

GLASGOW SIMON COMMUNITY RESEARCH REPORT ON ROUGH SLEEPING IN NORTH  
LANARKSHIRE

15 With reference to paragraph 10 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 16 March 2006 when, inter alia, (1) the contract with Glasgow Simon Community to develop an outreach service for rough sleepers was extended until 30 September 2006, and (2) it was agreed that the findings of the research conducted by Glasgow Simon Community would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee, there was submitted a report (docketed) dated 6 April 2006 by the Director of Housing and Property Services regarding the outcome of research carried out by the Glasgow Simon Community into rough sleeping and hidden homelessness in the North Lanarkshire area (a) detailing within the report, the aims and methodology used by Glasgow Simon Community, and the research findings and recommendations; (b) proposing that (A) the departmental service improvement recommendations be referred to the Homelessness Continuous Improvement Group, and (B) measures to respond to the wider recommendations as detailed within the report, be discussed with relevant partners, and (c) advising that a project proposal would be developed and reported to a future meeting of the Committee to tackle the issue of rough sleeping and provide outreach services.

**Decided:**

- (1) that the main findings and recommendations of the research, be noted;
- (2) that the proposal to refer departmental service improvement recommendations to the Homelessness Continuous Improvement Group and to discuss with relevant partners, measures to respond to wider recommendations within the report, be approved;
- (3) that approval be given to develop a project proposal for the ongoing delivery of outreach services to rough sleepers, which would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee, and
- (4) that the report be remitted to the Social Work Committee for information.

**NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL**

**REPORT**

<b>To:</b> HOUSING AND TECHNICAL SERVICES COMMITTEE	<b>Subject:</b> GLASGOW SIMON COMMUNITY - Research Report into Rough Sleeping in North Lanarkshire	
<b>From:</b> DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AND PROPERTY SERVICES		
<b>Date:</b> 6 April 2006	<b>Ref:</b> TMCK/JH	

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of the outcome of research carried out by the Glasgow Simon Community into rough sleeping and hidden homelessness in the North Lanarkshire area.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 In September 2004 Committee approved the award of a contract to the Glasgow Simon Community to deliver an outreach service to people sleeping rough within the North Lanarkshire area until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006. In March 2006 Committee approved an extension of the contract until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2006 in order to allow for consideration of the research findings and the development of services to respond to those findings.
- 2.2 Committee was advised that the final report of research findings was due to be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006 and would be reported at the next available opportunity.

**3 Research Aims and Methodology**

- 3.1 The aims of research were to:
- To assess the nature of rough sleeping/hidden homelessness in North Lanarkshire, and identify the 'pathways' through statutory and voluntary sector services that service users can take;
  - To geographically map rough sleeping/hidden homelessness in North Lanarkshire and qualitatively explore the experiences of rough sleepers;
  - To evaluate the current service provision for rough sleepers or people experiencing hidden homelessness in North Lanarkshire, particular strengths or weaknesses, and how they can be developed to successfully meet their needs in the future.

### 3.2 Research methods included:

- Quantitative monitoring of all service users accessing the service, and ongoing monitoring of their circumstances at subsequent contacts;
- In-depth qualitative interviews with a cross-section of service users;
- Detailed case studies of service users and their experiences and 'pathway' through homelessness;
- Site visits and informal interviews with service providers across North Lanarkshire.

3.3 A cross-section of service users that had repeated contact with the outreach workers took part in in-depth interviews to chart their life history, their experiences of homelessness, the contact with different statutory and voluntary services they have had, and what they thought about the services they have accessed.

3.4 Ten in-depth interviews were conducted. The age range of those who took part was 21 – 53. Eight men and two women were interviewed. This data allowed for the qualitative experiences of people sleeping rough or experiencing hidden homelessness in North Lanarkshire to be explored and for case studies of the service users and how the service could assist them to be developed

3.5 Consent was obtained from the ten people taking part in the in-depth interviews to use their experiences as case studies. By bringing together the interview data and data from the files kept on each service user about the contact they have had with the outreach workers, four detailed case studies have been developed. These case studies are used to illustrate the experiences and needs of the rough sleepers or the hidden homeless in North Lanarkshire, the pathways through services they take, and the work of the outreach project.

## 4 Research Findings and Recommendations

4.1 There are people experiencing rough sleeping in North Lanarkshire as part of a cycle of homelessness. The outreach service had contact with 91 individuals over the period of research from June 2005 to November 2005 and many of those people made numerous contacts with the team. They often have very high support needs.

4.2 Although important developments are being made, the statutory provision in place currently cannot always provide the level of support or specialist skills that may be required to assist people with such complex needs access accommodation within the framework that exists. The key gaps in provision are outlined below.

4.3 Joint working between specialist services working with these services users, and the statutory services that exist, can operate together to begin to 'plug' this 'gap' in provision.

3.4 This research has found that people with such high support needs often need:

- a. Immediate access to support in a crisis;
- b. Consistent access to practical resources such as food;
- c. More accommodation/service options, including those for people who have high support needs, and may not feel ready for an independent tenancy (see for example the case study attached as Appendix 1);
- d. Long-term support is also required if stability is to be maintained and the cycle of homelessness is not repeated.

3.5 Key problems with service provision identified include problems accessing and engaging with service users due to:

- Chaotic lives and complex needs of the service users
- Previous negative experiences and lack of confidence in services
- Confusion over the process of accessing housing and a lack of knowledge about services available
  
- Lack of suitable accommodation and housing being available;
- Support services unable to offer the intense level of support some people require;
- Lack of practical resources and support for people, and for places they can access during the day to obtain practical support and find meaningful occupation of time;
- Presenting at police stations 'out of hours' has previously been a barrier to accessing housing for some service users and there may be a lack of awareness about the new 'out of hours' provision in place;
- Whilst there is a draft protocol being developed for people leaving prison, it currently appears that some service users are unsure of the pathway in place at this time, and the implementation of protocols being developed (such as for prison/hospital leavers) may be crucial.

3.6 Main Recommendations;

- The resources provided by drop in facilities in North Lanarkshire were widely used by the services users researched here. Wider access to these practical resources through the community services that already exist may be useful and could be developed to provide some meaningful occupation of time, and a place for people to go throughout the day
  
- Increased training and awareness on and about complex needs – linking into the 'culture change' recommended by the Homelessness Task Force
  
- Ensuring there is provision of independent advocacy, advice, and clear information for service users;
  
- Consistency in service provision could be achieved if a "key worker" was assigned to the client throughout the homelessness experience;

- More availability or wider access to detox facilities;
- Protocols for joint working between statutory and voluntary sector services being developed and implemented consistently;
- Implement consistently protocols currently being developed to provide accommodation for people when they leave institutions such as hospital;
- Ensure that recent changes to the procedure for accessing the out of hours standby service (which had operated by presenting to the local police station previously) is consistently applied and service users made aware of the new out of hours procedures;
- Temporary accommodation must always be available to people when they require housing and as the case studies show, has not always been previously;
- Different types of accommodation in different locations are required to meet with people's individual needs. If people are only offered accommodation in areas they may feel 'at risk' for example they may not settle in that accommodation and will continue to be homeless;
- Development of community resources to assist people with complex needs e.g. Literacy and Numeracy problems to access mainstream services and communicate what they require – for example through Confidence Building and Communication courses;
- More intensive, one-to-one, specialist support for people with complex needs is required to advise and support them through the housing process, assist them to link into mainstream services and provide an ongoing and consistent base of support for them whether they sustain accommodation or not.

### The Outreach Service

There is a clear need for an outreach service to exist in North Lanarkshire. In particular this is useful to:

- Identify and engage with people with complex needs
- Provide specialist working for people with complex needs
- 'Signpost' people who are homeless through services to resolve their homelessness
- Promote joint working between agencies

- Provide independent advocacy and support for service users to access agencies and accommodation that they may not otherwise link into or be aware of
- Offer crisis intervention that may prevent rough sleeping or repeat homelessness
- Provide consistency, a point of contact, and independent advice and support which can be accessed via the freephone number

#### **4 Considerations and Proposals.**

- 4.1 Consideration of the research findings and recommendations is underway with a range of relevant partners and stakeholders; and relevant recommendations for improved service responses from The Housing and Property Services Department will be addressed by the Homelessness Continuous Improvement Group.
- 4.2 A project proposal will be developed and reported to a future Committee for continuously tackling the issue of rough sleeping and providing outreach services.

#### **5 Corporate Considerations**

- 5.1 Tackling rough sleeping associated with chronic ill health, social deprivation and exclusion is a high priority for the Council and its partners within Health and the voluntary sector.
- 5.2 The development of services to address homelessness is consistent with the Council's corporate priorities, specifically Social Inclusion and Health, Wellbeing and Care.
- 5.3 These proposals have no direct financial or personnel implications for the Council as they are funded by a grant from the Scottish Executive.

#### **5. Recommendations**

- 5.1 It is recommended that Committee:
- a) Notes the main findings and recommendations of the research.
  - b) Approves the proposal to refer departmental service improvement recommendations to the Homelessness Continuous Improvement Group and to discuss with relevant partners, measures to respond to wider recommendations within the report.
  - c) Approves the proposal to develop a project proposal for the ongoing delivery of outreach services to rough sleepers to be reported to a future Committee.

d) Remits the report to the Social Work Committee for information.

**6. Background Information**

6.1 Available within the Housing and Property Services Department.



Thomas McKenzie  
**Director of Housing and Property Services**

## APPENDIX I

### Case Study

#### **'James' 31 year old male**

James was born in North Lanarkshire and left his family home when he was a teenager. Since then he has been in a cycle of staying with friends, in homeless units, and sleeping rough in North Lanarkshire. He has had two tenancies in the past but both have broken down and he has become homeless once more. James has serious problems with alcohol misuse and finds it difficult to communicate or recall events at times:

*'I've slept rough before, around (town in North Lanarkshire), places I know, I wouldn't sleep anywhere else. I've stayed with my pal, I stayed with another lassie but that didn't work out, I've had 2 tenancies, fled violence in one, I've been in (homeless unit), I've been in (other homeless unit) one night and then I left it.'*

He has had some contact with the different services in North Lanarkshire, but remains caught in a cycle of homelessness. He was recently excluded from all statutory homeless accommodation in North Lanarkshire, although this has been appealed. The outreach service first made contact with James at one of the drop-ins in North Lanarkshire. He had just been discharged from hospital and was at the drop-in to get some food. He was sleeping rough:

*'I'm pretty down, because I'm out on the street. At the weekend I can't get food. Friday was the last time I had something decent, at the soup kitchen. If I got a base I could get myself sorted'*

As this was 'out of hours' to apply for accommodation through a Housing Office the outreach workers accompanied James to the police station to present as homeless. Due to his exclusion from all council homeless accommodation there was nowhere available for him. The outreach workers contacted a direct access voluntary sector accommodation unit but there were no beds available there either. The only option then was to provide James with a sleeping bag, as he had no bedding. The outreach workers continued to meet with him over the next two weeks to provide him with food, clothing, support, and to communicate with tenancy services about his situation. An appeal was made by James to Tenancy Services with the assistance of the outreach workers to review the decision not to accommodate. A referral was also made to the Shelter Housing Aid Project. The outreach workers also contacted other accommodation providers in North Lanarkshire to try to access accommodation for James, but there was nothing available. James started to stay with a friend some nights, although he was still regularly sleeping rough. In the meantime the outreach workers referred him to the Health and Homelessness team, and continued to provide him with practical support and advice. He is currently staying with his friend, making up part of the hidden homeless /rough sleeping population in North Lanarkshire. He has some contact with the outreach workers, although he is not engaging with other services at the moment. James appeal was successful, and in the future he may access statutory accommodation in North Lanarkshire and access other support services. In the meantime the outreach workers will continue to have contact with James, they will assist him in a crisis whilst he is rough sleeping, and to access stable accommodation in the future.