



REPORT ON TAMESIDE COUNCIL'S STATUTORY AND NON-STATUTORY HOMELESSNESS SERVICES AND EMERGING PRESSURES

October 2021

NARRATIVE

Introduction

Tameside Council's homelessness function sits within the Community Safety and Homelessness Service.

This report provides details about Tameside Council's Statutory Homelessness Service, Tameside Housing Advice (THA) Service and the Emergency Non-Statutory Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) Service.

This report outlines the emerging pressures that Tameside Council's Statutory and Non-Statutory Homelessness Services currently face and describes the measures being taken to address these. It also provides details of projects, which the RSI Service is undertaking and gives examples of collaborative initiatives, which they are engaged in with the Third Sector.

Tameside Council's Ambitions

Tameside Council's ambitions are:

- to prevent homelessness where possible by using a range of early interventions.
- where a person does become homeless, to aim to work with them to secure suitable alternative accommodation.
- to achieve a reduction in single homelessness.
- to end rough sleeping in Tameside.

The Council's target is that no-one should be rough sleeping in Tameside in this or subsequent years. This is a published commitment from our Chief Executive and Leader of the Council and everyone at the Council who has any part to play in the delivery of our RSI Service shares this commitment. In the last two years, there have been periods when the objective of zero rough sleeping in Tameside has been met.

The Service

Tameside Council's Statutory Advice Service- THA

Tameside Council's statutory Housing Advice Service is delivered, under a contract, by Jigsaw Homes. This service is based in Ashton-Under-Lyne.

It provides advice and information about:

- Homelessness
- The prevention of homelessness
- The rights of homeless people and those at risk of homelessness

Under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, this service is required to undertake statutory assessments for all eligible applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days. This assessment identifies:

- the cause of homelessness or threat of homelessness.
- the housing needs of the applicant.
- any support needed by the applicant to be able to secure and retain accommodation.

Working together, the applicant and their caseworker develop a personalised housing plan. This includes agreed steps, to be taken by the applicant and their caseworker to try to prevent and resolve the applicant's homelessness.

If there is reason to believe that an application may be homeless or threatened with homelessness the service undertakes inquiries. This is to identify whether a duty is owed to the applicant. While undertaking these inquiries the applicant may be placed in temporary statutory accommodation.

The Homelessness Code of Guidance states "An applicant is to be considered homeless if they do not have accommodation that they have a legal right to occupy, which is accessible and physically available to them (and their household) and which it would be reasonable for them to continue to live in."

Under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the following duties may be owed to an applicant:

- Prevention Duty
- Relief Duty
- Main Housing Duty

Prevention Duty

This is a duty to help the applicant to stay in their current accommodation, or help them to find alternative accommodation before they become homeless. This duty lasts for 56 days but can be ended if accommodation has been secured, or if the applicant does become homeless.

Relief Duty

This duty relates to applicants who are already homeless or become homeless when they were under the Prevention Duty.

If THA has reason to believe that, the application is eligible for assistance and has a priority need they may be provided with interim accommodation.

This relief duty lasts for 56 days unless ended in another way.

Main Housing Duty

An applicant is owed the main housing duty to applicants if they are eligible, have a priority need for accommodation and are not homeless intentionally.

Those who have a priority need include pregnant women, families with children, and those who are homeless because of being a victim of domestic abuse or due to an emergency such as a fire or flood.

Other groups may be assessed as having priority need because they are vulnerable because of old age, mental ill health, physical disability, having been in prison or care or because of becoming homeless due to violence.

Under the main housing duty, THA is required to make available suitable accommodation to the applicant and their household until the duty is brought to an end.

This duty usually ends when the application is offered permanent accommodation.

The Emerging Pressures Faced By the Statutory Homelessness Service

The emerging pressures faced by the Service include:

- the increasing numbers of people presenting as homeless in Tameside.
- the lack of availability of suitable move-on accommodation to discharge the main housing duty. This has resulted in more people staying in interim accommodation for a longer period of time.
- the lack of supported accommodation.
- the demand for properties for interim accommodation.
- priority vulnerable groups competing for the same accommodation.
- the reduced level of nominations being put forward by Registered Providers.
- the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requirements.
- increased service demands arising from the influx of refugees from Afghanistan.

A range of measures are being taken to address these. A key pressure is the demand for move on properties. We are increasing access to move on properties which meet suitability standards by:

- working with the Registered Housing Providers to review the Nominations Agreement and to agree a higher % of nominations put forward.
- reviewing the Allocations Scheme and procedures.
- developing links with a wider range of PRS landlords to expand the available stock for move on.
- supporting PRS landlords to follow best practice and provide accommodation, which complies with the suitability requirements.
- amending local procedures and policies to enable Tameside Housing Advice to also use Private Rented Accommodation to discharge the main duty where appropriate.
- providing incentives for prospective landlords including the Help2Rent insurance scheme, rent in advance and deposit arrangements, and providing resettlement and support packages.

Over the coming months, we will be working with colleagues at THA to review the objectives and targets of the THA Service to meet the emerging pressures discussed. A wide range of options will be under consideration and updates will be provided.

The Emergency Non-Statutory, Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) Service

Tameside Council has established an effective Emergency Non-Statutory Service, which is delivered by a proactive and innovative team of staff, who have demonstrated outstanding progress in reducing rough sleeping in Tameside. Our team includes some individuals who have lived experience of rough sleeping and the issues faced by this group of people including substance misuse, a history of offending and experiences of violence and trauma. In November 2017, our annual Rough Sleepers Snapshot Estimate was 43 and in November 2020, our annual Rough Sleepers Snapshot Estimate/Count had fallen to 3.

The RSI Service is tailored to the needs of local people. This is achieved by proactively listening to and learning from those who have lived experience of rough sleeping.

The RSI Service works with the most vulnerable individuals in the community, those who have found themselves homeless or rough sleeping.

Individuals are referred to the RSI Service by the THA Service. Referrals are made if the individuals are assessed as not being owed a statutory duty and are at risk of rough sleeping. Some individuals who were assessed as having a duty, may lose this duty for various reasons and they also will be referred to the RSI Service.

At the height of the COVID pandemic, there were 90 people accommodated by the RSI Service. In adherence to COVID guidance, a maximum of 8 individuals were placed in the Town House (the overnight hostel based on Burlington Street in Ashton-Under-Lyne) and the remaining individuals were in dispersed properties located throughout Tameside.

The RSI team has worked tirelessly during the pandemic to help move people on into permanent accommodation. From January 2021 to 21 October 2021, 158 people have been moved on into permanent accommodation.

Over the last 3 months, the RSI Service has averaged 50 people in service at any one time, a reduction of 45%. Currently the Service is accommodating 40 individuals.

Many of the individuals referred into the RSI Service come with a range of additional needs arising from complex mental health issues, drug and alcohol issues and an offending history.

When supporting individuals to move on into permanent accommodation, the RSI staff have to consider the affordability of accommodation since many homeless people are on low benefits. This means that a Household of Multiple Occupation (HMO) may be the most affordable option available to them until their financial circumstances change.

Individuals on low benefits find it very difficult to secure property in the Private Rented Sector (PRS). To overcome this, the RSI Service has introduced the Help2Rent Scheme, which offers landlords an insurance policy. This is an incentive to encourage them to rent their properties to homeless people.

The most complex individuals accessing the RSI Service may find it difficult to access services such as Adult Social Care, Mental Health Services or Drug and Alcohol Services. Every effort is made by the RSI staff to keep all service users safe. Each individual is allocated a Key Worker within the RSI Service to assess their needs and to support them to access services and to attend appointments. Some individuals however choose not to engage with services or do not consistently stay in the RSI Service. In some cases, service users are reluctant to take the relevant action needed to access services. This has an impact on how quickly support is provided.

The Emerging Pressures Faced on Tameside Council's Non-Statutory Homelessness Service

There are increasing pressures on these services and these include:

- the complexity of needs amongst the service users.
- the difficulty of accessing mental health and adult care services to obtain assessments for clients.
- the need for suitable move on accommodation.
- the increase in referrals to the RSI Service.
- drug and alcohol misuse.

- offending.
- increasing numbers of clients with complex needs and early years trauma.
- the lack of affordable social housing.

A range of measures are being taken to address these such as:

- Key Workers providing outreach support to all service users, identifying needs and highlighting any complex cases that need additional high-level support.
- continued multi-agency meetings to identify risk and support needs for our more complex service users, who may also have early years trauma.
- further developing working relationships and best practice with Adult/Social and children's services (under 25 years old has continuing Child Service or Leaving Care Support).
- working closely with local Drug and Alcohol Services to facilitate access to drug and alcohol support for service users.
- developing strong links with the PRS landlords to move individuals on to suitable and affordable accommodation.
- supporting service users to receive welfare rights/ benefit checks to ensure that they are on the right benefits. Also ensuring that service users have support to make additional claims if needed.
- creating 6 additional Supported Accommodated Units under the Next Steps Accommodation Programme to provide permanent homes individuals who have a long/repeat history of rough sleeping.

Further details are provided in Appendix B.

Tameside Council's Emergency RSI Service's Focus for the Year 2021-22

For the year 2021-22, Tameside Council's RSI Service are focusing on prevention, resettlement and sustainment to ensure people do not return to rough sleeping.

To prevent rough sleeping, the RSI Service's staffing capacity has been built up to deliver the service across normal working hours, night-time and at weekends.

This will enable the RSI Service to:

- provide a rapid response to any new incidences of street homelessness/rough sleeping and achieve zero rough sleeping in Tameside.
- continue to effectively co-ordinate activity to prevent rough sleeping and promote resettlement.

During 2021/22, the Community Safety and Homelessness Service will use the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) funding to increase preventative action to reduce single homelessness and rough sleeping and to reduce the number of people new to the streets. The Service is:

-continuing to develop and sustain effective partnership working with key services such as Mental Health Services, Adult Social Care and Children's Services to ensure the needs of vulnerable groups are met. Multi-agency meetings and planning is core to our service.

-continuing to build on our strong working relations across services in Tameside including Youth Justice, Welfare Rights, prisons, Youth Services and local employment services.

-ensuring that there is a comprehensive range of emergency and move on accommodation options linked to appropriate support. This includes dispersed Rough Sleeper units in the community, Housing First supported accommodation, access to complex needs provision via our partnership with a local charity ANEW, access to detox and rehabilitation facilities, referrals to social/ supported housing and access to PRS accommodation. We are continually working to develop options with existing and new partners and are currently working with a Registered Provider new to our service to open a 12-bed move on unit.

-putting in place a range of initiatives to help survivors of Domestic Abuse to secure and maintain tenancies.

-recruiting a Domestic Abuse Perpetrator's Co-ordinator and Key Worker who will work alongside staff on the Your Move Project (Offenders) to provide a one-stop shop with other key agencies working with Domestic Abuse Perpetrators to secure appropriate accommodation and engagement activities to minimise risk of re-offending.

-continuing to work across the sub-region as part of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) to prevent rough sleeping. Current work programmes includes CAS3 the provision of a community accommodation service providing temporary accommodation for individuals released from prison who are homeless, a GM pilot for young people and access to Help 2 Rent for people entering PRS accommodation.

Intervention

The RSI Service is proactively identifying new ways of reaching out to support rough sleepers who would not normally access our services. The RSI Key Workers have started holding weekly support sessions for rough sleepers at the Station Pub. This is a location where many homeless people receive free, daily food packages. Through these sessions, we are referring entrenched rough sleepers into services.

Recovery

The RSI Service is focussing our efforts on supporting people who have previously slept rough so they do not return to the streets. By adopting a person centred approach and relationship based practice we will work with each individual to ensure that they are supported to recover. We commit to working with individuals as long as it takes and that includes continuing to work with them when things do not go to plan or they experience setbacks. The key to the progress made by each of these individuals, is the relationships that have been forged with Key Workers.

Our actions include:

- assessing each client to identify their housing and support needs.
- assigning a Key Worker to each client who will support them to access the key services that they need.
- identifying the most appropriate and sustainable move on option for each client.
- ensuring continuity of care from community services when clients transition from emergency housing to their own tenancy.

We are continuing to build relationships with the Adults Service, Children's Services, Health, Police, Prison Services, Domestic Violence support, Probation and our Armed Forces community to ensure that a multidisciplinary approach is taken in respect of those service

users who may have multiple needs. Our support extends to mediation where required to encourage progress.

We are supporting clients to access employment and training opportunities through building strong relationships with local employers and training providers.

Examples of Projects

YOUR MOVE PROJECT (OFFENDERS)

It was identified that a portion of the RSI service users, were prison leavers. At the end of August, out of the 50 Service Users, 22% were prison leavers who were not owed a statutory duty when they left prison.

With limited incomes, many prison leavers cannot afford PRS accommodation and their accommodation options are limited to HMOs. People with an offending history face barriers. With the number of people currently looking for PRS accommodation, anyone with a criminal conviction or a poor credit rating is put to the bottom of the waiting list.

Landlords stipulate requirements such as:

- a clean credit rating
- working/benefits
- a guarantor

The RSI Non-Statutory Service made an application to the MHCLG (now known as DLUHC) for grant funding, this was successful. The Service has been given the finding to support 50 prison leavers to move into their own 1 bed self-contained properties on 12 months assured short hold tenancies with a third party property agent.

By working with these individuals prior to their release, the RSI Service will build up trusted relationships and engagement. This will allow the RSI Service to assess them and their needs and to provide the following support where required:

- Mental health assessment prior to leaving prison
- Wrap around drug, alcohol and mental health support
- Help2Rent insurance policies on all properties
- The payment of the first month's rent and deposit
- Assistance with benefit claims and welfare rights checks

By closely working with GMP, SOMU, Probation and third party support agencies the RSI Service can provide the right support for each individual and their specific needs. This will help them to feel a valued member of the community, and feel motivated to engage and move forward. It will also help to reduce re-offending.

EVICTON BAN LIFTING

After being notified about the lift of the eviction ban the RSI Service created physical and digital posters to raise the public's awareness of all the agencies that can be contacted if someone is facing eviction. The aim is to promote early interventions to prevent eviction.

These posters were distributed electronically to all the local GP practices.

Physical copies of posters and leaflets were distributed to all of the local housing associations for their tenants to see.

Posters and leaflets were also sent out to all local pharmacies in Tameside.

The RSI Service are also distributing the leaflets to the jobcentres in the area and DWP offices in Tameside.

Third Sector Support

Tameside Council is working collaboratively with the Third Sector to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping and to provide for the needs of the homeless. Some examples of joint initiatives include:



STRONGER TOGETHER TAMESIDE

Stronger Together Tameside allows us to have support from third parties in the community including services and internal teams.

The RSI Service receives food and furniture donations that are stored at the Town House (Homelessness Shelter). From these donations, the RSI Service can give the furniture to people who are leaving the service and moving into their own accommodation. The RSI Service can also create food parcels that are given to people when they move out, and when they move into RSI dispersed properties. Food parcels are also provided to people who are isolating due to Covid -19



TAMESIDE RESETTLEMENT SCHEME

Since setting up donations via Stronger Together Tameside, the RSI Service has had a decrease in the number of applications for a TRS Pack for people leaving the RSI service.

From 2020 to 2021, the scheme had a decrease of 69% for people leaving ABEN who accessed a TRS package when moving on into permanent accommodation.

This has led to a reduction in the annual spend on this scheme.



THE VETERANS FOOD COMPANY

This service allows the RSI Service to provide hot meals once a day to RSI service users. These meals are prepared and cooked by trained chefs. The dishes are created to enrich the service users' nutrient intake.

By having these meals, it allows the RSI Service to give service users a higher level of support. The RSI Service are also working towards upscaling the skills of service users. For example by providing service users with training and experience in catering to improve their employability.



THE TOWN HOUSE FACILITY

The Town House provides a place to store donations including furniture gifted by the wider community. Because the RSI Service is storing furniture in the Townhouse, client move ons to permanent accommodation are quicker. This is because the RSI Service can take the items straight from the Town House and move them into the client's new accommodation. This is instead of going down the TRS route, which includes more steps such as liaising with the

furniture company to arrange a furniture delivery. This could involve a waiting time of up to three weeks.

The Town House Facility also enables the RSI Service to provide support to other internal teams and partners including food banks or housing partners.

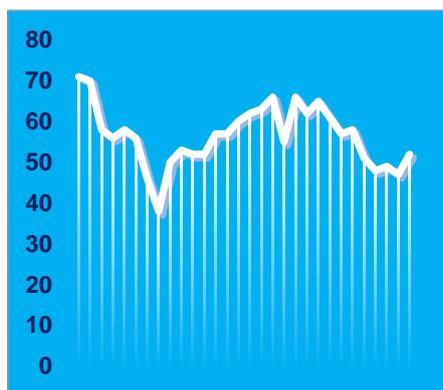
Conclusion

This report has provided details about Tameside Council's Statutory and Non-Statutory Homelessness Services. It has also outlined the emerging pressures that these Services currently face and describes the measures being taken to address these. Details of projects which the RSI Service is undertaking and examples of collaborative initiatives which they are engaged in with the Third Sector have also been provided.

Appendix A

STATISTICS

Covering 30 weeks up until the 10 September 2021



This graph (left) demonstrates the number of individuals attending the Emergency Non-Statutory Service, currently located at The Town House in Ashton-Under-Lyne.

This graph shows the previous 30 weeks up until 10th September 2021. The figures are captured at the end of the working week as a snapshot.

Historically, we do see a lower figure of those accessing the service in the summer. However, Homelessness Prevention has reduced this figure lower than anticipated.

This graph (right) demonstrates the number of cases accessing the Temporary Accommodation provision in Tameside on a weekly basis.

Each case denotes one individual or one family.

