

ELDC Approach to the Rough Sleeping Initiative

East Lindsey District Council

Chair: Councillor Ros Jackson

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Summary

The 2019/20 financial year was the first year of implementation of Rough Sleeping Initiative in East Lindsey. With a grant from central government to carry out this work, the council has had to integrate new staff roles and new ways of working aimed at cutting the numbers of people sleeping rough in the district. This has been important because 2018 saw a doubling of the numbers of people found sleeping rough in East Lindsey compared with 2017 at the annual count, against the national trend, and there was evidence that this rise reflected increasing numbers of rough sleepers year round. People were also being found sleeping rough in towns and villages that had previously not seen much incidence of this.

Witnesses from MHCLG and P3 pointed to the challenges working with East Lindsey's sparse rural setting, and the challenge of funding the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) in the long term. They had a number of recommendations for improvements to the service, particularly a rough sleeping charter. The council's rough sleeping team members gave in-depth evidence about their work, emphasising the need for them to work long-term with some rough sleepers in order for them to keep them in secure tenancies and to help them to maintain these. Again they had many recommendations, chief of which is the need for a 72-hour housing hub and assessment hub.

Portfolio holders have been generous in praise for the work the RSI team has carried out so far. This has been echoed by other organisations working with rough sleepers such as Witham Lodge and East Coast Homeless Outreach (ECHO), who have noted improvements in working relationships since the extra funding has been available.

However, themes of mental health and addiction, access to health services, and funding issues affecting partner organisations have been a thread throughout our interviews. The police spoke of being unable to prioritise rough sleeping due to their focus on crime, whilst Witham Lodge awaits a decision on funding beds that they use to take in rough sleepers and is expecting a reduction.

The literature from other councils reveals a wide range of approaches to reducing rough sleeping. However, there are some common threads with findings in East Lindsey, such as widespread concern about the continuity of funding for rough sleeping prevention. When it comes to reconnecting rough sleepers who do not have a local connection, other councils have found gaps in our knowledge about how successful this is on a national level. Perhaps the most persistent theme is the wide variety of reasons people end up on the streets. Research from Shelter chimes with findings from our interviews – people sleep rough for many reasons, and it's important to monitor these because they will vary from place to place and over time.

The six month duration of this scrutiny exercise has meant that the council has not been able to wait for the completion of this report to make changes. A successful bid has been submitted for RSI funding in 2020/21, and a rough sleeper charter has already been scheduled. However, we have ten recommendations for improvements. The majority of these affect the way the council works and communicates with partner organisations, and the importance of keeping up these lines of communications is why maintaining a rough sleeping charter is a key recommendation. Lobbying for funding continuity is another key recommendation; this scrutiny has uncovered evidence of the effectiveness East Lindsey's approach, but also that new people are likely to find themselves on the

streets if the funding is cut off. A 72-hour assessment hub is another key recommendation which would enable the authority offer more comprehensive, joined-up help to those who really need it.

Recommendations

These recommendations attracted a high degree consensus amongst the scrutiny panel. Recommendations 1 and 6 were agreed by the 5 out of 7 panel members, whilst all other recommendations had the full agreement of those present.

1. Write to NHS Lincolnshire East CCG emphasising the need for support services for rough sleepers, and the need for those services to come to rough sleepers rather than waiting for them to present themselves.
2. Create a Charter for Rough Sleeping, to include information about all local organisations working with rough sleepers, and information about the council's reconnections protocol, its duties with regard to rough sleeping, and a phone number and information for the public about what they can do to help. Update this charter on a regular basis. Provide printed copies to libraries.
3. Provide a 72-hour assessment hub with access to services, so that rough sleepers can be taken off the streets and helped into the correct housing pathway as soon as possible.
4. Improve attempts to understand rough sleeping in East Lindsey by inviting those who have used the service and found settled housing to give their feedback.
5. Write to NHS Lincolnshire East CCG and Lincolnshire County Council requesting help for rough sleepers with co-occurring mental health and addiction needs.
6. Parties involved with enforcement of antisocial behaviour and begging should try to keep in regular contact to raise any issues that arise with regard to rough sleeping.
7. Renegotiate the contract with a provider so that the outreach worker can work for longer with those exiting the streets, and has more flexibility in order to deliver an improved service.
8. Lobby government and local MPs for continuity of government funding to deal with rough sleeping.
9. Review the data we have on people who are reconnected to other areas, and consider whether it would be useful to increase the types of data we collect about these cases. Anonymised statistics on rough sleeping should be shared with key partners on a regular basis and made public.
10. Provide the public and parish councils with posters outlining what help is available from the council, what to do, and who to contact in the event of finding someone sleeping rough.

Introduction from the chair

In autumn 2018, 4677 people were estimated to be sleeping rough during a single night in England.¹ This figure illustrates a national rise in rough sleeping of 165% since 2010, when 1768 were estimated to be sleeping rough on a single night. East Lindsey has not been immune to this national trend, and in 2018 there was a significant and disproportionate increase in rough sleeping in the district, with 18 people recorded on the night of the rough sleeper count, double that of the previous year. Although the majority of rough sleeping was concentrated in Skegness, smaller settlements were also seeing increases as rough sleeping became more prevalent.

Due to this challenge, £45m of government funding was made available as part of the national Rough Sleeping Strategy, and in 2019/20 ELDC successfully bid for £142,813 of this. This enabled the council to increase its resources focused on helping people off the streets. This scrutiny came about due to the need to monitor the impact of the Rough Sleeping Prevention Team, to ensure that the money it received is being spent in the most impactful way.

Those sleeping rough are amongst East Lindsey's most vulnerable residents. So it's no hyperbole to say that the stakes are life and death; it is vital that we get this right. This takes place against the backdrop of limited resources for local government. Rough sleeping is a challenging issue, with many different factors leading people to sleep rough – no person's journey to sleeping rough is the same. According to Shelter, "People's journeys to rough sleeping are complex and often involve several stages. There are many reasons why individuals and families end up on the street."²

However, this is not a story of despair. Recent evidence from the team has shown a reduction in rough sleeping as a result of the team's work in East Lindsey. What this demonstrates is that with careful deployment of resources it's possible to have positive results that profoundly improve the lives of rough sleepers in East Lindsey.

I would like to thank the following interviewees for providing their insight and expertise: Jonny Goldsmith, Gary Harvey, Jason Oxby, Carol Rippin, Elly Rutherford, Inspector David Webb, Sergeant Kate Odlin, Councillor Graham Marsh, Councillor Wendy Bowkett, George Hockings, Richard Speed and Paul Simpson. I would also like to thank fellow panel members Councillors Billy Brookes, Jimmy Brookes, Carleen Dickinson, Dick Edgington, David Hall, and Sandra Campbell-Wardman for their assistance.

Thanks also to Michelle Howard for facilitating the panel, and to Rebecca James for administrative support.

¹ Health matters: rough sleeping, published 30 September 2019

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-rough-sleeping/health-matters-rough-sleeping>

² Shelter, On The Streets: an investigation into rough sleeping, published December 2018

https://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1636561/On_the_streets_-_an_investigation_into_rough_sleeping.pdf

The scope and key lines of enquiry

Objectives and Key Issues:

Like many areas across the Country, East Lindsey has experienced an increase in rough sleeping.

East Lindsey District Council is committed to supporting vulnerable people including through tackling and preventing homelessness and rough sleeping; and to supporting those who find themselves sleeping rough to access appropriate accommodation and support.

A £45m Rough Sleeping Initiative fund was announced in September 2018 for local authorities to be used in 2019-20. This included an £11m fund to support areas outside of an initial 83 local authorities who were supported in 2018-19. Proposals for this funding were submitted to MHCLG in February 2019 by local authorities and were reviewed by a moderation panel. Following this process, East Lindsey District Council has been awarded £142,813 for the 2019-20 period to deliver specific interventions aimed to reduce rough sleeping.

This funding presents an important opportunity to support vulnerable people and to reduce the number of people sleeping rough in its district.

NB: This Scrutiny will follow the implementation and early delivery outcomes of the project, so will meet over a 6 month period. It is therefore likely that meetings will be less frequent than a usual Scrutiny Panel.

Lines of Enquiry:

The service will be focussed on a commitment to reduce rough sleeping and will also inform wider strategic discussions in respect of housing, homelessness and health/wellbeing across East Lindsey and Lincolnshire.

The lines of enquiry will broadly cover the following:

- The East Lindsey approach
- Mobilising a new resource to deliver the project
- Monitoring the initial impact
- The effectiveness of collaboration in delivery
- The sustainability of our approach e.g. plans for how rough sleeping becomes part of the housing pathway.

Potential Risks and Considerations:

The focus of the Panel needs to be on the initial development, implementation and outcomes of this MHCLG funded project, as this will be a new way of working. The Panel will not continue to meet during the whole period of delivery, but will be invited to take part in the evaluation towards the conclusion.

The project will provide detailed monitoring to MHCLG, as they have a keen interest in this programme. The Scrutiny Panel should aim to add local value and ongoing constructive input, and not seek to duplicate formal reporting mechanisms. Support in helping feed back to MHCLG will be welcome.

Methodology

We examined the following texts.

Title	Author	Date
Rethinking Allocations ³	Chartered Institute of Housing	September 2019
Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Scrutiny Panel ⁴	Northampton Borough Council, Councillor Cathrine Russell	May 2019
Supporting Rough Sleepers With No Local Connection ⁵	No Local Connection Review Group, Oxford City Council	October 2018
On The Streets – An Investigation Into Rough Sleeping ⁶	Shelter	December 2018
Rough Sleeping and Prevention ⁷	Birmingham City Council, Councillor Victoria Quinn	13 June 2017
Health matters: rough sleeping ⁸	Public Health England	30 September 2019
Rough sleeping and street life issues in Cambridge ⁹	Cambridge City Council, Councillor Tim Bick	February 2018
Review of Rough Sleeping in Scarborough Borough ¹⁰	Scarborough Borough Council, Rough Sleeping Task Group	July 2018
Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-2021 ¹¹	Lincolnshire housing authorities	2017

As a result of the changes to homelessness legislation in 2017, and the national Rough Sleeping Initiative Fund, a wealth of local authorities have carried out scrutiny exercises that this panel has been able to draw on. Another document that has been particularly useful is Shelter’s *On The Streets*, because this study takes an in-depth look at why some people sleep rough, based on case studies.

³ <http://www.cih.org/resources/Rethinking%20allocations.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.northamptonboroughcouncil.com/councillors/documents/s59663/Homelessness%20and%20Rough%20Sleepers%202019.pdf>

⁵ <http://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/s44650/DraftReportoftheNoLocalConnectionReviewGroup.pdf>

⁶ https://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1636561/On_the_streets_-_an_investigation_into_rough_sleeping.pdf

⁷ https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/7194/rough_sleeping_and_prevention

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-rough-sleeping/health-matters-rough-sleeping>

⁹ <https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/documents/s43006/Rough%20Sleeping%20report%20and%20Officer%20Response%20to%20Cllr%20Bicks%20report%2019062018%20Housing%20Scrutiny%20Commit.pdf>

¹⁰

<https://democracy.scarborough.gov.uk/documents/s83220/218130%20Rough%20Sleeping%20Task%20Group%20Report.pdf>

¹¹ https://www.e-lindsey.gov.uk/media/10205/Lincolnshire-Homelessness-Strategy/pdf/Lincolnshire_Homelessness_Strategy_Final.pdf

The panel conducted the following interviews:

Interviewee(s)	Organisation(s)	Date
Jonny Goldsmith (Operations Manager P3), Gary Harvey (Rough Sleeping Adviser MHCLG)	P3, MHCLG	7 th October
Elly Rutherford (Housing Options Adviser) and Carol Rippin (Rough Sleeping Coordinator)	ELDC	29 th October
Inspector David Webb, Sergeant Kate Odlin	Lincolnshire Police: Skegness Policing team	19 th November
Cllr Graham Marsh, Portfolio Holder for Partnerships	ELDC	18 th December 2019
Cllr Wendy Bowkett, Portfolio Holder for Communities	ELDC	15 th January 2020
George Hockings (Centre Manager for Witham Lodge)	Salvation Army, Skegness,	29 th January 2020
Richard Speed, Paul Simpson	ECHO	11 th February 2020

See appendixes A-G for details of these interviews.

Councillors Dick Edgington, Billy Brookes, and Jimmy Brookes made a site visit to Witham Lodge in Skegness in February to take a look at the facilities used for housing people who have come off the streets. They were impressed with the commitment of the staff, and how well organised it is. They were also impressed by the way people were arranged into smaller groups clustered around lounges.

Findings

The East Lindsey Context

In 2018 East Lindsey's numbers of rough sleepers found on the annual count, a one-night snapshot, had doubled since 2017 from 9 to 18, whilst in Lincolnshire overall the numbers had risen from 62 to 78 over the same period, and in England had dropped from 4751 to 4677, a 1.6% decrease. The upwards trend in East Lindsey was expected to increase without intervention¹².

East Lindsey between 2010/11 and 2016/17, the number of decisions on whether to accept a full homelessness duty fell by 15.9%, whilst it rose in other Lincolnshire districts.¹³ Resolving housing benefit and rent arrears issues form a major part of homelessness work in the county. East Lindsey is expecting a decrease in working-age residents, and has relatively high numbers of out of work claimants. Employment, training, and educational opportunities are poor. The area was ranked 30th most deprived district council authority in England in 2019 out of 317 authorities.¹⁴

During the summer months there is an increase in rough sleepers as people come from the Midlands to the coast.¹⁵ For this reason, around 78% of rough sleepers were found at Skegness in 2019, with 9% at Louth and the rest in other towns in the district, particularly along the coast.

East Lindsey has a high proportion of male to female rough sleepers – 85% male in 2019. However, George Hockings of Witham Lodge has identified a rising proportion of female homeless in their hostel accommodation, which he estimated at 40% female compared with just 5% female in 2001. This facility is helping around 200 people a year. It takes homeless people into hostel accommodation before they can be moved to more permanent accommodation, and has one space for couples and two for pets.

There are a high proportion with no local connection, 61% at a recent count¹⁶. On average only 3 people of the 50 housed at Witham Lodge have no local connection.

32% of East Lindsey rough sleepers have mental health needs, whilst 16% report drug use and 12% daily alcohol use, although these figures are self-reported so should be treated with some caution. 39% are unable to work due to sickness or disability, 42% are on benefits, and 20% have self-reported involvement with the police.

ECHO, an organisation that deals with people in need of food parcels and help with all kinds of money issues as well as rough sleepers, have noted an increase in the need for their services. They cited issues with people living in more crowded conditions, and that these conditions can lead to

¹²https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/831133/RSI_Impact_Evaluation.pdf MHCLG Impact Evaluation of the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2018. This shows a typical rise in rough sleeping in authorities without RSI funding versus a “significant reduction” in RSI funded areas.

¹³ https://www.e-lindsey.gov.uk/media/10205/Lincolnshire-Homelessness-Strategy/pdf/Lincolnshire_Homelessness_Strategy_Final.pdf page 35.

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

¹⁵ https://www.e-lindsey.gov.uk/media/10205/Lincolnshire-Homelessness-Strategy/pdf/Lincolnshire_Homelessness_Strategy_Final.pdf page 10.

¹⁶ Appendix B, question 7.

family breakdown as a result of the stress levels people experience from living in overcrowded homes. Although they report that many of their users are male and over 30, everyone can be vulnerable at some time.

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) beds

East Lindsey now has SWEP beds in Louth, where previously there hadn't been provision in that town. Provision is now available in Louth, Skegness and Mablethorpe in the event of severe weather.

The Rough Sleeping Prevention team

The team currently includes a rough sleeping prevention coordinator, an in-reach resettlement worker, and an outreach worker delivered by P3 and co-located with ELDC.

Funding the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) team

In 2019/20 East Lindsey District Council was awarded £142,813 by the government for the Rough Sleeping Initiative, which aims to deliver specific interventions to reduce rough sleeping.

The funding bid for a second year of RSI funding was successful, with £202,936 secured for 2020/21 and ELDC allowed to keep £47,000 of underspend. Some funding streams have merged.

The 2020/21 funding will include a section for "personalised budgets". This can be spent in a variety of ways to best help individuals exit rough sleeping. It was felt this needed to be a flexible fund, because the wide variety of issues that lead people to sleep rough require a range of different solutions. These bespoke solutions could include furniture, GP time, support with skills and training, and more, depending on the needs and strengths of the individual.

Because the funding is bid for in a competitive process against other local authorities, and due to a lack of clarity over the Government's future plans, there is significant uncertainty about future funding for the service after 2021.

Stories of success

A number of our interviewees stressed the good work of the RSI team to date. The police said they had "heard good things and have seen people on the streets finding places to live."

Following the first year of RSI funding, the area has had a 55% reduction in the numbers of rough sleepers seen on the annual count. With the new funding, the team must now take counts every two months. The last two counts to date have found 0 rough sleepers (although this must be treated with caution, as the numbers in East Lindsey do normally fall during winter months).

Analysis

Barriers to access

Representatives of both P3 and MHCLG highlighted the problem of barriers to access, both to supported housing and to health and treatment services.

Mr Goldsmith commented that access to treatment can be slow, the process clunky, and that this isn't helping with access to services when people are in greatest need and therefore more likely to engage. He highlighted significant barriers to accessing mental health services in East Lindsey. Recently P3 have been able to refer to the community health team. Access to physical health services is still a challenge. The service needs to be taken to people rather than waiting for them to ask for help.

Mr Harvey noted that a hub and outreach system for mental health operates in those areas where access challenges for mental health services have been overcome. Funds from the Rough Sleeping Initiative can be used for mental health if appropriate. He noted that he saw help with mental health and substance abuse as key things to examine.

The interview with Mr Goldsmith and Mr Harvey took place before the NHS in Lincolnshire announced a restructuring of mental health services, including a mental health phone line to launch in 2020 and a number of mental health hubs to be launched. NHS plans will also involve the recruitment of more mental health workers, some of whom will operate in East Lindsey. This change in working practices will no doubt have some impact on access to mental health help for rough sleepers.

George Hockings has noted that Witham Lodge has difficulty in getting doctor's appointments for its residents, and also that there are difficulties in getting help for mental health issues. Lack of transport and medical and other facilities in Skegness are other problems raised.

Our interview with ECHO raised the issue that some people may not want to engage with the council due to distrust of social services. They also commented that drug testing, which some people need to undertake in order to have access to their children if they are separated, is a service which Addaction now charges for where previously it was free.

Shelter's *On The Streets* raises the issue of difficulties accessing a bank account, benefits, or doctor registration as common experiences whilst sleeping rough, noting that "whilst many people still managed to access these services, it was common to experience significant challenges." They also cite a deterioration in physical health as a result of rough sleeping amongst those they spoke to in their research. Similarly, Shelter also found loss of possessions and the experience of abusive behaviour from members of the public to be common experiences.¹⁷

¹⁷https://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1636561/On_the_streets_-_an_investigation_into_rough_sleeping.pdf page

According to Dr Nigel Hewett, the Medical Director of the homeless healthcare charity Pathway, “Homeless people in the UK don’t die from exposure. They die from treatable medical conditions.”¹⁸

As a result of these combined factors, it’s more important that people who are rough sleeping are helped with access to services. This is likely to have a high impact on the experiences of those on the streets. At the same time, challenges to funding for health, transport, and other local services will mean that there are no easy fixes.

A rough sleeping charter

A charter to engage with community groups was identified early on in this scrutiny exercise as desirable. A charter could:

- Identify who is working locally with rough sleepers, and where they are;
- Bring them all together to understand what each group is doing;
- Help with engagement and encourage people to commit to action;
- Explain what the council does, for example its reconnections protocol;
- Get the public on board, myth bust, and let people know what they can do to help.

Both Jonny Goldsmith and Gary Harvey spoke positively about a charter, especially as a way to involve community and faith groups, and to understand what the wider community already does.

Although the RSI team have a good relationship with community groups, they have suggested that more collaboration with community groups would be recommended. George Hockings of Witham Lodge in Skegness confirmed that they have a positive relationship with the staff based at Skegness Town Hall, and that they share information on referrals.

It isn’t always clear where to go for help or who can help, according to the police in our interview. They also recognised the value of faith and community groups, whilst being supportive of the concept of a charter. They raised the possibility of competition between community and faith groups. A charter could be beneficial in reducing that. They were also keen to stress that a solution to rough sleeping needs to come from local councils and the community rather than the police.

Councillor Marsh also spoke favourably of a charter, whilst cautioning that we would need to ensure people wanted to be part of it and share data. Councillor Bowkett was also favourable, whilst noting that the council has been focusing on removing people from the streets.

George Hockings indicated he would be happy to be part of a charter.

Birmingham City Council recommended in its 2017 rough sleeping scrutiny “the creation of a clear functional map of all homelessness prevention and relief providers and assessors (commissioned and non, statutory and voluntary) within the city. This should be collectively updated on a regular basis.”¹⁹ A charter could incorporate this mapping.

As a result of this positive response, a charter has already been commissioned.

¹⁸ <http://www.pathway.org.uk/about-us/>

¹⁹ https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/7194/rough_sleeping_and_prevention page 6, R06.

Housing models

In East Lindsey the primary model of housing for rough sleepers is currently hostels. Mr Goldsmith warned that a “one size fits all” housing option doesn’t work. We need flexibility in housing options. He commented that we need a pathway, but first we need to understand and plan for the needs of people in East Lindsey. Mr Harvey echoed this, saying that there is no perfect model, and even with the best access some rough sleepers wouldn’t want it. He recommended a range of models including hostel accommodation, supported housing, shared housing, and so on. Then, once off the streets, people need support to stay off.

Nobody helped through ACTION Lincs, a project to help rough sleepers with multiple needs, has since been evicted.

ECHO noted that there can be problems with hostel accommodation when people are forced together, in the event of personal animosities. So this type of help won’t be suitable for everyone.

Housing First

One of the recommendations of Northampton Borough Council’s 2019 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping panel was to introduce the Housing First model. This is a model where a homeless person is moved into stable housing of their own without first requiring them to participate in services or insisting that they are addiction-free. However, Northampton notes that this “should not be considered a panacea” and that in order to work “Housing First requires the right combination of a permanent, secure home in a positive community setting, coupled with intensive support”.²⁰

A 72-hour assessment hub

The Rough Sleeping Initiative team recommended the idea of an assessment hub in key areas such as Skegness, Mablethorpe and Louth that would give the team time to find people better accommodation. This is particularly because finding temporary accommodation can sometimes be an issue.

The police indicated that a hub to help people access different services would be beneficial for homeless people accessing mental health services.

Councillor Marsh was favourable to the idea of a housing hub to take people off the streets and have some time to help them find somewhere. Councillor Bowkett also favoured the idea, seeing it as a way to save money compared with B&B accommodation.

George Hockings commented that Witham Lodge used to work like a hub. Current ways of working mean that people who are rough sleeping take longer to be referred and assessed, and police checks take longer.

ECHO also had a favourable response to an assessment hub, saying that it would be ideal for certain individuals, although they had questions about whether it would be affordable or sustainable.

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<http://www.northamptonboroughcouncil.com/councillors/documents/s59663/Homelessness%20and%20Rough%20Sleepers%202019.pdf> page 78.

In light of the positive response to the concept, and the need to extend the council's range of housing models to more than simply hostel accommodation, the evidence shows that a 72-hour assessment hub should be explored.

Understanding why people sleep rough

Mr Goldsmith highlighted the need to better understand the problem of rough sleeping, including who we are dealing with and why they are homeless, and the need to understand people as individuals.

Mr Harvey suggested that ELDC need to understand drug, alcohol, and mental health issues, and also to ensure that the statistics we gather work for us in order to plan what is needed.

Amongst Birmingham City Council's recommendations in its 2017 rough sleeping scrutiny was an annual audit "conducted with the involvement of former rough sleepers. To include issues such as:

- User satisfaction;
- Provision for animals;
- Couples;
- No Recourse to Public Funds;
- Substance misuse issues;
- Advice provision and referral."²¹

Councillor Marsh emphasised the need to understand who needs help and what help they need. He suggested contacting former rough sleepers to find out what worked for them.

George Hockings of Witham Lodge cited a variety of reasons that people are on the streets, including young runaways, pregnant single women, marriage breakdowns, addictions, and mental health problems. Witham Lodge provide case studies as part of their contract with LCC.

Paul Simpson of ECHO emphasised the importance of preventing people from having to sleep rough in the first place, and stated that being on the streets can induce mental problems. Richard Speed of ECHO cited the price of private rentals locally being one of the factors pushing people onto the streets.

Shelter's *On The Streets* report into rough sleeping cites a wide range of factors that cause people to become homeless. These include:

- Eviction from a settled home;
- Preceding factors of relationship breakdown, bereavement, drug and alcohol problems and mental health
- The council not helping because they're considered either intentionally homeless or don't have a local connection;
- People being discriminated against for housing, especially if on benefits or if they have children;
- Lack of money for a deposit;
- Nowhere else to turn, and no family or friends who can help;

²¹ https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/7194/rough_sleeping_and_prevention page 6, R07.

- Leaving an institution or the military without enough support;
- Drug and/or alcohol abuse;
- Mental health problems such as depression affecting rent payments.²²

Although the scope of Shelter’s report is national, so not all of its findings will apply to East Lindsey, one thing that does stand out is the large range of issues that could cause rough sleeping. Similarly, Oxford City Council pointed to a variety of causes and risk factors in its 2018 *Supporting Rough Sleepers with no Local Connection* scrutiny paper²³. Therefore it will be valuable to keep the causes that are affecting people in East Lindsey under review.

Addiction help

The RSI team recommends adding navigators to their team to help to arrange assistance for those with problems with addiction and mental health issues. They were keen to emphasise the importance of working with people after they left the streets in order to help manage money and any addictions. They highlighted mental health and addiction issues as the hardest to resolve. This can be because the wait time for services can be too long and it can be hard to prove that someone is in urgent need of assessment.

For the police we interviewed, drug and alcohol addiction was the biggest issue for those on the streets, with begging money used to fuel addiction. Sergeant Kate Odlin spoke favourably of the “Blue Light Project” for drinkers where they can access help. For those under the influence of drugs or alcohol they can’t access a proper mental health assessment, yet when they sober up they may not present with problems. ELDC already works with the Blue Light project.

In our interview with ECHO they identified that addiction services are much needed locally.

Therefore it would be helpful if help was available to people with co-occurring addiction and mental health issues.

Enforcement approach to anti-social behaviour and begging

Several of those we interviewed drew a distinction between anti-social behaviour, begging, and rough sleeping. Gary Harvey stressed that not all beggars are homeless, and that we need to enforce against anti-social behaviour, but support people who are rough sleeping. He emphasised the role of enforcement to protect the public and also homeless people, who are often victims of crime.

Jonny Goldsmith recommended that enforcement efforts are joined up with support services to ensure the right people are targeted. It needs to be appropriate, to take needs into account, and to solve problems rather than move them on.

The RSI team wanted to see a different enforcement approach, citing issues with the enforcement team giving notice to people in tents. Because some people see all council workers as one group this can cause problems for the rough sleeping team in getting people to engage.

²² https://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1636561/On_the_streets_-_an_investigation_into_rough_sleeping.pdf Chapter 6, pages 15-25.

²³ <http://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/s44650/DraftReportoftheNoLocalConnectionReviewGroup.pdf> page 36.

Similar to others, the police distinguished between those begging who had somewhere to stay, and those actually homeless. They emphasised the connection between begging and addiction issues. They raised the concept of a “wet house”, a place people with drink issues can go to drink in the presence of support services, although noted the lack of appetite for this in East Lindsey. This lack of appetite was backed up by Councillor Marsh’s response to the suggestion, as he criticised its suitability for a rural area.

One proposal for enforcement the police made is the concept of staged warnings.

Councillor Bowkett supported the idea of removing inappropriate meeting places such as drug taking areas, and stopping begging especially when those beggars aren’t homeless.

At Witham Lodge, they have a system of written and verbal warnings regarding drugs, antisocial behaviour and violence which the manager reports is usually successful. However, they used to have a police liaison officer and no longer have access to one. However, Witham Lodge did have a poor reputation locally for crime and other problems, but after working with residents on a number of schemes such as litter picking, noise reduction and tenancy rules, this has improved the centre’s reputation.

ECHO were highly critical of the enforcement approach undertaken at Lincoln, which can lead to rough sleepers losing their possessions.

The discussions on enforcement have not revealed a single, clear recommendation that most parties are asking for. Perhaps the most consistent message is that all parties involved in enforcement of antisocial behaviour related to street life and begging should communicate with each other more closely.

Diverted giving

Diverted giving is a scheme used by some local authorities, for example Cambridge’s Street Aid scheme, whereby members of the public are encouraged to donate to that scheme rather than giving money directly to those on the street, so that they can be sure the money they give will be spent on projects that assist people to leave the streets.

Mr Goldsmith had a mixed view of diverted giving. He didn’t want to stop people giving, and warned that we need to be careful not to alienate people who help by giving money direct. Mr Harvey also struck a note of caution, saying that these schemes have a place but warning of downsides including:

- The scheme may not make money if not managed properly;
- It could disengage the public;
- It must be tied to a wider campaign to inform people;
- It won’t stop begging.

Carol Rippin noted the importance of educating the public that handing homeless people money doesn’t help them leave the streets.

However, Councillor Marsh warned of the difficulty of managing a diverted giving scheme such as Street Aid, questioning who would manage such a scheme. Councillor Bowkett also had reservations

in case it encouraged people to stay on the streets. Representatives of ECHO were not enthusiastic, warning that diverted giving risked “othering” people and could be construed as demeaning.

By contrast, George Hockings considered diverted giving a “good idea”, and considered the benefits of being able to use the money to help hostel residents.

One of the recommendations in Northampton’s recent homelessness and rough sleeping scrutiny was to develop a multi-agency campaign to discourage members of the public from giving money to people who are begging.²⁴

Similarly, Cambridge City Council’s main officer-supported proposal from its 2018 Rough Sleeping Report was to further promote a diverted giving scheme known as Street Aid.²⁵ Their scheme raised £25,000 in its first year of operation, which was then paid out to vulnerable people to help them move into work and into homes.

As a result of the mixed responses to diverted giving, the evidence isn’t yet strong enough to make a specific recommendation to follow this approach in East Lindsey.

Staffing of the RSI team

The P3 outreach worker

As one of the outreach workers in the current model is funded by ELDC and paid by P3 it causes issues because support stops once someone has a roof over their head, because that is when P3 support stops. The RSI team would find it easier if this outreach worker were brought in-house in order to be able to provide support more flexibly.

However, whilst Councillor Marsh supported greater flexibility for the P3 outreach worker, he warned against absorbing P3 into ELDC. Councillor Bowkett was in favour of adjusting the contract with P3. ECHO representatives were also in favour of this approach provided there is capacity, because of the risk of people coming off the street and then feeling abandoned.

Sergeant Kate Odlin highlighted the importance of solving the issue of “what happens in the long term, to ensure people stay off the streets.”

There is good support for tweaking the contract with the outreach provider to ensure the outreach worker can work longer with those people exiting the streets, without necessarily bringing that worker in-house with ELDC.

A Mental Health worker

When discussing the possibility of adding a mental health worker to the team, Councillor Marsh raised issues about the impracticality of this. Councillor Bowkett also criticised this idea as unaffordable. MHCLG have advised ELDC not to apply for a mental health worker in their bid for

²⁴

<http://www.northamptonboroughcouncil.com/councillors/documents/s59663/Homelessness%20and%20Rough%20Sleepers%202019.pdf> page 86.

²⁵

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/documents/s43006/Rough%20Sleeping%20report%20and%20Officer%20Response%20to%20Cllr%20Bicks%20report%2019062018%20Housing%20Scrutiny%20Commit.pdf> page 3, recommendation 2.

funding, instead buying in help when needed. However, in the second year of bidding for RSI funding ELDC has asked for additional resources to be able to help people access the system of mental health help.

ECHO advised that those working with rough sleepers need special training. They explained to the panel that people in need experience a great deal of stigma, have self-respect and pride, and should be spoken with in a sensitive way. They called for more mental health help for rough sleepers, and for all people dealing with them to be trained in mental health issues.

Shelter's *On The Streets* cites worsening mental health as one of the experiences of rough sleeping in those they interviewed. Their report also mentions feelings of stigma and shame, a loss of contact with friends and family, and feelings of isolation.²⁶ Therefore there is a need for mental health support amongst rough sleepers.

The RSI team overall

The RSI team would like an outreach worker to deal with rough sleepers, and in-reach worker to help former rough sleepers maintain their tenancies, and another person on the team to handle preventative work.

Councillor Bowkett advocated for the RSI team to continue what they are doing whilst employing more people to use the same strategy. In particular, she cited the ease of managing things if we employ people in-house.

Funding to keep the service going

One of the most consistent themes of this scrutiny has been concern about future government funding for the Rough Sleeping Initiative. Mr Goldsmith was also worried that there would be no LCC funded countywide street outreach service after March 2021 as funding from Public Health would stop.

Mr Harvey also spoke about MHCLG filling some of the funding gaps, but warned that the money wasn't guaranteed. He was cautiously optimistic due to an increase in the rough sleeping budget.

Carol Rippin suggested that the council should apply for Rapid Rehousing Funding. (At the time of writing the funding stream for Rapid Rehousing has been merged with other homelessness funds, so ELDC has effectively already applied for it.) The RSI team agrees that they can continue to make a difference if funding continues, and emphasised the need for this continuity.

Councillor Marsh highlighted the need to fund what works, and to focus funding on the worst problems. He identified money and resources as key issues that East Lindsey has trouble resolving effectively.

Councillor Bowkett also highlighted the difficulty in making long-term plans due to having to reapply for funds every year.

One of the major concerns for George Hockings of Witham Lodge was continuity of funding for the 50 beds they currently operate in Skegness. They were expecting to see a reduction to 28 beds,

²⁶ https://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1636561/On_the_streets_-_an_investigation_into_rough_sleeping.pdf pages 29-31 and page 34.

which would mean working from one building rather than three, but until their grant is confirmed they will not know if any beds are going to be funded.

Evidence from ECHO pointed to growing demand for their services, as a result of problems with benefits and Universal Credit. They referenced many issues that are leading to homelessness problems.

There is evidence that some areas that didn't receive extra funding for rough sleeping have seen increases, whilst East Lindsey has seen a decrease – so the funding is being used effectively.²⁷

One of the conclusions of Scarborough's Rough Sleeping Task Group was a recommendation to include lobbying the government to look at the rough sleeping situation and consider the funding for it.²⁸ Similarly, Oxford City Council's *Supporting Rough Sleepers With No Local Connection* scrutiny also recommends that their council write to central government to lobby for greater assurance about the need for long-term funding for rough sleeping support services.²⁹

From March 2021 the street outreach service won't be commissioned by Lincolnshire County Council and it's unclear how it could be funded. The annual bidding process for the RSI budget causes a lot of uncertainty. Therefore there is strong evidence in favour of the need to lobby central government for continuity of funding and a longer-term settlement.

Office organisation

The RSI team expressed concerns about their office accommodation. The council is due to change the way it works as a result of plans to move to Horncastle, with employees on the whole expected to be less office-bound. This may benefit the team if they have more access to work spaces in Mablethorpe, Louth, and Skegness.

Councillor Marsh considered the team would be mostly out on the streets. Councillor Bowkett was keen for the team to be close to other teams and services so they can work closely with them.

The proposed move of the council headquarters to Horncastle would mean bases in Skegness, Louth, and Mablethorpe would allow for more flexibility for the team. Due to this move, it would be premature to propose changes to office organisation when significant changes to council working practices will need time to become embedded.

Reconnections to another area

Reconnecting rough sleepers with the area they have the greatest connection with is a challenge. Of 173 recent referrals, 113 were found to be rough sleepers, and 69 of these were people with no local connection. The local connection criteria are defined by law, and ELDC has to follow the definition that is laid down.

²⁷

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/831133/RSI_Impact_Evaluation.pdf

²⁸

<https://democracy.scarborough.gov.uk/documents/s83220/218130%20Rough%20Sleeping%20Task%20Group%20Report.pdf> section 6.11.(ii).

²⁹ <http://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/s44650/DraftReportoftheNoLocalConnectionReviewGroup.pdf> page 45.

Jonny Goldsmith commented that ELDC need a clearer plan on how to deal with reconnections, as the current method is disjointed. There is a need for more support to be redirected to the area a person has links to. He recommended having a clear reconnection protocol through a strategy or a charter. Gary Harvey also identified help to reconnect people with home as an issue.

Ensuring people return home and get the support they need to stay there was also identified as an issue by Jason Oxby.

George Hockings spoke about Witham Lodge not always being able to help those people who come to the area for seasonal work because they have no local connection.

Our interview with ECHO raised the issue of rough sleepers with no local connection who may have come to East Lindsey because they want a fresh start and feel unsafe where they came from. The local connection criteria makes no specific exception for people who need to escape criminal associations, although it does make an exception for those fleeing domestic violence.

Oxford City Council's *Supporting Rough Sleepers With No Local Connection*, cites the lack of national data on how effective reconnections are nationally. Their recommendation for Oxford was to trial a reconnections log to monitor the outcomes and effectiveness of reconnections to other areas.³⁰ East Lindsey does ensure that those who are reconnected are sent to stable accommodation. However, there may be value in recording more information about what happens to rough sleepers with no local connection.

Discharge from prison or hospital

Both Gary Harvey and Jonny Goldsmith raised prison discharge as issues of concern, in terms of the availability of resources to help people coming out of prison or hospital.

However, ELDC are part of the pathway and are told before people are released so that referrals can be made to relevant organisations.

George Hockings noted that Addaction and Probation services are harder to access because they have moved to Boston, and that the prison service can be inconsistent in the way they plan their releases.

The scrutiny panel did not feel able to provide a specific recommendation on the topic of prison or hospital discharge without further information from the prison service or hospitals.

Use of data and statistics

Jonny Goldsmith highlighted an issue with P3's access to some data from Lincolnshire County Council, particularly the data that looks at longer periods than the annual snapshot of rough sleeping.

The RSI team has been collecting data including on the proportion of rough sleepers having addiction issues, mental health issues, a criminal history, or who are prolific offenders, as well as looking at demographic data such as the proportion of males to females, and where need is greatest in the district. They collect information because it makes it easier to provide the right help.

³⁰ <http://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/s44650/DraftReportoftheNoLocalConnectionReviewGroup.pdf> pages 35-36, recommendation 11.

There was consensus with Councillor Bowkett and Jason Oxby that ideally the data should be in the same place for everyone to access.

One of Birmingham City Council's rough sleeping scrutiny recommendations is the development of a quarterly data dashboard on street homeless to be shared with all key partners.³¹

There are gaps in our knowledge about what happens to rough sleepers who are reconnected to other areas, as mentioned above, and in understanding why people sleep rough. Appropriately anonymised data needs to be available on a regular basis to those working with rough sleepers in order to fully understand the situation.

Communications with the public

The authority already makes attempts to let the public know what is available to help rough sleepers and who members of the public should call for help, particularly at the start of the summer season.

However, ECHO found that people didn't always know where to turn for help. One of their main suggestions was the need to publicise what is available to help people who are rough sleeping. People who don't have internet access may find this information harder to come by. Jonny Goldsmith from P3 also called for a clear communication plan with the public.

It is difficult to reach everybody with information about services. Therefore it's important to repeat this information in accessible formats and make it widely available.

³¹ https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/7194/rough_sleeping_and_prevention page 7, R10.

Glossary

CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group.
DELTA	DELTA is the online system provided by MHCLG to collect all of the Department's statistical data and grant applications.
ECHO	East Coast Homeless Outreach. A community group working with homeless and deprived people in parts of Lincolnshire.
MHCLG	The Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government.
P3	An organisation working in outreach work with rough sleepers.
RSI	Rough Sleeping Initiative.
SWEP	Severe Weather Emergency Protocol. A plan to provide emergency shelter to rough sleepers during periods of severe weather.

Appendixes

Appendix A – Notes from the scrutiny meeting of 7th October 2019

Councillor attendance: R Jackson (Chair), C Dickinson, D Hall, B Brookes, J Brookes,

Councillor apologies: S Campbell-Wardman, D Edginton

Officers: Michelle Howard (Assistant Director, People), Rebecca James (Scrutiny Assistant)

Witnesses: Jonny Goldsmith (Operations Manager P3), Gary Harvey (Rough Sleeping Adviser MHCLG)

Notes:

The Chair welcomed everyone and, following introductions, the witnesses were invited to provide some background information for the panel. Mr Goldsmith (Jonny) explained he was the Operations Manager for the charity P3, which has operated in Lincolnshire since July 2015 and is funded by Public Health England.

Mr Harvey (Gary) explained he was the Head of Housing at Nottinghamshire County Council but had been seconded to the MHCLG in August 2018. It is part of his remit to oversee the Rough Sleeping Initiative. He further explained that ELDC were new to the RSI programme as they had not met the criteria in previous years. In terms of funding, it was explained that money ELDC received was the result of a bidding process. In the first year of the Rough Sleeping Initiative 83 authorities received funding compared to this year when 243 received funding.

The Chair then asked Jonny and Gary a series of questions linked to the lines of enquiry.

1. *What do you consider ELDC needs to do next to help people exit the streets?*

Jonny

- Bring the housing register back in house (already in progress)
- Provide access to supported housing, health and treatment services
- Need to remove barriers to access in ELDC
- Need to understand the problem, who you are dealing with, why they are homeless

- In terms of reconnection, due to 'fluid' homeless population, ELDC need a clearer plan on how to deal with this specific issue, it's disjointed at the moment, shouldn't say no to helping but need to redirect to more/better support in an area person has links to
- ELDC access to treatment can be slow, process clunky, not helping access to services when need is greatest and person more likely to engage
- No 'one size fits all' in terms of supported housing, need a pathway but first need to understand and then plan for the needs of the area

Gary

- ELDC need to work more closely with P3 to provide support on access to housing
- Current access arrangements are clumsy
- Need more openness and a better 'selection' process
- Some good changes so far but the difficulties are with the 'flow' of homeless people to the coast, some don't intend to stay so it's hard to provide continuity of service, many have mental health / substance abuse issues
- Help needed to reconnect people with 'home'

2. What changes would you like ELDC and local groups, services and organisations to make in order to engage more effectively with people who are sleeping rough and to help them come off the street, in a planned way, as quickly as possible?

Jonny

- ELDC are doing good work which needs to be built on e.g. co-locating with the housing service
- Better access to health and treatment services
- Quicker, more effective response
- Actively engage with community groups, bring them on board as they have lots to offer

Gary

- Discharge from prison / hospital is an issue, recommendations will be forthcoming following a meeting last week
- A new approach working with enforcement will be important, anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Skegness is shocking but mustn't be muddled with rough sleeping, ensure enforce ASB, support on rough sleeping
- First year but ELDC on right track, working together effectively, have right priorities
- Have capacity but lack of access
- There is a budget for next year but unknown how it will be distributed as yet, ELDC likely to receive same funding, will be a bidding process, also a cold weather fund available

- Bid process changed, going forward hopefully just one funding structure so know what money is coming in when so easier to plan
- Need support from officers, members, external groups such as police and faith leaders

3. What is your organisation's approach to addressing rough sleeping and how does this enhance efforts across East Lindsey?

Jonny

- Currently have 2 outreach workers and a Freephone number for referrals, either self-referral or concerned friend etc.
- Volunteers out every evening to check on / find rough sleepers, help find accommodation, all ages 13 – 88
- Funding mostly from ELDC, Public Health England
- We do supported reconnections, mostly Lincoln and Boston
- Want to end the problem not move the problem
- We are assertive, proactive, enforcement if necessary
- Help not always welcome but we always try again, try to find a better time or place to speak with them
- Once someone is no longer homeless our 'contract' with them ends which can create challenges. We have a positive relationship with Public Health and ELDC which allows us to continue helping someone where appropriate for a short time, decided case by case
- Making a difference but always more to be done, particularly in terms of prevention e.g. prison / hospital release, no resources to **help these people at the moment which is frustrating**

4. How effective do you consider ELDC and local groups, services and organisations have been in engaging purposefully with people who are sleeping rough and helping them to come off the streets?

Gary

- Some great work being done by ELDC, people have been spoken to , follow up is good
- Need to prioritise response based on identified needs
- Recommend a charter to give better structure/plan moving forward, particularly in terms of dealing with community and faith groups
- Value of a charter as opposed to a strategy is that it moves outwards and helps involve the wider community.
- ELDC could discuss charter with community/faith groups/charities to discover what they do and what they can offer in terms of linking up with ELDC like P3 do already

5. When is enforcement action most successful in the context of a project like this? How are data, statistics and demographics gathered and used to meet the needs of men and women who are homeless?

Jonny

- In terms of enforcement, it's appropriate in relation to begging but in conjunction with support services to ensure targeting right people (not all beggars are homeless) so enforcement is appropriate, takes needs into account and solves problem not moves it on
- In terms of data, kept since 2015 and passed to Lincolnshire County Council but can't always access the collated data from LCC
- We have an annual snapshot but no data which looks at longer periods, it's all there at LCC but cannot currently be accessed by P3, frustrating, needs changing

Gary

- Homeless people are often victims of crimes such as cuckooing, role of enforcement should be about protection as well, done sensitively to protect public and homeless
- Shouldn't say homeless 'community', is misleading as too diverse
- ELDC have to do a monthly return on stats/figures to MHCLG and a bi-monthly count. MHCLG are looking at best way of using the data
- ELDC need to understand drug/alcohol/mental health issues, this will help plan ahead on what help is needed
- Not necessarily making best use of stats but making progress, need to decide what to do and how to make stats work for you, is about reduction, look at problems, responses, changes

6. Do you get the support you need from other organisations? How could this be improved? Please can you suggest ways in which services and organisations can connect with, and meaningfully engage with, harder to reach groups?

Jonny

- There are significant barriers in EL, particularly regarding access to mental health services
- P3 is able to refer to the community health team, this is a recent change, access to physical health services still a big challenge
- Treatment services need more thought, service needs to be taken to people rather than waiting for them to ask for help
- Support from Skegness neighbourhood police team is fantastic, P3 use them as best practice to show other areas how cooperation can work well

7. What are the issues you face in East Lindsey that you feel unable to resolve effectively?

Jonny

- Size is a big issue, population is so widespread, don't have enough staff to cover all areas
- Travel to different areas eats up too much time, need to work with the community to help understand what is happening on a day to day basis

8. Are there any similar districts to East Lindsey that have overcome the challenge of access to Mental Health Services?

Gary

- There are and these districts had a 'hub' as well as outreach. This is not possible in rural areas, issue not yet been resolved in any rural area
- Lincolnshire has money allocated for mental health coming next year and this will feed into the rough sleeping / mental health linked issues
- In other areas mental health issues are referred in but there is limited capacity for services to help
- A way forward could be to work collaboratively with another local authority / district council
- The Rough Sleeping Initiative plugs some of the gap as funds can be used for mental health if appropriate
- Any response would need to be coherent, consistent and followed through

9. How could collaboration and engagement with the community and voluntary sector and with the public be developed?

Jonny

- First thing to do would be identify who the groups are, where they are, what they are currently doing
- Secondly, bring them all together to understand what each other is doing
- Thirdly, a charter would be useful to help engagement and encourage people to commit to action
- Finally, it's important to get the public on board, to 'myth bust' and encourage them to be part of the solution by knowing what they can do and how they can help
- With regard to street aid schemes, if people want to give, we shouldn't stop them. We can encourage other ways to help but be careful not to alienate people who help by giving money direct

Gary

- I believe diverted giving has a place but needs to be tied to a wider campaign which informs people, there is a danger the

schemes don't make money if not managed properly and can disengage the public

- Need to be clear on what money raised on behalf of homeless people would be used for
- Encouraging other forms of giving won't stop begging
- Along with Jonny, believe areas with just a food offering is misguided as doesn't help people come off the streets

10. What do you consider to be the best housing models / solutions to overcome rough sleeping?

Gary

- There is no perfect model, even with the best access there are still people who wouldn't want it
- Best way to help is to understand homeless people as individuals, they may come across as aggressive due to not knowing how to interact or accept help
- Best response is to have a range of offers to suit differing needs: hostel, supported housing, shared accommodation etc. and once off the streets support is needed to stay off, cost of support is cheaper than cycle of street/bed/street
- MHCLG may be filling some of the funding gaps but this has not been decided and is not guaranteed,
- Lincolnshire has been commended for keeping so many services, however there is a worry that homelessness will not be a priority in the services that are left after the cuts
- £54million uplift in rough sleeping budget so there is potential for the future

Jonny

- There needs to be flexibility in housing policy to allow people a second chance
- We house people in hostels as our only option even though it's not right place for them
- Need to be able to respond flexibly to stop the same problem reoccurring which does happen
- Action Lincs was a project started in 2017 to try to address long term rough sleepers with multiple needs, worked with Waterloo and P3 and hostels to provide appropriate housing, by using this collaborative approach, no one helped through this has since been evicted
- Funding worries – no outreach service after March 2021 as funding through Public Health will stop, won't be able to continue helping people we currently help

11. Do you have any other information to provide or any recommendations for the Scrutiny Panel to consider?

Gary

- MHCLG will be publishing a report very soon which will contain a number of relevant recommendations for ELDC
- Help with mental health and substance abuse, community involvement, criminal discharge/parole service I would say are they key things to look at

Jonny

- I would agree to look at the report
- Build on the data ELDC already has so you can engage with the right people
- Have a clear reconnection protocol (through strategy or charter)
- Have a communication plan with the public
- Keep working with people like us, P3, and as a partnership we can make a difference.

Appendix B – notes from the scrutiny meeting of 29th October 2019

Date & Time: 29th October 2019, 10am

Councillor attendance: R Jackson (Chair), C Dickinson, D Hall, J Brookes, S Campbell-Wardman

Councillor apologies: B Brookes

Councillors Absent: D Edginton

Officers: Rebecca James (Scrutiny Assistant)

Witnesses: Carol Rippin (Rough Sleeping Coordinator), Elly Rutherford (Housing Options Adviser)

Notes:

The Chair welcomed everyone and, following introductions, the witnesses were invited to provide some background information for the panel. Carol Rippin explained that as Rough Sleeping Coordinator her work was wide-ranging and included not just working with rough sleepers but also the police, enforcement officers, community groups, faith groups, drop-in centres, and other organisations such as the charity P3.

Elly Rutherford explained that she works with people to secure accommodation and ensure they are able to keep that accommodation on a more permanent basis. This involves working with landlords and housing providers as well those seeking accommodation.

Both Elly and Carol advised that part of their work included reaching out to people who were at risk of becoming homeless, such as 'sofa surfers' and people in squats and that the three key areas were Skegness, Mablethorpe and Louth. The panel then asked Carol and Elly a series of questions linked to the lines of enquiry.

1. What do you consider ELDC needs to do next to help people to exit the streets?

Carol advised that:

- The Council should apply for rapid rehousing funding;
- There should be a hub in Skegness, Mablethorpe and Louth that people could go to for up to 3 days to enable help to be given like Lincoln and Boston;
- 2 'navigators' should be employed to assist with arranging help for those with addiction/mental health problems.

2. What changes would you like ELDC to make in order to engage more effectively with people who are sleeping rough and to help them come off the streets?

Carol indicated she would like to see a different approach from enforcement. She advised she was due to visit colleagues in Lincoln to look at how they dealt with street begging. Both Elly and Carol emphasised the importance of working with people after they left the streets to ensure they stayed in accommodation and were given help to manage addictions / money.

When asked about street aid, Carol felt it was important to educate the public that simply handing money to homeless people did not help them leave the streets. She noted that charities such as the Salvation Army went out to speak to people, make a connection and encourage them to accept help.

With regard to morning/evening visits, it was noted that early morning visits were done twice a week. Elly advised that early morning visits were important to ensure that people really were homeless. Carol explained that evening visits were better for creating a connection but also more of a danger to due drug/alcohol consumption.

3. Do you think the East Lindsey approach is effective?

Both Carol and Elly said yes, due to the way we are working, we can help people who are sofa sleepers, in sheds or squats. P3 are restricted in that these people would be classed as having a roof and the case would be closed. One of the Outreach workers is paid by P3 so this causes issues, it would be easier to deal with cases if all 3 outreach workers were funded by East Lindsey. Elly emphasised they had good communication with the P3 worker but it just restricted the work they could do to help people after they had left the streets.

4. Is there enough resource and capacity to make a lasting difference in East Lindsey?

Elly and Carol both agreed that if the funding continued they could continue to make a difference. They have found a stricter approach more effective in encouraging people to accept offers of accommodation. They have rehoused a number of people and helped reconnect others to their home areas. Following a query regarding the 'local connection' Carol provided some figures for the panel:

173 referrals, 113 rough sleepers, 69 with no local connection. A local connection has to be parents or siblings, grandparents only considered if parents deceased.

A comment was made on working with the police regarding 'county lines' being operated on the streets and also couples who turned up unexpectedly on the streets, they were often wanted.

Carol mentioned the idea of a hub again as she believes this would give the team time to find people more stable accommodation.

5. What are your thoughts on the progress made to date by ELDC? How effective do you consider ELDC have been in engaging purposefully with people who are sleeping rough and helping them to come off the streets?

Carol and Elly were both confident the service has already made a real impact. They feel they have built up good relationships with connected services which means they are able to help people more quickly.

6. When is enforcement action most successful in the context of a project like this?

Carol felt that it was most useful in cases of begging and when homeless people were not engaging. Elly advised that currently the enforcement team were giving notice to people in tents and this was causing some issues. She advised that as some people saw all 'council workers' as one group and it made it harder for the rough sleeping team to engage with people in tents who had been served notices.

Carol informed members that there were not thought to be any begging gangs or foreign nationals rough sleeping in East Lindsey.

7. How are data, statistics and demographics gathered and used to meet the needs of men and women who are homeless?

Carol indicated that they were in the process of collecting a variety of data, including:

- Percentage of those with addiction issues;
- Percentage of those with Mental Health problems;
- Those with a history of criminal convictions or prison time;
- MAPPA (prolific offenders).

Elly explained there was a high proportion of male rough sleepers (143 men to 30 women on one count). Carol explained that collecting information on rough sleepers in East Lindsey meant it was easier to offer the right help for the right person. For example, with reconnection, the safest option for that person is always used and contact is made with the relevant organisation in that area to ensure they arrive. For prison leavers, ELDC are part of the pathway and are informed before people are released so they can make referrals to relevant organisations in advance.

A member queried the kind of private rental used and it was confirmed that it was usually HMOs but each case was different.

8. What are the issues you face in East Lindsey that you feel unable to resolve effectively?

Carol indicated that Mental Health and addiction issues were the most difficult to resolve effectively. She indicated that as part of the RSI funding there was the ability to apply for 'navigator' funding which provided someone to go on outreach with the rough sleeping team to offer help. Elly indicated the issue was that Mental Health issues often limited people's ability to ask for help but they could only be referred for help by a doctor. If help is offered, the wait time is often too long and it is difficult to meet the criteria to prove someone is in urgent need of immediate assessment. Elly and Carol advised this was why a 'navigator' would be so useful, as they would be instrumental in getting the right help at the right time.

Following a comment about the 20p charge for using toilets, it was confirmed that homeless people would not pay to use the toilet or wash and there were limited facilities where they were able to do this for free.

9. How could collaboration and engagement with the community, voluntary sector and with the public be developed?

Carol indicated that the team already had good working relationships with a number of organisations such as Hope House, Stepping Stones and the Salvation Army and they could share information. Elly indicated she was building up positive relationships with landlords and ensuring that she worked with people once they were in accommodation to manage the risk of them losing it again.

Carol informed the panel that she felt there should be a 'task group and homeless forum' but as services were so spread out and resources stretched, people tended to take information to general meeting and discuss issues when they managed to get together. Ideally a weekly meeting to share information between different groups and organisations would be good.

10. Do you have any other information you are able to provide in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping?

In terms of the housing pathway, an in-house outreach service with access to mental health and addiction services would be the 'ideal' solution.

In terms of making a difference, Carol and Elly believe they are doing that, but need the funding to carry on to keep making a difference.

Finding temporary accommodation can be an issue which is why Carol and Elly feel it is so important to build up good relationships with these providers and why a hub would solve/ease a lot of these issues.

Carol indicated that they were currently gathering evidence/figures to help assess where need was greatest in terms of accommodation needs for rough sleepers. The panel were advised that Jason Oxby, Homeless, Housing and Wellbeing Service Manager, would be able to provide more in-depth information on this if required.

11. Do you have any other recommendations for the Scrutiny Panel to consider including within its' final report?

Recommendations from Elly and Carol were:

- An outreach worker;
- An in-reach worker;
- Prevention work – another person on the team;
- A hub in key areas for people to go and be assessed;
- More collaboration with community groups;
- Please ensure service carries on.

Members noted that the concerns raised were similar to those raised by P3 at the previous meeting. It was further noted that due to ELDC staff having fewer restrictions than P3, Carol and Elly had been able to build up better communication links with other groups and organisations. It was noted that Carol and Elly had provided some clear recommendations for the panel. It was agreed that for the next meeting, the Police would be sent some of the questions in advance to enable them to provide relevant answers at the meeting.

Appendix C – notes from the scrutiny meeting of 19th November 2019

Date & Time: 19th November 2019, 10am

Councillor attendance: R Jackson (Chair), C Dickinson, D Hall, S Campbell-Wardman

Councillor apologies: J Brookes

Councillors Absent: B Brookes

Officers: Rebecca James (Scrutiny Assistant)

Witnesses: Inspector David Webb (IDW) and Sergeant Kate Odlin (SKO) from Skegness Policing Team.

Notes:

The Chair welcomed everyone and, following introductions, the witnesses were invited to provide some background information for the panel. Sergeant Odlin advised that in relation to rough sleeping, the police team at Skegness worked with P3, Addaction and the Rough Sleeping Initiative Team to support the work they did. Their main problem is beggars, particularly those who are not homeless, or those who do not want to be housed.

The police also work with ELDC enforcement officers in moving tents. Inspector Webb added that when they received reports of newly homeless people, they attempted to get information on their criminal history. The main issue is people who don't want help and the fact that there is little officer time to look at begging due to it being a minor offence.

Sergeant Odlin advised the panel that drug and alcohol addiction was the biggest issue for homeless people, with begging money used to feed their addiction. These people often have chaotic lives and can't cope in a 'normal' situation and risk ending up back on drugs and homeless. It was discussed that whether to give money or not was an emotive social issue. The panel then asked Sergeant Odlin and Inspector Webb a series of questions linked to the lines of enquiry.

1) What do you consider ELDC needs to do next to help people to exit the streets?

SKO: There is a need to solve the issue of what happens in the longer term, to ensure people stay off the streets. There have been campaigns on begging designed to raise public awareness. Wet houses have been successfully trialled in some areas but there is currently no appetite for this in East Lindsey. Following queries from the panel, Sergeant Odlin advised that:

- Most begging was done to feed a drink or drug habit;
- It was partly a social thing to sit on the streets drinking together;
- Many people begging actually have somewhere to sleep.

2) What changes would you like ELDC and local groups, services and organisations to make in order to engage more effectively with people who are sleeping rough and to help them come off the streets?

IDW and SKO felt it was not always clear where to go for help or who may be able to help, although in Skegness there is something called The Storehouse.

3) Do you think the East Lindsey approach is effective? How does this fit with the local, regional and national context?

SKO advised that other areas have a 3 stage approach of warnings – this gives a clear idea of who can help and how – it has proved successful in other areas, for example Manchester, a good example of partnership working.

4) What is the Police's approach to addressing rough sleeping and how does this enhance efforts across East Lindsey?

SKO confirmed the police try to engage with people. Rough sleeping is not a criminal offence. They try to signpost people to the relevant services. They are quite often helping and safeguarding the homeless. It is hard to find a balance, it is not costly in terms of money but in terms of officer time. Sergeant Odlin indicated that they would signpost people to services every day such as health care or Addiction.

5) Is there enough resource and capacity to make a lasting difference in East Lindsey?

Inspector Webb advised that whilst his team managed things okay in Skegness that competing demands meant they never had enough resources. He advised it was not a difference for the police to make, it needed to be others such as Councils, charitable organisations etc.

6) What are your thoughts on the progress made to date by ELDC?

The police indicated that they were aware of the Councils new initiative and also confirmed that they often worked with P3.

7) How effective do you consider ELDC and local groups, services and organisations have been in engaging purposefully with people who are sleeping rough and helping them to come off the streets?

The police advised they have heard good things and have seen people on the streets finding places to live.

8) When is enforcement action most successful in the context of a project like this?

Sergeant Odlin advised she would like to try the approach mentioned earlier with staged warnings. She also confirmed she would prefer to start from a place of support rather than enforcement.

9) Do you get the support you need from other organisations? How could this be improved?

SKO: I would like to see a place open where someone can go to help change their life. There is something called the 'Blue Light Project' for drinkers where they can access help but nothing like that here, you need the help to be available every day. Following a member query, it was confirmed that there was not a big problem with violence towards homeless people.

10) Please can you suggest ways in which services and organisations can connect with, and meaningfully engage with, harder to reach groups?

IDW: the police, P3 and Addaction used to go out together but now the police have taken a step back. Sergeant Odlin confirmed that there was a link between drug use and rough sleeping, with the problem often getting worse once someone was on the streets. It was advised that is was usually the so-called 'harder' drugs such as cocaine, heroin and spice that people were taking. It was mentioned that 'cuckooing' sometimes happened, where people were made homeless and their house was taken over by drug dealers. Sergeant Odlin confirmed that the police tended to stick to their own areas as that was the best way to build relationships. There was a brief discussion surrounding the decriminalising or legalising of drugs but this was deemed not to be relevant to the discussion.

11) What are the issues you face in East Lindsey that you feel unable to resolve effectively?

SKO – if someone is under the influence of drugs/alcohol, services can't look at them; also if they refuse help you can't look at them. Mental health issues are linked with drugs/alcohol use – Inspector Webb advised that you can't have a proper assessment when under influence of drink drugs but when sober people often seem fine so they are refused an assessment.

Marc Jones, PCC has a mental health advisor on the emergency switchboard in this area to point to support - homeless don't access this as it's generally for when responding to incidents. A hub to help people access different services would benefit homeless and mental health.

Inspector Webb indicated that the less time people spent on the streets the easier it was to get them off again. He also advised that there were homeless who wanted help and weren't getting it but those who did not want to be helped tended to cause more problems.

12) How could collaboration and engagement with community and voluntary sector and with the public be developed?

IDW: Collaboration is not always done well, it's hard to find a common agreement on a way forward. People want to help but they don't always agree on how to help or know how to help for the best. Street aid? Project where you don't give to beggars give to scheme who will help people get off the streets. IDW and SKO had no experience of this.

Faith groups? IDW advised they are a great resource in the long term – a huge untapped resource and the council needs to bring them on board.

Charter? A good way of connection between council, community, faith groups, good ideas.

Sometimes there is competition between different community/faith groups if they could be brought together that would be beneficial.

13) Do you have any other information you are able to provide in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping?

Inspector Webb advised that it was not a massive issue in this area for the police and that it was fairly low level in terms of crime and police time. Sergeant Odlin added that there was a difficulty with the definition of 'homeless', the example given being people 'sofa-sleeping' /

14) Do you have any other recommendations for the Scrutiny Panel to consider including within its final report?

Sergeant Odlin was of the opinion that the solution shouldn't be police led, that it needed to come from the community and the local councils to be effective.

Appendix D – notes from the scrutiny meeting of 18th December 2019

Date & Time: 18th December 2019, 2pm

Councillor attendance: R Jackson (Chair), C Dickinson, D Hall, B Brookes

Councillor apologies: J Brookes, S Campbell-Wardman, D Edginton

Officers: Michelle Howard (Assistant Director, People), Rebecca James (Scrutiny Assistant)

Witnesses: Councillor Graham Marsh (Portfolio Holder for Partnerships)

Notes:

The Chair welcomed everyone and invited Councillor Marsh to say a few words. Councillor Marsh (CGM) explained that although this issue did not cross his portfolio, he could have an effect through his work with Michelle Howard (MH) and his partnership work. He believed the first thing to do is to define what we mean by rough sleeping – begging, streets, etc. – as homelessness can mean something different to rough sleeping. He also advised of need to identify the reasons behind people rough sleeping and put things in place for the whole package. Councillor Jackson (CRJ) then explained that she would like to put some information / questions to Councillor Marsh and ask him to give his take on the information.

Charter

CGM – I think it would be a good idea to collate information regarding who can do what so people can be directed to the right place. However, we would need to ensure people wanted to become part of a charter and share data.

Mental Health Worker

CGM – I believe this is a valuable asset for the police who use it in their emergency call centre. An ambition for our own is nice but impractical at the moment. It would be down to the NHS and their health and wellbeing offer.

MH – Some RSI models do have a mental health worker and it is difficult not always being able to access the right health support. We have completed a submission for further RSI funding and within this have requested additional resource to increase capacity to be able to support system access/ engage with the right partner to reduce systematic pressure so we can help people access the system. We are also aiming to learn from the changes enabled through the additional NHS England money allocated to Lincoln City. At a case management level we have found it helpful to go to partner meetings to discuss solutions.

Regarding the year 2 bid we have also asked for funding for ‘crash pads’ in Louth, Mablethorpe and Skegness where people can be taken off the streets and services can be invited in to assess people whilst there. With regard to mental health and addiction, it was confirmed that the team tried to base themselves with relevant services as partners. It was clarified that ‘outreach’ is when you go out to assist people on the streets, whereas ‘inreach’ is the provision of support once someone has been found accommodation.

Data collection and sharing

CGM – Data collection is a tricky area but once we have the data surely we can use it.

MH – clarified that we provide data to MHCLG for the RSI programme. For the P3 public health funded outreach service; P3 provide data to LCC. There is a challenge regarding the reporting mechanism (it is suggested that a report would need to be built within the LCC system). From March 2021, the street outreach service will not be commissioned by LCC and the future model is unclear. RSI funding will benefit from integration in terms of data so we can work on the results for the whole of Lincolnshire. This won't impact ELDC day to day but need to look at this moving forward.

Communications plan to engage the public (example of Street Aid scheme in Cambridge)

CGM – I believe this would be difficult to manage and understand. In Skegness there are increasing numbers of people who take food and drink to rough sleepers. It sounds more like another charity – how would it be managed: town, district, county? CRJ confirmed it had worked in bigger towns. CGM said an issue was with those people begging who weren't actually rough sleepers.

Police not being the lead organisation in tackling rough sleeping

CGM – I agree it is not their primary function but they are part of the solution and part of the answer to a partnership approach.

MH – The police have worked well with the rough sleeping team. On the issue of engagement, MH confirmed that police supported ELDC's enforcement strategy but found it difficult to deal with people who may be sitting rather than obviously begging. The police are key to help other agencies engage with people.

Flexibility for working in collaboration with P3

CGM – This would make sense but we have to be careful not to absorb P3 into ELDC – we need to understand the barriers that stop P3 from assisting with inreach work.

MH – We have proposed a more flexible operating model as part of the year 2 bid and also submitted a revised model for flexibility to use staff time differently at peak times.

Housing Hub

CGM – It makes sense to take someone off the streets and then have time to help them find somewhere.

MH – It was confirmed that in addition to the SWEP beds in Louth, Mablethorpe and Skegness, it was hoped that further work could be done with the Salvation Army to support them in taking on complex cases.

Request for different office accommodation

CGM – I would think the team are mostly out on the streets in their role.

MH – It was clarified that the team were not asking for their own office but rather that the accommodation they currently used was not ideal. The Council is changing the way it works and this will benefit the rough sleeping team as it will allow them access to work spaces in Mablethorpe, Louth and Skegness.

How to keep the funding going long term

CGM – We need to look at what has worked and why and fund what works. Helping the most vulnerable is an important part of what the Council does.

Wet house

CGM – This is an issue of the law, really they should be arrested as they are breaking the law. Should we do this? Does it make them safer? I have not heard of that before and would need to think how it might work. It seems to be an idea that may work in a big urban area but not in a rural area like East Lindsey. Other panel members agreed that perhaps funding or lack of suitability were reasons for not doing this in East Lindsey.

MH - MH suggested that providing access to detox facilities and integrating people into the wider community and finding other activities to occupy them would be more suitable.

What do you consider ELDC needs to do next to help people exit the streets?

CGM – I would suggest that we need to ensure we have identified who needs help and what help they need and work in partnership with others to provide that help.

Do you think the East Lindsey approach is effective?

CGM – Yes as the number has reduced.

MH - The annual snapshot methodology is just one measure, but I see the figures over a longer period than just the ‘snapshot’ event so I know we have made a reduction, the data has been validated. Not all areas that saw a reduction had the same funding as us but some of those without RSI funding have seen an increase and are now applying for funding.

Is there enough resource and capacity to make a lasting difference in East Lindsey?

CGM – We won’t really know this until we find out the results of the funding bid but there will always be people who fall into this way of life.

What are your thoughts on the progress made to date by ELDC?

CGM – It is reassuring to see the figures but we can’t be complacent, we need to keep working and be open to new ideas, don’t just do things because they are nice, do them because they work. If we have 10 problems, don’t split the money 10 ways, choose the worst three and look to solve them then move on to the other issues.

How effective do you consider ELDC have been in engaging purposefully with people who are sleeping rough and helping them to come off the streets?

CGM – Very successful so far, we need to do follow up work to check it has worked. Councillor Jackson mentioned that Shelter had tried this in the past. CGM agreed it would be a good idea to look at the wider picture and show what worked. Part of the strategy is to understand the long term effects. We would need to find a way to keep in touch with former rough sleepers to find out what worked for them.

What do you feel the issues we face in East Lindsey are that you feel unable to resolve effectively?

CGM – money and resources.

How could collaboration and engagement with the community, voluntary sector and with the public be developed?

CGM – We need an open and honest approach, ask what the problems are, be honest and be realistic about what we can and can't help with.

MH – update on bid

I can confirm that the bid had been submitted after a thematic analysis of the key themes and challenges. ELDC were not eligible in Year 1, in Year 2 ELDC received £143,000 and in the bid for next year we have requested £251,000 (less underspend offset if approved). The extra money will pay for enhanced capacity and staffing. It will provide sustainability and flexibility for staff. Each staff member will have a thematic focus such as reconnection, vulnerable adults, prevention etc. We need to create a legacy plan as we can't guarantee the funding forever. We will maintain the current staff and would also like 2 inreach workers and 1 admin apprentice. We would also like to develop a 'crash pad' – which provides swift access when needed, requires working with landlords – this is linked to SWEP but separate. We have also asked for a personalised budget for a 'whatever it takes' approach as we recognise that one size doesn't fit all and we need to allow the team to spend where they see fit – a strengths based approach. We have also asked if we can keep the under-spend for: 1 – staff training, 2 – creation of a charter (Roxanne Warrick to lead on this), 3 – lease for a crash pad. The bid has been validated and is in review. We will hear in January.

Following queries from panel members it was confirmed:

- In previous years there were multiple funding streams, from this year they have all been consolidated into this RSI funding as it simpler – there is no detail on any further commitments;
- The 55% reduction we showed is based on the snapshot. The figure fluctuates but we aim to half it in line with government recommendations;
- There has been a countywide homelessness strategy since 2002 but there is now also a Government requirement for a rough sleeping strategy for Lincolnshire
- There is also a Homelessness Reduction Act from 2017 with a code of guidance for district councils.

Appendix E – notes from the scrutiny meeting of the 15th January 2020

Councillor attendance: R Jackson (Chair), C Dickinson, D Hall, S Campbell-Wardman, J Brookes

Councillor apologies: B Brookes, D Edginton

Officers: Jason Oxby (Homelessness, Housing and Wellbeing Service Manager), Rebecca James (Scrutiny Assistant)

Witnesses: Councillor Wendy Bowkett (Portfolio Holder for Communities)

Notes:

Councillor Bowkett (CWB) began by commenting that some excellent work had been done as part of the Rough Sleeping Initiative. She believes they have a great team who have really got on top of the problem and are even making headway with the entrenched rough sleepers.

What do you consider ELDC needs to do next to help people to exit the streets?

CWB – I believe they need to carry on doing what they are already doing and employ more people to use the same strategy. The key thing is to stop people becoming entrenched in sleeping rough and help them return home or find them accommodation.

What changes would you like ELDC to make in order to engage more effectively with people who are sleeping rough and to help them come off the streets?

CWB – I believe the ELDC approach is effective and the team is already doing the right thing but if we were able to employ extra people ourselves it would be better and easier to manage. I understand we have a good working relationship with P3 but it is better when we manage everything. Jason Oxby (JO) clarified that P3 brought different experiences and helped hold us to account but confirmed that the relationship needed tweaking.

Is there enough resource and capacity to make a lasting difference in East Lindsey?

CWB – We were given the lowest amount of money and have done the most with it. We are in the process of bidding for our second year of funding and hope for the same or more than this year. We have asked for £250,000 to pay for more staff, support, and flexibility and to aid access to accommodation.

JO – confirmed that we would hear any day about the success of the funding bid. He advised that the reference to 'crash pad's was linked to access to immediate accommodation such as B&B's, although these were not always suitable due to smell, behaviour issues etc. It is mostly ELDC managed B&B or pre-approved landlords as some homeless people can be challenging to house appropriately. Our RSI team work closely with B&B staff to ensure access to different accommodation.

How effective do you consider ELDC and local groups, services and organisations have been in engaging purposefully with people who are sleeping rough and helping them to come off the streets?

CWB – I believe it is happening and it is working, we work with P3 and shelters to help
JO – Our staff ensure they build relationships with organisations and trust so they can help – it is the same with landlords, we work with people once they are in accommodation to help ensure they keep it, for example how to interact, stop boredom.

When is enforcement action most successful in the context of a project like this?

CWB – Removing inappropriate meeting places such as drug taking areas; stopping begging particularly when those begging are not homeless.

JO – MHCLG have an adviser on enforcement to support us with queries on begging/stealing.

JO / CWB – clarified that the team has a good relationship with the police in general and that cuts had not been recent so did not impact current work.

How could collaboration and engagement with community and voluntary sector and with the public be developed?

CWB – We have good engagement with Skegness and Louth already and we have SWEP beds in Mablethorpe. There is a fine line between too many people helping but also ensuring that help continues.

JO – we work better with ECHO than we used to, the team is building a better relationship with them.

CWB – We need to be firm to ensure people are helped into accommodation instead of too many different kinds of help.

The panel then asked Councillor Bowkett to comment on a number of issues that had been raised at previous meetings.

Charter

JO – we have had this as part of our action plan for some time, Roxanne Warrick is working with us to ensure this happens.

CWB – we have been focusing on removing people from the streets, it would be good to do when we have the time.

Mental Health Worker

CWB – This idea is just unaffordable and there is also the difficulty of finding someone suitably qualified. If we get the Mental Health hubs then people will have access to that.

JO – We find it hard to access services for rough sleepers even with Mental Health experience. When making our recent bid we were advised by MHCLG against asking for a Mental Health worker, they have suggested buying in help when needed.

Data collection and sharing

It was agreed by CWB and JO that the frustration with this was that P3 have to use the LCC system, we use ours but ideally all the data would be in the same place for everyone to access.

Reconnection protocol

CWB – this is something we do already although people don't always want to return home, they think the coast will be nicer/better.

JO – it is difficult to ensure that people who go back 'home' will stay there and be dealt with there. People come from a mixture of areas but often for seasonal employment.

Communications plan to engage the public (example of Street Aid scheme in Cambridge)

CWB – we do try to ensure the public are aware of who to call in order to help someone they see on the streets. Compared to other areas, our 'problems' are well managed.

JO – we try to remind people at the start of the summer season.

Street Aid Scheme

CWB had not heard of this but JO indicated that ELDC were nervous of doing this as it is telling people how to spend their money. Once the concept was explained, CWB thought it may encourage people to stay on the streets.

Flexibility for working in collaboration with P3

CWB – I understand they have certain terms to work with and we try to work around them. The way we work with them needs tweaking, a change to the contract.

JO – we need a SLA with P3 if we continue to work with them – they have a 5 day turnaround, we want the same day. They have to confirm someone is actually a rough sleeper, we can help all forms of rough sleeping. If we get the funding we want we can get our own staff.

Housing Hub

CWB – this is an excellent idea and my ideal solution – if we could buy accommodation for this kind of approach it would save money compared to B&B.

JO – it would be ideal for assessing, helping and supporting.

SWEP beds

It was confirmed that ELDC have good contingency plans for this and now have somewhere in Louth where there was nowhere previously.

Office accommodation

CWB – the team need to be close to other teams and services so they can work closely with them.

JO – agreed that their accommodation is where it needs to be to help. He also confirmed that the proposed move would mean bases in Skegness, Louth and Mablethorpe would allow for even more flexibility for the team.

How to keep the funding going long term

CWB and JO agreed that reapplying for funding was difficult as you couldn't make long term plans.

Addiction services – Addaction? Wet house?

CWB – Addaction work well and are part of the Blue Light Project. I believe drink causes more problems than drugs in summer – these are often street drinkers and beggars rather than homeless.

Understanding why people are homeless

JO – this is hard to study although we usually have some background information on the people we help. We do ask but it is not currently a priority.

Appendix F – notes from the scrutiny meeting of the 29th January 2020

Councillor attendance: R Jackson (Chair), C Dickinson, D Hall, S Campbell-Wardman, J Brookes, B Brookes, D Edginton

Officers: Jason Oxby (Homelessness, Housing and Wellbeing Service Manager), Rebecca James (Scrutiny Assistant)

Witnesses: George Hockings (Centre Manager, Witham Lodge)

Notes:

The Chair welcomed Mr Hockings. He began by explaining that he worked at Witham Lodge in Skegness, which was run by the Salvation Army. They had 3 buildings, 22 staff, had been open since 2001 and could cater for up to 50 homeless people at a time.

1. What do you consider ELDC needs to do next to help people to exit the streets?

GH – we work with the ELDC Rough Sleeping team in Skegness. We take referrals from Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) – we respond, ensure conditions are met before taking them – if they have a local connection they can stay for up to 6 months, if not they can stay for up to 3 months. Our goal is to find people sustainable accommodation locally.

2. What changes do you think ELDC and local groups, services and organisations need to make in order to engage more effectively with people who are sleeping rough and to help them come off the streets, in a planned way, as quickly as possible?

GH - We have a 5 year contract with LCC which is up for renewal this coming July – we have to reapply but they are only offering us 28 beds which means 1 building instead of 3. We have been funded by LCC until now but from July the funding will come via ELDC. Jason Oxby clarified that ELDC would also begin to make the referrals and that the team would work with Witham Lodge to help find long term accommodation.

GH – Some people do not follow our rules or engage with us. We run at around 85% capacity – we have enough requests to be at 100% but people don't always fit the criteria.

3. Do you think the East Lindsey approach is effective? How does this fit with the local and regional context?

GH - I believe it a good team. It is early days for the project but it has worked well so far.

4. What is your organisation's approach to addressing rough sleeping and how does this enhance efforts across East Lindsey?

GH - The Salvation Army is the biggest provider of housing for the homeless in the UK after the government, it is embedded in what we do.

5. Is there enough resource and capacity to make a lasting difference in East Lindsey?

GH - It will all depend on the success of our tender and whether we can survive without a grant or not. The only other place like us is Hope House in Mablethorpe.

6. What are your thoughts on the progress made to date by ELDC?

We have good working relationships with the staff based at Skegness Town Hall, we share information on referrals. We have a variety of reasons for people being on the streets: young runaways; pregnant single women; middle aged men suffering marriage breakdown; addictions; mental health problems. We get referrals from a wide area but the main issue is transport to get to us. The other issue is people coming to the area for seasonal work and we can't always help as they have no local connection.

7. How effective do you consider ELDC and local groups, services and organisations have been in engaging purposefully with people who are sleeping rough and helping them to come off the streets?

GH – organisations such as Addaction and Probation services have moved to Boston so they are harder to access. We take referrals from prison leavers if they have a local connection. We try to interview them whilst they are still in prison but the prison service are inconsistent in the way they plan their releases. The demographic has changed, in 2001 95% of homeless were men, now it is around 60% men 40% women. We often find female homeless more difficult to manage than male. We have 1 space for couples at Witham Lodge and 2 spaces for pets.

8. When is enforcement action most successful in the context of a project like this?

GH – At Witham Lodge we have our own terns for those staying with us. These include written and verbal warnings regarding drugs, ASB, violence and are either 14 or 28 days depending. They usually work as people realise that we are their last chance for help.

9. How are data, statistics and demographics gathered and used to meet the needs of men and women who are homeless?

GH – We help around 200 people per year. We have 1 building staffed 24 hours a day, 1 staffed during the day and 1 unsupervised. There are on average 3 out the 50 people who have no local connection

JO – LCC seem to feel that we will need less beds if we only help people with a local connection but the data clearly shows that the vast majority of people we help do have a local connection.

10. Do you get the support you need from other organisations? How could this be improved?

GH – we used to have police liaison officer, now we only see them if they are looking for someone. It is difficult for us to get doctor's appointments and the probation service are short staffed. We get no help from Mental Health teams and there is no longer any 'crisis' help, for example if someone threatens suicide. If our residents are going to college, most need to travel to Boston to do this although the college help support costs of this. If people staying get jobs then their benefits are reduced and they also have to pay 6 or 7 times more than an unemployed person to stay at Witham Lodge. Mental Health issues are a real barrier, our staff have basic training to assist with minor issues.

11. What are the issues you face in East Lindsey that you feel unable to resolve effectively? Please can you suggest ways in which services and organisations can connect with, and meaningfully engage with, harder to reach groups?

GH – we struggle to deal with mental health issues, lack of transport and medical and other facilities in Skegness.

12. How could collaboration and engagement with community and voluntary sector and with the public be developed?

GH – Witham Lodge have run volunteer groups since 2009 such as a furniture project, which we took over from Furnichurch. We cover the whole area of East Lindsey if we can and it helps the resident's wellbeing and mental health. It also helps relieve boredom and can also be used on a job or property reference. We try to work with local residents and police to ensure we know who is here and that they are not causing trouble in the area. It used be that all crime and problems were blamed on our residents but after working closely with people, we now have a much better relationship and reputation. We run schemes that deal with litter, noise, tenancy rules, and life skills. This helps with a pathway out of homelessness. We usually know about people with mental health problems or other issues as it will be on their referral form. If we are not told it then makes it harder for us to help them.

13. Do you have any recommendations for the Scrutiny Panel to consider including within its final report?

GH – If our tender is unsuccessful or our bed numbers are reduced, this will have an impact on ELDC.

The panel then asked Mr Hockings to comment on a number of issues that had been raised at previous meetings.

Charter

I would be happy to be part of this although we already have the VAP and the homelessness forum.

Mental Health Worker

We used to have access to someone but it doesn't happen now. Addaction used to do a surgery for residents but then changed to having a named worker but a moving back to the previous way of working.

72 hour Hub

We used to work like this but we now have to wait for LCC referrals. A hub was a much better method as I could say yes the same day, police checks could be done in Skegness in 2 days, unlike now where they go to Lincoln and it takes 3 weeks. Also, we now only know about convictions, we don't get any intelligence on people.

Understanding why

We provide quarterly case studies for LCC as part of our contract and this is one of the areas we look at.

Diverted giving

I believe it is a good idea. We rely on the Store House for food parcels and public donations for toiletries. It would be beneficial as we could use it to feed and clothe and clean people, give them public transport tickets rather than giving cash.

Mr Hockings left the meeting.

Jason Oxby then informed the panel that the RSI bid for year 2 had been successful and awarded £204,000 and were also allowed to keep the £47,000 underspend. Regarding Witham Lodge, Jason Oxby advised that they were in a good position for their tender to be successful but the main worry was the potential reduction from 50 to 28 beds.

Appendix G – notes from the scrutiny meeting of 11th February 2020

Councillor attendance: R Jackson (Chair), C Dickinson, D Hall, S Campbell-Wardman, J Brookes, B Brookes

Apologies: D Edginton

Officers: Jason Oxby (Homelessness, Housing and Wellbeing Service Manager), Rebecca James (Scrutiny Assistant)

Witnesses: Richard Speed and Paul Simpson from ECHO

Notes:

Discussion

Jason Oxby provided some details for the panel regarding reconnection: the team must ensure there is somewhere or someone to go to; Carol Rippin may have figures on the link to domestic abuse; if someone has left their own area due to abuse then the team can help them stay.

During discussion the following points were raised:

- There is a lack of knowledge on why people are rough sleeping rather than accessing available help;
- Figures for mental health and domestic abuse are low as people don't self-report, especially for men as they are less likely to admit to having a problem;
- ELDC have 24 hr access to help for homeless people through 01507 601111;
- A Councillor queried whether it was obvious to homeless people what they had to do to access help. JO advised there was information out there but they could not guarantee rough sleepers were always able to access it.

Richard Speed (RS) and Paul Simpson (PS) from ECHO introduced themselves and explained to the panel that they helped people by providing food, sleeping bags, directing people to the Council. They see themselves as friends helping friends.

1. What do you consider ELDC needs to do next to help people to exit the streets?

PS – They need to prevent homelessness in the first place as being on the streets can cause mental health problems if they are not already present.

RS – privately renting a property can cause problems of affordability. Sofa surfing is a big problem as they don't seem homeless but that is when they fall through the cracks.

JO – We actually struggle to get people to bid on 1 bedroom properties.

PS – There are stages of debt and arrears and people feel they can't ask for help and start to feel invisible, feel there is a stigma in asking for help and food.

2. What changes do you think ELDC and local groups, services and organisations need to make in order to engage more effectively with people who are sleeping rough and to help them come off the streets?

RS – provision of a night shelter for different areas such as Louth. Although around 11 homeless in the district, we also help people who are at risk of becoming homeless – we work in an area much wider than Louth. The benefits system is not working and causes gaps so people can't buy food.

CLlr CD/JB – Universal Credit doesn't match with the cost of living and rental costs force people into the black economy to top up their income.

3. Do you think the East Lindsey approach is effective?

Yes, we believe it is improving with the new rough sleeping team, we work much better with them and have a much better relationship with them. ECHO is a growing organisation, we work in Grimsby, Louth, Lincoln, all funded through fundraising and carried out by volunteers.

4. What is your organisation's approach to addressing rough sleeping and how does this enhance efforts across East Lindsey?

PS – we work through a network of people and local knowledge, 'friends helping friends'.

5. Is there enough resource and capacity to make a lasting difference in East Lindsey?

PS - This is a never ending problem, the whole of society needs to change for the problem to go away. Whatever we do there's always more to be done. The issue of cramped and expensive housing may cause homelessness – so many issues lead to homelessness, they connect and have a knock on effect. We are notified of people in need by P3, ELDC, the police, and local residents.

RS – There are many people who slip through the net as they sleep in a tent in someone's garden so you can't find them. JO confirmed that these people would still be classed as homeless even if in a shed/garden/sofa.

PS – people are not always aware of what they can claim or how to go about it and can feel helpless.

RS – In response to a query, it was confirmed that there is the issue of needing to help people with poor literacy skills fill in forms and overcome the feelings of stigma associated with providing information. There is a related issue of being too proud to ask for help – ECHO have helped people in this situation ask for help.

PS indicated he felt people need special training to deal with homeless people and RS added that you need to approach people in a certain way and speak to them in a sensitive manner – this can't always be taught, you need to find the right people. They both felt that ELDC approach has improved now the new team is in place but they need to have training as well as experience and the right personality.

6. What are your thoughts on the progress made to date by ELDC?

RS – we are working well with the new team and feel we can refer people to them.

7. When is enforcement action most successful in the context of a project like this?

ECHO confirmed that they do not get involved with enforcement as they don't agree with it – they tend to see the negative side of it, peoples possessions being thrown away, people being banned from town centres so they can't access the food and help they need.

8. Do you get the support you need from other organisations? How could this be improved? Please can you suggest ways in which services and organisations can connect with, and meaningfully engage with, harder to reach groups?

RS – we work independently, we have our own network to help people but we already connect with Mablethorpe, Skegness and Horncastle foodbanks and we assist each other.

9. What are the issues you face in East Lindsey that you feel unable to resolve effectively?

All of them, we can't see an end to it, we both feel it will get a lot worse in the near future as issues come to a head such as rent, cost of living etc.

10. How could collaboration and engagement with the community, voluntary sector and with the public be developed?

This has grown, changed and developed over time. It already happens between ECHO, ELDC, police, P3, churches.

11. Do you have any other information you are able to provide in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping?

PS – Our main users are males aged 30+. We have an issue with the definition of 'vulnerable' we would class the people we help as vulnerable but they don't always qualify as this.

12. Do you have any other recommendations for the Scrutiny Panel to consider including within its' final report?

PS – 1) publicise the help available, 2) assist people at risk of becoming homeless.

Charter

PS – I am not keen on this idea, we're ad-hoc and have no defined plan on what we do so it would be hard to commit to anything. We would not want to be involved but would want it to happen. JO explained that the Charter was about ensuring the public were aware of what different organisations do and have available. RS still felt that ECHO already had the links it needed and a charter would take up their time.

Mental Health

PS – I believe those working with rough sleepers, such as outreach staff, should have Mental Health training – this way you wouldn't need a specialist mental health worker. More awareness of mental health issues generally for those working with rough sleepers.

Reconnection protocol

RS – indicated that some people leave their own area as they feel unsafe. JO confirmed that people usually need a local connection to access housing. RS advised that there were often good reasons why people didn't want to be reconnected. JO confirmed that there were exceptions to rule, such as those suffering domestic abuse. PS added that he felt reconnection was wrong in principle as people should be able to live where they want.

Diverted giving

PS indicated that he did not like the idea of this as it would be demeaning and 'othering' people. He could not see how it would work in practice.

RS – giving money to homeless people gives them a choice over what to spend it on.

P3 flexibility

RS – I think flexibility to work with people after they have been taken off the streets is important as there is a risk they would otherwise feel abandoned. There is an issue of affordability.

PS agreed that if the funding was there it would be a great idea. JO confirmed that funding has just been agreed for the next 12 months in order to trial this approach.

Housing Hub

PS/RS both confirmed they could see this arrangement working for many people but also it would be very expensive so potentially not sustainable.

JO confirmed that ELDC were working with Witham Lodge to help more people there into permanent accommodation so there were new spaces people could access.

Addiction services

RS – Addaction are good and we need their service. My only issue with them is they charge people to have a drugs test to prove they are 'clean'.

Understanding why

PS – we know the reasons why people become homeless but there is a stigma against homeless people as it is often assumed it is their own fault.

Points raised during discussion

- Children who have spent time in the care system are more likely to end up homeless;

- There is a need to move people away from the preconceptions they have about homeless people;
- PS - People often have a negative view of the council / social services which is why groups such as ECHO are a vital link as they are seen as safer/non-judgemental;
- ECHO receive donations from shops and supermarkets. They give out food parcels on a Sunday in Lincoln and often have queues in Grimsby when they give out food parcels there. They often share donated food with other food banks to ensure stock is replenished;
- ELDC has a much better relationship with ECHO now;
- ECHO assist people who are struggling, to try and stop them becoming homeless in the first place;
- Key points to consider: public awareness; working together; reconnection; ELDC performance; continuity of funding.

Appendix H – East Lindsey DELTA figures sent to MHCLG in 2020

These figures are for the period from June 2019 to February 2020.

PROJECT SUMMARY					
CLIENT DETAILS					
Total number of clients recorded	263				
Client Gender:					
Male	209		Transgender	0	
Female	48		Did not answer	0	
Client Age:					
15-24	24		60-69	5	
25-39	86		70-79	0	
40-49	48		80-89	0	
50-59	20		90 and over	0	
Average age of clients:	36				
Verified rough sleepers:	134		Without Local Connection	89	
Where clients moved to:					
B&B	12		Other	3	
Hospital	1		Private rented sector	12	
Moved in with Family	20		Re-connected	23	
Commissioned Accommodation	28		Night Shelter	0	
Non-commissioned Accommodation	5		Social Housing	1	
Prison	7		Lost Contact	13	
Night Shelter	0		Moved on	51	

Returned Home	5		Long Term	43	
Not Found Rough Sleeping	69		Short Term	74	
Area Located					
Skegness	187		RS Timeline		
Horncastle	2		Flow	6	
Louth	26		Return	3	
Mablethorpe	16		Stock	1	
Ingoldmells	3				
Winthorpe	1		Open Cases	1	
Wainfleet	0		Case On Hold	19	
Alford	0		Closed	227	
Chapel St Leonards	0		Disengaged with Service	32	
Con/Tatershall	4		Returned to RS from Long Term Acc	3	
Sutton on Sea	4				
Homeless Reasons					
Relationship Breakdown Partner	32		Evicted ASB	11	
Relationship Breakdown Family	29		Terminated tenancy to move to another are without local connection	0	
Prison Release	8		Mental Health Issues	1	
Hospital Discharge	1		Fleeing violence	7	
Evicted rent arrears	37		DV	2	
Evicted Benefit underpayment	0		Drug Debts	3	
Wanted to move to seaside	6		Seasonal Work	0	
ATL	20		Not Homeless	3	

Criminal Activity	0		Addiction Issues	3	
Lost Job	6		Other	0	
Referred for Accommodation	0		No Answer	72	
Seasonal Caravan	0				
LAST SETTLED HOME					
Private rented sector	54		Social housing	15	
Owner occupier/joint owner	0		With partner	32	
With friends	15		Family home - extended family	7	
Family home - parents	28		Overseas	0	
Foster care/looked after	0		No Answer	77	
MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH					
Do you have any mental health needs?	88		Do you have any physical health problems?	29	
Do you have a medical diagnosis	65		Do you take medication	0	
Do you get support	22		Registered with GP	0	
SUBSTANCE MISUSE					
Do you use Drugs?	59		Who do you receive support from? Addaction	16	
Do you drink alcohol daily or binge drink?	60		Who do you receive support from? GP	1	
Do you gamble daily?	0		Who do you receive support from? Gamcare	0	
EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION					
Do you have benefits in place	1		Unable to work, sickness/disability	125	
			On benefits	159	
CRIMINAL HISTORY					
Have you ever had any involvement with the Police?	93		Currently involved with probation	22	

				Have you ever been to Prison	64	
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