Update on Emergency Shelter Services

Community Development & Recreation Committee

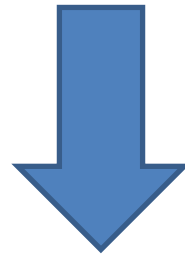March 18, 2013

Two things are clear

- Beds are available across the system nightly
  - Few formal complaints regarding access to beds
  - Direction to all staff is never turn anyone away
  - Toronto Shelter Standards in place to ensure there is no overcrowding

- Persistent recent anecdotal reports to the contrary

Path forward

- ## Improve service efficiency
  - There are a number of things to be done immediately that will result in improved customer service, operational efficiency and better access to beds

- ## Refocus the service system
  - Systemic changes are coming, planning and consultations for which include discussions about the role, extent, and funding for emergency shelter

Where are we going?

**Emergency Responses
to Homelessness**

**Integrated Housing Stability
Service System**

Opportunity to transform the system

- 2013 is a year of transition with the introduction of CHPI

- Through consultation with service providers, service users and other community stakeholders, a Housing Stability Service Plan will be delivered for Council consideration in the fall of 2013

- This is the context for discussion of broader systemic issues during the spring and summer

Current shelter system capacity and role

- 3,836 permanent beds at 57 shelter locations
  - 1,315 beds at 9 directly operated locations
  - 2,521 beds at 48 community agency sites through purchase of service contracts

- Additional capacity
  - Up to 172 emergency spaces funded by the City at 18 locations to supplement permanent beds as needed
  - 75 spaces at University Settlement House on weekends
  - Average of 88 Out of the Cold program spaces per night during winter season

How to get a shelter bed

- Multiple points of access
  - Through 57 sites; Central Intake/311; in person at SHARC; community referral/ directly to Out of the Cold

- Tracking bed availability with SMIS
  - Real time; shows available beds; used by all City-funded shelters

- Intake, referral and admission to a shelter bed
  - An intake through SMIS is required any time a client requests a shelter bed
  - Worker identifies bed through SMIS and calls the shelter directly
  - Bed is held in the system until person arrives and is admitted to the shelter

Role of SHARC in the shelter system

- Provides housing services to people who are living outdoors, street-involved, or housed and panhandling

- Four separate services; one location
  - Street respite
  - Shelter referral
  - 40 Transition to Housing shelter beds
  - Walk-in housing services

Why people wait or sleep at the SHARC

- Some refuse shelter altogether; just want to rest

- Some want to stay in the respite rather than leave downtown

- Some don't want to go to specific shelters where they may be referred or may have service restrictions in place that keep them from accepting

- Some present at the SHARC very late, very intoxicated, or under the influence of drugs; not appropriate to make a shelter referral

- Some are waiting for a bed to be made ready

Access issues within the system

- Intakes may not be completed as directed

- Transitional beds make up a majority of available beds each night

- Lag between discharge and making a bed available

Plans in place for near term improvement

- New protocols for communication to homeless people during emergencies

- Updating and re-issuing protocols related to service requests and referrals; training the front line

- RFP for an external third party to review bed access practices as part of overall quality assurance process

- Addressing lag between actual discharge and electronic discharge, fail to returns and no shows

- Assessing transitional programs to determine how to free up more beds for emergency shelter purposes

- Targeted housing allowances

- Waiting list pilot

Conclusion

- With a new funding model in place 2013 is a transition year

- Housing stabilization service plan under development

- Funding pressures in the housing services envelope

- Broad systemic questions and issues regarding the purpose and place of emergency shelters need to be addressed within an outcome focused, housing stability service system

- Appropriate place for these conversations is in the consultation and service planning process that will culminate in a report to City Council in fall 2013