds are funded via Portsmouth City Council.
- 5.5. The table below summarises the demand for the Night beds over 365 nights from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2019.

	Number	Percentage
Total number of individual users	372	
Total number of male users	306	82%
Number of female users	66	18%
Number of nights beds at full capacity	58	16%

- 5.6. The Night Beds accommodated 372 individuals in 2019 who would otherwise have slept rough during 2019. The data shows some occasions when demand has exceeded the number of beds available. To help meet this demand a further eight Night Beds were commissioned to be provided at Hope House. These commenced on 2 March 2020.
- 5.7. During periods of adverse weather the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) is implemented, and accommodation is available to any individual requiring shelter.
- 5.8. The voluntary sector is providing additional night provision for rough sleepers via the Open Church initiative. Four churches provide an evening meal and beds for 12 individuals for four nights per week from Monday 3 February 2020 to Sunday 1 March 2020.

**6. Portsmouth Homeless Day Service**

- 6.1. The Portsmouth Homeless Day Service is commissioned by Portsmouth City Council and provided by the Society of St James. This service complements the Night Bed Service by providing advice and support around housing needs during the daytime, in addition to practical support in terms of breakfast, showers, laundry facilities, lockers and IT access. The Portsmouth Homeless Day Service co-ordinates access to the Night beds for rough sleepers and is open every day from 8am to 4pm.
- 6.2. During the period 1 December 2019 to 5 April 2020 opening hours have been extended until 8pm. This service, which includes a hot evening meal, is available following a grant of £79,000 from the MHCLG Cold Weather Fund. During January 2020, 83 unique individuals used the service and were provided with a meal. On average 32 individuals are using the service each evening.
- 6.3. Cold weather funding has also provided a temporary alternative accommodation offer to individuals who would otherwise be rough sleeping where an alternative solution cannot be found.

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- 6.4. A successful bid to Public Health England has also secured £259,000 of funding to establish health services within the Portsmouth Homeless Day Service. This provides access to G.P. Services, a Clinical Psychologist, Mental health Services and Health Navigators to support clients with health issues. This service commenced on 3 February 2020.

**7. Outreach Support**

- 7.1. Outreach support is commissioned by Portsmouth City Council and provided by the Society of St James with a team of three Outreach Workers and one Tenancy Support Worker.
- 7.2. The Outreach Team work collaboratively with the council's Community Warden team to provide an immediate response to reports of rough sleepers, and to engage with individuals to assist them to access support and accommodation. There is a coordinated response to rough sleepers between these services and regular reviews of the rough sleeping population.

**8. Rough Sleeping Navigators**

- 8.1. The National Rough Sleeping Strategy identified the Navigator role as pivotal in addressing rough sleeping and supporting individuals with complex needs. Navigators provide intensive and flexible support to rough sleepers and remain engaged with them across all tenure types to help sustain accommodation.
- 8.2. Following the successful receipt of grant funding of £275,000 from the MHCLG, a Navigator team commenced in October 2019 to work with rough sleepers in Portsmouth for one year. These Navigators work with entrenched rough sleepers and Night Bed users to help them to access support and accommodation and to sustain their housing once obtained. This is essential to sustaining the move on from the Night Beds.
- 8.3. Early outcomes indicate Navigators have successfully engaged with their clients. To date eight individuals have been housed in settled accommodation and 38 referrals to non-housing support services have been made.

**9. Housing Needs, Advice & Support**

- 9.1. The council's Housing Needs Advice & Support Service, based in the Civic Offices, provides specialist housing advice anyone who is homeless, threatened with homelessness or rough sleeping.
- 9.2. To assist rough sleepers to engage with a personalised housing plan, a Housing Assessment & Advice Officer is based at the Portsmouth Homeless Day Service one day per week to provide specialist advice and support to rough sleepers.

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**10. Preventing homelessness following hospital discharge**

- 10.1. Queen Alexandra Hospital in Portsmouth treats an increasing number of individuals who are homeless on admittance to hospital. Following a successful bid to MHCLG's Cold Weather Fund, a grant of £25,625 has been awarded for a short term service piloting prevention of homelessness following hospital discharge.
- 10.2. Working in partnership with other local authorities in Hampshire, Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust and Two Saints Housing Association, this new service provides a 7 day per week specialist housing and support service based at Queen Alexandra Hospital. The service commenced on 27 January 2020, targeting both entrenched rough sleepers and individuals at risk of homelessness, and aims to prevent individuals being discharged as homeless, support individuals who self-discharge without accommodation, reduce readmissions and understand and explore the need for longer term services around prevention of homelessness on discharge from hospital.

**11. Community Development Worker**

- 11.1. The Rough Sleeping Initiative funding (received from the MHCLG) has enabled funding for a new post of Community Development Worker to be based at libraries and community centres for 1 year from 3 February 2020. This post has been established as a response to libraries identifying increasing numbers of rough sleepers using their service, and provides additional support within the community resources accessed by rough sleepers.

**12. Voluntary Sector**

- 12.1. The voluntary sector in Portsmouth provide a range of valuable support for individuals who are rough sleeping. The support includes providing food, befriending and financial advice in addition to the provision of practical resources.
- 12.2. The support was felt to be uncoordinated, and in response to this 'Project Bridge' was formed, which is a collaboration between the voluntary and statutory services. In July to December 2018, Project Bridge consulted with voluntary and faith groups, and individuals with lived experience in the city. This consultation informed the Street Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Partnership Strategy 2018-2020 and the development of support services for rough sleepers in the city. As a result of Project Bridge the Portsmouth City Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Advisory Group was formed to develop the voluntary sector response to homelessness and to provide a link with the voluntary sector and individuals with lived experience to the Street Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Partnership Board.
- 12.3. Voluntary sector partners run additional Night Beds in the winter with the Open Church initiative. They also provide food resources via food banks and hot meal provision throughout the city. The variety of regular weekly hot meal provisions also offer alternative locations and support networks for rough sleepers.

**13. Rough Sleeping Initiative Bid 2020/2021**

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13.1. The MHCLG announced on 28 January 2020 that the council's bid for funding for the continuation of the Night Beds, Navigators, Day Service and Outreach Services has been successful. This bid has also secured funding for additional support staff to support and manage move on from the Night Beds. The value of the award is £649,250 for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

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Signed by (Director)

**Appendices:**  
**Appendix 1 Summary of resources for rough sleepers**

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

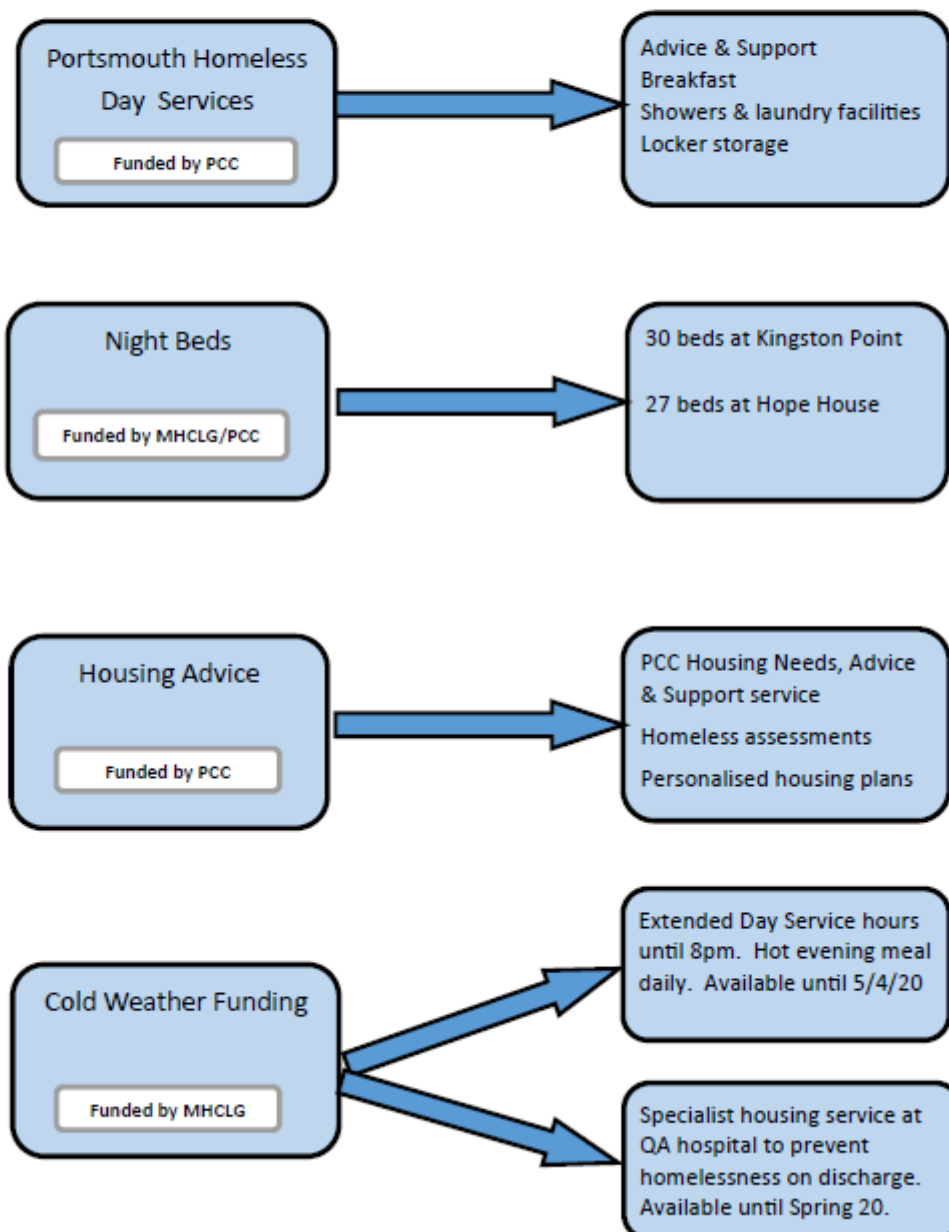
The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

<b>Title of document</b>	<b>Location</b>
MHCLG Rough Sleeping strategy 2018-2027	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-rough-sleeping-strategy">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-rough-sleeping-strategy</a>

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## Appendix 1: Summary of resources available

**Key**  
MHCLG - Ministry of Housing, Communities  
and Local Government  
PCC - Portsmouth City Council  
PHE - Public Health England



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