

Council looking at ways of protecting the homeless

Plans are in place to protect people facing homelessness in Edinburgh during the coronavirus outbreak thanks to the combined efforts of the council, public health, private and third sector workers.

As part of urgent measures to support those most at risk in the capital, the council has set up a team who will co-ordinate support and increase the number of safe places for homeless people to live while self-isolating.

- Dedicated team set up to co-ordinate city's support for homeless people
- Hotels, self-contained flats and halls of residence could be used
- Care packages including food to be delivered

The new Additional Accommodation Needs Team will have officers from the Homelessness, Health and Social Care and Procurement Services.

The team will be responsible for organising crucial activity to step up the self-contained temporary accommodation the council has available for those without a home. It is being supported by daily advice from colleagues within Public Health Scotland.

The continued delivery of care packages including food, alongside the use of bed spaces in vacant hotels, self-contained flats and University halls of residence, are among

the measures being actively and urgently explored. There is also ongoing support for rough sleepers who are considered to be very vulnerable to the virus.

The team will build on work which was already underway in Edinburgh to move families living in shared temporary accommodation such as bed and breakfasts into self-contained places to live. This will keep Edinburgh's homeless shelters and street-based outreach services open for as long as possible.

Council Leader Adam McVey said: "We are committed to doing all that we can during this crisis and we stand ready to support everyone who is or becomes homeless, in any way possible.

"We've put a plan in place that will help us ensure the safety of people experiencing homelessness in the city, thanks to the incredible efforts of our housing officers and third sector partners who have been working nonstop to explore options for how we continue to care for those who need it most.

"We'll be exploring all options to make sure our most vulnerable families and residents can still get the help they need while following the Scottish Government's clear instructions.

"This is clearly a very challenging time for our teams and our city so I'm pleased we've had a very positive response from the private sector to our appeal for extra accommodation. I'm grateful too for the incredible sacrifice and dedication of Edinburgh's key workers who continue to do their jobs, day and night, to keep our essential homelessness and health services running and our people protected, as far as they can."

Depute Leader Cammy Day said: "The new team we've set up has an incredible responsibility and challenge ahead of them. They will constantly be checking the numbers of rooms we might need, working in the face of a national lockdown to prioritise our city's most vulnerable people. They need to do this while

factoring in the additional support needs many individuals who experience homelessness will have.

“It’s not going to be easy but we are all in this together. Hotels and other organisations are already responding to our call and we’re urgently looking at how we join forces as a city at this very difficult time.”

