

Appendix 1 Hostels Plus Overview.

The Commissioning Body agreed to an amount of the in-year underspend to be used to enhance rough sleeper provision.

1. Context

Following consultation with the Core Strategy Group, the Hostels Plus scheme utilised existing hostel and supported housing schemes to add very short-term, emergency capacity targeted at the most vulnerable rough sleepers through the winter months.

2. Brief

The enhancement provided additional staffing to enable :-

- safe assessment and admissions of vulnerable rough sleepers 24hr a day
- intensive work after admission to achieve settled accommodation e.g. reconnection with area of origin, into supported housing, with family or friends or own tenancy, using the SP rent deposit scheme available in local authorities.

The service would be linked closely to existing drug and alcohol provision and Kent Support and Assistance Service

3. Response

Two providers participated in Hostels Plus, providing additional “sit-up” accommodation in 6 locations in the county

- Tonbridge & Malling
- Tunbridge Wells
- Canterbury
- Dover
- Ashford

Providers utilised the Hostel Plus resource to supplement staff hours at the scheme to ensure the service was ready and able to safely manage admissions and work intensively with those who used the service.

4. Outcomes

In all, a total of **22 individuals** accessed the scheme. An existing service for rough sleepers was used as a central referral route.

At point for the referral, the **location** of the service users was as follows:-

Canterbury	12
Dover	5
Ashford	3
Thanet	1
Tunbridge Wells	6*

*(*all had accessed the winter shelter 2 had previously been rough sleeping in Tonbridge and Malling one had come from East Sussex)*

Though the majority (12) of the service users were British, the remainder came from other European countries including Poland (6) and one each from Latvia, Slovenia, Germany and Greece.

The **causal factors for rough sleeping** among the group varied. The most common were in relation to employment

Employment – Loss of job	4
Employment – Economic migration	4
Employment – Zero hours contract/irregular salary	1
Eviction incl. social/private rent – non compliance/arrears	4
Repossession	1
Relationship breakdown Family/Partner	4
Mental/Physical Health/Alcohol/Drug	2
Release from prison	1
Other*	1

** Partner taken into residential care, service use not on tenancy*

Support Needs

In addition to needing help with accessing accommodation, Hostel Plus service users needed support to access help with a wide range of health conditions, managing finances, form-filling and applications and with work or training opportunities. A number needed help with getting help with alcohol problems and a small number needed with help with communication as English was not their first language.

Length of stay

Almost half (45%) of entrants used the scheme for two weeks or less with most of these needing the service for less than a week. Seven people needed to use the service for between two and 4 weeks and five accessed it for more than a month.

Accommodation All but two of the clients were helped into more stable accommodation.

Supported Accommodation	16
Private Rented	2
Shared House	1
Returned home	1
Returned to rough sleeping	2

5. Feedback from Providers

Providers have given very positive feedback about the project, the outcomes they were able to achieve and the opportunity to add another option to enable vulnerable people to move away from rough sleeping.

The ability to act quickly in bringing vulnerable rough sleepers into very short term settings was seen as of value in the intervention. One provider mentioned the support that Hostels Plus scheme gave to other local rough sleeping initiatives such as *Canterbury 22*; service users in this service were able to access the Hostels Plus service.

A number of challenges cited by the providers are in relation to the short set-up and duration of the pilot itself. There was a short period of time to recruit staff to this short term pilot which, for one provider, meant relying upon agency staff and the management issues this poses. This also had an impact on the induction process that provider would liked to have put in place. The timescales of the project also had an impact on the ability and desirability of raising awareness of the scheme.

In running the scheme, providers found managing risk to be a significant part of the work. Both providers cited that the nature of the scheme lead them to make decisions about acceptances into the service based on factors other than vulnerability e.g. to maximise access to the scheme, those with highest, most complex needs would remain in the service longer, reducing access to the service for others; where service users were to share a space, compatibility was also a consideration. Both providers mentioned access to move-on accommodation as being critical to the success of the scheme.

6. Conclusion

It is clear from providers that the pilot had some successful features which could be scaled up and replicated in future commissioning. The majority of those who used the Hostels Plus service moved successfully into more independent settings.

Whilst the informal structures such as eligibility, referral mechanisms in and out of the service, links to recovery services and information sharing were adequate for the very short term pilot, it is clear that should any similar scheme be rolled out, these structures should be more formalised.

Both providers expressed interest in a more formal arrangement to deliver a similar scheme in the future and one provider has already created such a facility themselves within their existing resource.

Case Study

S is a 50 year old man who had been rough sleeping in Tonbridge. He was accessing the Winter Shelter in Tunbridge Wells prior to using Hostels Plus. He'd been living with his partner in Tonbridge until she sustained life-changing injuries in a serious accident and had to move into residential care. S had no rights over the tenancy and became homeless.

S's history of alcohol issues had impacted on his ability to maintain employment and had been a factor in a previous eviction. Hostels Plus quickly him with alcohol treatment services locally to enable him to begin his recovery. In the relative stability of the scheme, staff enabled S to gain access to GP services, including prescription medication that he needed for better control of his epilepsy and manage his back pain, resulting in improved mobility.

In addition to his alcohol and health issues, S needed help to complete forms, maintain and access benefits, managing finances and finding further accommodation. S engaged well with the support staff at the scheme to achieve these goals.

S was keen to move to his own independent flat and was happy to consider private rent. He felt he previous tenancy problems were due to not having any support; knowing that the outreach support from Hostels Plus would be available to him, he was keen to have his own tenancy. S was supported to view and find a flat nearer his family support networks and to liaise with the landlord. He was enabled to secure a deposit for the rent through Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and was supported through the application and award of vouchers for furniture and white goods through the Kent Support & Assistance Scheme. He moved into his flat on the 1st April 2014, supported throughout the transition process by Hostels Plus who assisted him to set up new utility accounts, housing benefit etc.

S has settled in well in his flat and is making good progress living independently. He has reconnected with his family who now live nearby. He has the continued support of Hostels Plus who have linked him with the alcohol treatment provider in his new area, so he can continue on his recovery journey and is able to sustain his tenancy.