

# Homelessness, Housing and Fair Work

10.00am, Thursday, 5 November 2020

## Management of No Recourse to Public Funds Cases

Routine  
Wards  
Council Commitments

### 1. Recommendations

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1.1 Committee notes the content of this report.

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# Report

## Management of No Recourse to Public Funds Cases

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 To support public health objectives, since the beginning of lockdown restrictions in March 2020, the Council has continued to make temporary accommodation available to anyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness. This includes people who may not or do not have recourse to public funds (NRPF). This report provides information on the provision of accommodation and support services.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 The Council has supported public health objectives by providing accommodation for people who may be NRPF, who would otherwise be ineligible to access accommodation and may sleep rough.
- 3.2 This began in March 2020 and as agreed by the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee of 3 September 2020, will continue until the public health crisis ends.

### 4. Main report

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- 4.1 As lockdown restrictions were initiated in March 2020, it was estimated that around 35-40 people who were or believed they were NRPF were sleeping rough in Edinburgh.
- 4.2 It is likely that currently more people were in insecure accommodation and using services, such as the Bethany Christian Trust Care Shelter.
- 4.3 To ensure that the Council and its partners supported public health objectives to minimise the spread of Covid-19, joint exercises including public health officials, Police Scotland, the Council and street-based outreach services were conducted to engage with all rough sleepers, including those with NRPF, to ensure they knew accommodation was available.
- 4.4 Following these initial exercises, the Council quickly accommodated around 80 people thought to have NRPF.

- 4.5 Temporary accommodation for most people was over two sites and support services specific to their needs were put in place. Feedback from partners has confirmed that generally this is not a static group and this has continued to be the case throughout the pandemic, which can make the provision of support and information collection challenging.
- 4.6 Partners have introduced packages of support which includes, but is not limited to:
- 4.6.1 Streetwork dedicated support worker, who co-ordinate information and support provision between the Council, statutory partners and the street-based outreach teams,
  - 4.6.2 Interpretation Services, to ensure that as much background is collected as possible to ensure support is centred on the service user's needs,
  - 4.6.3 Employability support is being offered to all, including access to teaching English as a second language through Crisis,
  - 4.6.4 Support to repatriate if the service user wishes to,
  - 4.6.5 Streetwork's EU Settlement Scheme Support Worker is helping EEA nationals to apply to the scheme, to determine their rights to stay,
  - 4.6.6 Referrals to advocacy agencies to support people with their applications around their status and rights to reside,
  - 4.6.7 Outreach visits by Council Homelessness Officers, to ensure that advice and support was provided where people could access it,
  - 4.6.8 Regular contact with the relevant consulates and the International Office for Migration to share information.
- 4.7 These supports in conjunction with the Council's assessment services have ensured that, wherever possible, positive outcomes are being achieved for NRPF service users, this includes establishment of rights to reside and benefits, employment, moves to settled accommodation and repatriation.
- 4.8 In addition to the supports above, where appropriate, public health and general health services have been provided to people who may have NRPF. This support will continue until the end of the public health crisis.
- 4.9 Current intelligence suggests that following the relaxation of lockdown restrictions more potentially NRPF people have arrived in Edinburgh, with some rough sleeping. Most of these people have arrived from rural Romania, where they describe living conditions as very poor.
- 4.10 Partners are working closely together to understand how many people have arrived, what support they require and to route them into appropriate services.
- 4.11 It is likely that whilst the Council and its partners continue to provide accommodation and support to potentially NRPF people, numbers will increase. The numbers will also fluctuate as people arrive or are repatriated depending on individual circumstances and as their status changes following the provision of support.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 Officers will continue to work with partners to support this vulnerable group. This will include the provision of accommodation, support and health services with regular reviews of cases.
- 5.2 Officers will continue to create and adapt support and move on plans for all potentially NRPF service users, to ensure that as the public health crisis ends a clear outcome is in place for all service users.
- 5.3 Officers will continue to work with civil service colleagues, to understand any existing legislation and any potential legislative changes that would impact on the way cases can be lawfully managed.
- 5.4 Officers will continue to work with public health and civil service colleagues to ensure awareness of the stages of the public health crisis and proposed dates for this ending.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 Although the numbers of people who are potentially NRPF fluctuates, it is anticipated that the provision of accommodation and support for this group could cost in the region of £1.3million per annum.
- 6.2 This figure is included within the Period 5 monitoring report, produced for the Finance and Resources Committee on 27 October 2020, which notes an estimated pressure of £9.3million for the delivery of homelessness services in 2020/21.
- 6.3 The financial implications of supporting this client group will be considered through the 2021/22 budget process taking into account of points 5.3 and 5.4 above.

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

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- 7.1 N/a

## **8. Background reading/external references**

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- 8.1 [Homelessness Services - Use of Temporary Accommodation Report](#)
- 8.2 [NRPF - Legal Position](#)

## **9. Appendices**

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- 9.1 None.