

**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**Scrutiny Panel 1- Food Poverty**

Your attendance is requested at a meeting to be held in the Jeffery Room at the Guildhall on 14 January 2020 commencing at 6:00pm

**George Candler**  
**Chief Executive**

If you need any advice or information regarding this agenda please phone who will be able to assist with your enquiry. For further information regarding **Scrutiny Panel 1 - Food Poverty** please visit the website [www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny)

**Members of the Panel**

Chair	Councillor Dennis Meredith
Panel Members	Councillor Alan L Bottwood Councillor Emma Roberts Councillor Cathrine Russell Councillor Zoe Smith
Co-opted Members	Paul Foster, Emmanuel Church Clive Irston, Northamptonshire Food Poverty Network

**Calendar of meetings**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Room</b>
2 March 2020 6:00 pm 31 March	All meetings to be held in the Jeffery Room at the Guildhall unless otherwise stated

# Northampton Borough Scrutiny Panel 1 - Food Poverty

## Agenda

Item No and Time	Title	Pages	Action required
1. 6:00pm	<b>Apologies</b>		The Chair to note apologies for absence.
2.	<b>Deputations and Public Addresses</b>		<p>The Chair to note public address requests.</p> <p>The public can speak on any agenda item for a maximum of three minutes per speaker per item. You are not required to register your intention to speak in advance but should arrive at the meeting a few minutes early, complete a <a href="#">Public Address Protocol</a> and notify the Scrutiny Officer of your intention to speak.</p>
3.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>		Members to state any interests.
4.	<b>Minutes</b>	<b>1 - 9</b>	The Scrutiny Panel to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20 and 25 November 2019.
5. 6:05pm to 8:00pm	<b>Witness Evidence</b>	<b>10-11</b>	<p>The Scrutiny Panel to receive a response to its core questions from a number of key expert advisors:</p> <p>Partnership Manager, Department of Work and Pensions            CEO, Hope Centre            Representatives from the Community and Voluntary Sector</p>
6. 8:00pm	<b>Statutory and Social Overcrowding</b>		The Scrutiny Panel to consider a briefing note on statutory and social overcrowding

## NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY



### SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – FOOD POVERTY

**14 January 2020**

Written address from Councillor Danielle Stone

Please see my contribution to the food poverty discussion.

1. NBC is a Living Wage Foundation Living wage employer. It needs to take the next step and make it a contractual obligation for its contractors.
2. Holiday hunger is about children not being able to access a hot meal during the school holidays. It is a real, material deprivation.
3. Food poverty does not sit on its own. Many households, with children, cannot use food bank food because they cannot cook- because they have no cooker, or no fuel, or no pots- or none of these. Poverty goes very deeply over time, eroding all resources. Some poverty is more visible than others. Households with children are not particularly vulnerable and are particularly vulnerable.
4. BAME communities are not well served by food banks. Often their dietary needs are not met at all.
5. By the county councils own figures 16-18,000 children in Northampton are living in poverty.

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## NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

### SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - FOOD POVERTY

Wednesday, 20 November 2019

**PRESENT:** Councillor Russell (Deputy Chair, in the Chair); Councillors Bottwood, Roberts and Smith and P Foster (Co Optee)

**Witnesses** Rhosyn Harris, Consultant in Public Health  
Deborah Mbonfona, Health Improvement  
Mike Kay, Chief Executive, NPH  
Nicky McKenzie, Assistant Director, NPH

Geraldine Mahney, Customer Services Manager  
Tracy Tiff, Democratic and Member Services Manager

**Member of the public** Robin Burgess, CEO, Hope Centre

#### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Dennis Meredith.

#### 2. DEPUTATIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES

Robin Burgess, CEO of the Hope Centre, requested that this Panel takes full submission from the voluntary sector; community food and is offered by them their evidence is crucial. Gathering food to alleviate food poverty is a massive task and he urged the Panel to understand this and hear the full evidence.

#### 3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Allan Bottwood declared an interest in as a Board Member of NPH.

#### 3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2019 were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

#### 4. WITNESS EVIDENCE

Rhosyn Harris and Deborah Mbonfona highlighted the key points from the written evidence and gave a presentation which reflected Public Health's definition of food poverty. They explained that Northampton had a 56% take up of Healthy Start Vouchers whilst the average is 52% nationally.

The Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

The main barriers to partnership working are:

- There is lots of partnership working and work completed already
- There is a need to being able to maintain 'momentum'

A main barrier is leadership. There is a need for strong leadership and a clear vision. Leaders should be drawn together to provide the necessary direction. Rhosyn Harris and Deborah Mbofona urged the Panel to recommend this in its final report. It was emphasised that there is a need to have individuals with the relevant passion to lead e.g. Food Poverty Champions who can identify the partners who have the motivation and drive to bring all together.

The Panel supported the living wage employer.

It was explained that means tested benefits do not consider those who are in work and in poverty but receive no benefits.

The Health Protection Team has been in contact with all food banks but there was no compulsion for food banks to provide information on the number of food parcels that they provide. The need for the Panel to receive details of the number of food parcels distributed was highlighted

The Emmanuel Church provides 40 parcels a week for around 100 people with referrals generally coming from schools.

The Chair invited Robin Burgess to provide comment. Robin Burgess expanded further that more information would be required rather than just the amount of food bank parcels handed out, as at the Hope Centre, for example, 120 people come in for food daily whilst there is a separate food provision that helps 250 families per week. He added the following:

- That information could be provided via the groups
- It needs to be reviewed how much aid is given out and where and whether there is poor uptake and why
- He would produce a written report explaining how the living wage would impact

Robin Burgess further advised, that in his opinion, the impact of food deprivation meant children were living in relative poverty with 60% of the median income; this information could be provided to the Panel as he felt it was important so that the statistics could be cross referenced. He explained that food banks can't always provide fresh provisions therefore an understanding of the types of food offered would be a useful question to ask as there has also been some work done regarding the nutritional value of the food.

The Grow and Eat Project is also in operation.

The Panel commented that there were lots of different Groups doing different things in relation to food distribution, which needed looking at collectively to ensure the sharing of information; which is very important across all of the Groups; as every Group needed to know about each other's work so that there was no duplication. Expert advisors further commented and queried:

- How to improve our approaches to diverse ethnic groups. Northampton has a diverse population of 30% BAME
- Should older people who find themselves on their own and running out of money had access to quality food
- To ask the University if they would be interested in the future about doing a qualitative research paper regarding food poverty (it was suggested that there is liaison with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee)
- They were concerned regarding the cost of distribution of food from the Trussell Trust. Want to work with the existing food poverty network and they could also be a useful vehicle

Mike Kay and Nicky Mckenzie from NPH, highlighted the salient points from their written evidence. These included:

- 90,000 households in the Borough may be affected by food poverty of which they support 9,000 who live in NBC homes
- They look to work in partnership with other bodies
- In house NPH staff bring in food and create food parcels although they have now formalised this
- NPH is an accredited living wage employer

The Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- Volunteer tenants put the food parcels together however NPH delivers them which ensures dignity remains. Food parcels distributed by NPH was put in place due to the need for crisis intervention
- Tenants are signposted to other sources of assistance i.e. Oasis House
- The number of parcels and their locations is reported on a monthly basis and Mike Kay confirmed this could be shared with the Panel
- The difference between social rents and private rents was queried
- Cooking facilities are key and the Panel queried whether there are ways of educating people on how to cook and ensuring even older properties having full use of cookers
- How overcrowding impacts on food poverty was queried

Mike Kay and Nicky McKenzie explained that NBC sets the rent and NPH applies the policy. It was confirmed that the standard arrears letters went through Tenant Consultation Panel before the letters are sent out. There is an escalation process, letters get firmer throughout the process and it was highlighted that tenants are encouraged to communicate with NPH. NPH is 100% decent homes compliant. Lots of new kitchens had been put in by NPH, although kitchens do not generally have white goods fitted. Cross Street did however, have built in appliances.

The Panel was further advised that there is a huge challenge regarding social versus statutory overcrowding as it is up to each Local Authority to decide which to apply. NBC follows the statutory overcrowding guidelines. NPH completes lots of analysis to avoid social overcrowding. NBC agreed that NPH could identify families who were socially overcrowded and allows them access to the housing register just for the Century House and Spring Boroughs schemes.

The Help at Home Project is very good and helpful.

There are two key ways that NPH provides assistance to vulnerable tenants who need extra support; it uses the housing register and identifies those who will struggle to get a tenancy and works with them prior to the tenancy agreement (6 weeks pre-settlement). Assistance is provided, for example acquiring a bed, white goods etc. Should the tenant need ongoing support they will be referred to NPH Support Service, which works with them for up to 2 years or with 4 weekly intervention.

Mike Kay and Nicky McKenzie were thanked for their informative address.

**AGREED:** That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

## **5. PUBLISHED REPORTS AND DATA**

### **5.A NEU COUNCILLORS NETWORK: STATISTICAL DATA: REGIONAL ESTIMATES; EAST MIDLANDS CHILD POVERTY (2019)**

**AGREED:** That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

### **5.B UN REPORT: FOOD POVERTY**

**AGREED:** That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

### **5.C TRUSSELL TRUST: FOOD BANK STATISTICS**

**AGREED:** That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

### **5.D HOUSE OF COMMONS LIBRARY: FOOD BANKS IN THE UK**

**AGREED:** That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

### **5.E INSTITUTE FOR FISCAL STUDIES REPORT: LIVING STANDARDS, POVERTY AND INEQUALITY IN THE UK: 2019**

Councillor Emma Roberts raised queries regarding the report regarding Statutory versus Social overcrowding.

It was requested that the Head of Housing and Wellbeing is asked to attend the January 2020 meeting to provide details of the Policy in relation to statutory and social overcrowding.

**AGREED:** That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

That the Head of Housing and Wellbeing is asked to attend the January 2020 meeting to provide details of the Policy in relation to statutory and social overcrowding

At this point, the Chair conveyed her disappointment that not all expert advisors had been present and the meeting and she would liaise with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding contacting the organisation in this respect.

The meeting concluded at 7:20 pm

## NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - FOOD POVERTY

Monday, 25 November 2019

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:** Councillor Meredith (Chair), Councillors Bottwood, Roberts and Russell (Deputy Chair)

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS:** Paul Foster Emmanuel Church  
Clive Irston Northamptonshire Food Poverty Network

**Witnesses** Julie Silver, CEO, Community Law  
Sarah Hayle, Manager, Community Law  
Anya Willis, Director, RESTORE  
Mary Clarke, CEO,  
Northamptonshire CAB

#### Officers

Geraldine Mahney, Customer Services Manager  
Tracy Tiff, Democratic and Member Services Manager

#### 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

#### 2. DEPUTATIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

#### 3. WITNESS EVIDENCE

Sarah Hayle, Community Law Manager and Julie Silver, Chief Executive, Community Law, presented the salient points of their written report. Julie Silver circulated a further report on statistics, a copy of which is attached to the minutes. Julie Silver and Sarah Hayle highlighted the following:

- Within the last 12 months we have supplied 42 clients with Foodbank vouchers. The organisation will only refer someone to a food bank if they are engaging with Community Law
- Community Law attends Emmanuel Church fortnightly which is very successful as they have provided a case work service for 52 people

- There is a range of reasons why people visit food banks. CLS Provision methods include; maximising Benefits, managing priority debts and applying grants to clear Energy debts, all of which help prevent food poverty.
- 
- Investment in advice is very positive in addressing food poverty; there is a massive need for advice around debt management
- The introduction of Universal Credit has in many cases led to people having very little money to live on
- The representatives from Community Law commented that the reduction in grants to Community Law has impacted on its service. A two hour drop in session with Community Law costs £150. The Panel requested details of costings to be forwarded to the Chair. A discussion ensued regarding the rent that Community Law and CAB pay for the space in the One Stop Shop at the Guildhall.

The Scrutiny Panel made comments, asked questions and heard:

- Universal Credit was being rolled out nationally and was replacing all working age means tested benefits; it is a monthly benefit for the claimant, partner and children
- There have been various elements of Universal Credit that were amended by DWP if they were unable to work
- Claimants are notified 7 days before they are paid of the amount that will be paid to them
- Deductions can take a large part of their payment and often claimants are not aware of this
- Often, people have difficulties budgeting for an entire month
- Universal Credit has impacted on housing arrears
- The “Bedroom Tax” has impacted people too
- Statistics can be reviewed however a broad range of debt can be seen i.e. 6% for age 17-24, 34% for age 35-49 and 27% for age 50-65
- More women come to Community Law for advice than men  
Sarah Hayle confirmed that Community Law would provide case studies also and the impact of the advice provided to the Scrutiny Panel
- Universal Credit can change month by month for some people as it works on a monthly assessment basis however people are not notified of deductions in advance; An example was provided: a single man, who is a homeowner, receiving Universal Credit since March 2019 and should have been getting help with the mortgage; but due to admin error this didn't happen, he was now at risk of repossession as Universal Credit took the maximum 40% for a fine and Council Tax arrears which left him with £180 per month. Universal Credit works on a calendar month basis so is affected by any income in that calendar month which makes budgeting difficult
- The Scrutiny Panel requested that the costs were broken down and provided to them
- Community Law and NPH have a good working relationship and they will contact tenants when permission is granted by the tenant for their details to be shared
- The Scrutiny Panel commented that it would ask further questions in relation to Universal Credit of the representative of Department of Work and Pensions that is attending the January 2020 meeting.

Sarah Hayle, Community Law Manager and Julie Silver, Chief Executive, Community Law were thanked for their informative address.

Mary Clarke, CEO of Northamptonshire Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), provided a general overview of the service provided by CAB and circulated a written response. The salient points were referred to:

- CAB uses a case book system that tracks key issues and the statistics can be narrowed down by Borough, Ward etc.
- An example of case work was provided: a woman needed food for her 7 year old as well as nappies and milk for her 4 month old, she wouldn't go to a food bank but wasn't able to budget properly and had not receive the correct advice. She had presented at CAB for advice and support
- Mary Clarke undertook to provide statistics on food poverty for the January 2020 meeting of the Scrutiny Panel
- Mary Clarke further suggested Goodwill Solutions and Northampton Domestic Abuse Service should be invited to provide a response to the core questions as she felt their evidence would be useful to this Scrutiny Review
- Mary Clarke advised that there is often a shortfall in the housing benefit and what landlords charge for rent
- Mary Clarke provided details of the rent that CAB pay for its space in the One Stop at the Guildhall and that further grants would be of assistance
- CAB supported the Council Tax reduction scheme of 34% but would support 100% for the most vulnerable
- She added that Council Tax is not proportionate to peoples incomes. 50-70 Local Authorities in England and Wales provides 100% reduction in Council Tax to the most vulnerable
- CAB has found that 55% of people that claim Universal Credit have gone without essentials compared to 37% of those on legacy benefits
- People are now coming in to CAB for advice regarding day to day debt
- The Chair suggested that should Mary Clarke want to provide additional information that she attends the next meeting in January 2020 and addresses the Scrutiny Panel under public addresses

The Scrutiny Panel made comments, asked questions and heard:

The Scrutiny Panel commented that it would be keen to receive further information regarding the historical budget decision around the rent charged to CAB and Community Law for the space it uses in the One Stop Shop at the Guildhall.

Mary Clarke, CAB, was thanked for her informative address.

Anya Willis, Director of Restore, presented her written report highlighting the key points:

- She highlighted that one cannot separate food poverty from poverty

- Many people that Restore sees have complex issues, especially mental health
- In Anya Willis' opinion, the cuts to local services has impacted on food poverty
- Charities and community services are seeing lots of people with complex needs
- Anya Willis advised that she does not think food banks are the answer to food poverty, but the statistics show that 5,000 people are of in desperate need within the Borough of Northampton
- Restore offer other initiatives such as the NEST Grow Baby that families can access without the stigma of a food banks. These are very well attended
- Advice and support is key to reducing food poverty and helping people to become self-sufficient
- A lot of clients to Restore are returning clients; core examples include some parents going up to a week without eating so that they can feed their children
- If people are on a constant low wage they may not be able to access a food bank
- Charities provide excellent value for money
- CAB comes in to Restore and provide advice. CAB charge Restore for this facility. Anya Will confirmed that charities work together. CAB is part of Northamptonshire Food Poverty Network which keeps them providing advice on site

The Scrutiny Panel made comments, asked questions and heard:

- The Panel was concerned about parents not eating food for a week; Anya Willis advised that often they have wanted to access food banks, she provided an example: one being a pregnant woman with two small children who was referred by her midwife. Restore helped her access other support services in the town
- Zero hour contracts are a contributing factor as in some circumstances individuals often turn up to work to be told there is no work that day and they have to go home.
- Housing can be a problem as some landlords charge around £750 which is often more than the housing benefit
- Restore has distribution points in certain parts of the town
- The Scrutiny Panel commented on the need to promote that t advice and support available and ensure that the prevention advice and support services are also promoted

Anya Willis, Director of Restore, was thanked for her informative address

**AGREED:** That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

#### **4. RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

The briefing note detailing the summary of the Child Poverty Act 2010 as reported in the House of Commons Library was noted.

**AGREED:** That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

The meeting concluded at 19:41 hours



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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**



**SCRUTINY PANEL 2 –POVERTY IN THE TOWN**

**CORE QUESTIONS – EXPERT ADVISORS**

The Scrutiny Panel is currently undertaking a review to review poverty in the town to ascertain whether it is a serious issue:

- Whether it is growing and more generally what are the trends (including migration)
- What are the causes of poverty locally?
- What can public services do in this time of austerity?
- What can other groups/individuals do to help?
- What the impact is, if any, on the economy, crime, health and education

The expected outcome of the review is to make informed recommendations to all relevant parties on the most appropriate approaches to take to address the causes and mitigate the impact of poverty in Northampton

**CORE QUESTIONS**

1. Do you feel that poverty is growing within the town? Please can you supply some trend data in support of your response, such as who are the most affected, where it is concentrated and the main causes of poverty.
2. What do you feel are the causes of poverty locally?
3. What can public services do in this time of austerity?
4. What can other groups/individuals do to help?
5. What is being done by your organisation to identify and mitigate household poverty?
6. Are you aware of an impact that poverty has had on the economy, crime, health and education? Please supply further details, together with any supporting statistics.
7. How can partnership working be maximised?
8. What has already been done to tackle poverty and what assistance is currently available?

9. What awareness exists of the different types of assistance that is available and how can this awareness be improved?
10. Are all households in poverty being reached?
11. What support and advice is available to individuals who find themselves in arrears, for example, arrears on mortgage payments?
12. Do you have further information regarding poverty issues which you would like to inform the Scrutiny Panel?

# **NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**



### **SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – FOOD POVERTY**

#### **CORE QUESTIONS – EXPERT ADVISORS**

##### **CEO – HOPE CENTRE**

The Scrutiny Panel is currently undertaking a review:

- To examine the extent to which individuals and families are experiencing food poverty, the range of contributing factors and the changes that have been made to the way the Council and partners support residents during hardship.
- To review the impact and concentration of food poverty across the Borough of Northampton

The required outcomes are:

- To make informed recommendations to all relevant parties on the most appropriate approaches to take to mitigate the impact of food poverty in Northampton.
- To make recommendations on how the specific issues in relation to food poverty are dealt with from now until the new Unitary Authority.

## **CORE QUESTIONS: The Response from the Hope Centre**

### **1. In your opinion, what are the main impacts of food poverty?**

Food poverty is just one way of looking at poverty as a whole. Food poverty is not some separate thing: it is labelled in this way simply because in a world of surplus food, people think they can ameliorate it with the surplus they have or is available. The term is superfluous: we are talking about poverty. But if it helps the public to become motivated about poverty as a whole, because they believe they can make a difference, as with homelessness, then it has awareness value. Therefore poverty impacts on health, wellbeing, mental health, child development, obesity/malnutrition, dental poor health, crime, unemployment, future prospects and civil harmony. An unequal society is bad for itself, as studies such as the 'Spirit Level' have shown.

### **2. How widespread do you understand food poverty in the borough to be?**

National data suggests that as many as 14m or 21% of the population are in some form of poverty<sup>1</sup>. Given that Northampton is comparably poorer than the average for Britain by a ratio of 1:1.12 (based on salary average), this suggests that in Northampton, with a population of 225000, there are 53000 people (or 23.52%) in relative poverty. These are people who on a weekly basis experience issues of poverty which include issues with food. Within this total, 9.33% can be defined as destitute, or 4944 people<sup>2</sup>. Realistically, this can be seen as a likely shorthand figure for those who might access regular food aid provision but others will need help periodically from sources beyond their immediate families.

Transferrable Canadian data<sup>3</sup> suggests that no more than 20% of people in the highest levels of need ever approach food aid provision, for reasons of stigma etc.

### **3. In your opinion does food poverty differ across the borough of Northampton and what are the reasons for this?**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://fullfact.org/economy/poverty-uk-guide-facts-and-figures/> ;  
<https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN07096>

<sup>2</sup> [https://naccom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/destitution2018\\_0.pdf](https://naccom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/destitution2018_0.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11266-018-0039-2>

The above figure includes a disproportionate number who are of ethnic minorities; and women are generally thought to most likely to offer food to their children before themselves, meaning even within poor families, women are more likely to experience food issues. Obviously the figures are averaged, so this masks concentration in areas of greatest deprivation.

#### **4. What strategic approaches are you aware of to tackle food poverty?**

The government gives some tax encouragement to food retailers to share surplus food. Beyond this, there is no strategic action beyond broader welfare provision. That which is done is solely at the inspiration of individual organisations, both statutory (eg Partnership Homes, NCC Public Health, as supplied) and mainly charitable, often church based. There is a county food poverty group but this is not strategic; it largely engages only in strategic campaigning. It does very little to co-ordinate or support food aid providers nor engineer any organised supply or sharing of food.

Within the voluntary sector nationally the Trussell Trust is in essence a franchise system for local foodbanks, from a Christian perspective: it has no local co-ordinatory function, even amongst its own registered foodbanks. IFAN is a loose alliance of other providers, of which Hope is a member (and former board member) but does little co-ordination, mainly focusing on national campaigning.

Within the retail industry there is no strategic co-ordination, either nationally or locally. Fareshare is a national charity with regional (not local) branches supported by various companies, but it is not strategic. If you want food from Fareshare, you contact them and they arrange this, but it is chaotic and unstrategic, and often of variable quality, focused on short life, sometimes unusable items near use by date, which is not supplied in a co-ordinated way, can become unusable between their supply to food aid providers and its distribution to customers. It contains little ambient food. This is a just a fragment of the food supplied by supermarkets, which is offered chaotically to charities every day of the week, wasting time and money with multiple wasted journeys for a smashed pallet of rotten veg or pop, as is often the case. Much of that which they give away has no nutritional value.

The closest to strategic food aid is not in practice organised at all by any single entity, but each year, in two waves, supplies a vast amount of the food that is in turn supplied by food aid providers across the UK. These are the Christian festivals of Harvest and Christmas, where Churches and Schools (and the general public, at Christmas) voluntarily choose to collect and supply food to charities like Hope and others. It is co-ordinated, if at all, only by organisations like Hope, to try to co-ordinate donations to enable their management and not become overwhelmed. This is a vast operation and can involve in Hope's case perhaps 30 tonnes of donated ambient long life items being gathered, collected, sorted and stored in two quite short, concentrated periods. Because of Hope's size and efficiency we are the

closest to offering a structured way of managing what is in effect a spontaneous outpouring of kindness, but even we struggle at Christmas where we receive as much in clothes as food. If we have surplus, we then pass on to others (there is a degree of sharing amongst foodbanks generally, it isn't structured, it just comes from relationships and mutual respect).

Because of this seasonality, most foodbanks and Hope are running low after Easter, with real issues later in the summer.

There is a real need for structured leadership of local food aid, with co-ordination to get short life food to organisations who can use it best; to co-ordinate pickups and manage the supermarkets. In practice there is competition, for the supermarket food, where slots to access their offerings are fiercely fought over. Some providers are especially competitive.

Hope is moving to seeing its large warehouse (the single biggest in the county, by some distance) as being a community food hub where we, through size and organisation and funding, can support smaller foodbanks to access food through us. We would welcome opportunity to do this on a more structured basis, becoming a local distributor to other local food aid projects, a role really needed.

## **5. What approaches are in existence to reduce people's dependency on food aid, such as Food Banks?**

There are two broad ways of looking at why people are food poor: one, that they are feckless, lazy, can't manage the money, don't know how to cook, have too many children, are drug addicts, spend their money on fags etc etc. The second is that the low level of wages and benefits, in relation to other costs, like food, travel, and most of all, housing, mean that regardless of their personalities or individual characteristics, they are largely poor because they don't have enough money, including if they are working. Hope would generally recognise the latter view as being more broadly accurate. The best way to reduce such poverty would be a functioning welfare state or incomes policy with government commitment to ending poverty but sadly this not the case, as poverty increases daily and will likely get worse. The solutions to this at individual level may include education and teaching, but we are not aware of much structured work of this type and are in any case, secondary to improved income levels.

At the local level a commitment by the council and pressure on its contractors do become Living wage employers would help, setting an example and applying leverage.

In terms of activity within food aid settings, Hope supports the progressive approach in part of the food aid movement as members of IFAN. This model of practice includes such activity as:

- Campaigning against low wages and benefits
- Growing food locally
- Support for people to learn new skills and get better paid work

- Empowering service users to be voices for change, improving confidence etc
- Sale based methods of food aid, such as social supermarkets, selling food at proper prices, rather than making it entirely charitable.

Hope does all these (see 'Big Hunger' MIT 2017 by Andy Fisher for further examples of such initiatives). There are a number of other examples of progressive work but these are not means of reducing dependence on food aid but do have other value, such as refusing to supply large quantities of unhealthy food to users, not requiring referrals by health or social care professionals, not limiting to 3 parcels in crisis only, dignified offer of food, no evangelising as a condition for food etc).

It is sometimes suggested that the addition of wrap around services can reduce continuing use of food aid. This includes benefits advice, access to drugs, alcohol and mental health support, plus education. All of these are potentially useful and Hope makes all of these available. However they should be used in the context of the measures above and not conditional; i.e. there can be no assumption that people must take such services up to access food aid. There should be no presumption of need for such services as they are only in some cases the cause of need. Whether better take up of already inadequate benefits provides any real solution is arguable. Even where people have everything they are entitled to, they still experience food poverty.

## **6. How do you understand food poverty is being addressed?**

We have listed most of these above.

The benefits system and proper wages are the most effective methods.

Aside from small scale efforts conducted by specific agencies and groups for their own customers, and the work carried out by Partnership Homes and the educational role of Public Health, previously submitted, the overwhelming response at any scale is from the voluntary sector and the churches.

The churches offer foodbanks, Hope offers a social supermarket, where food and toiletries are supplied at charge, usually 1/3 or less of retail price, with lots of free items (sanitary products, toothbrushes and toothpaste etc). People pay a membership fee of £2 a month, but thereafter can attend every week, whereas in foodbanks people are often restricted to 3 visits in crisis, although often that is relaxed. You often have to be referred to foodbanks; you can self-present to Hope, our only condition being evidence of benefit status, including in work benefits.

The other main distinction between foodbanks and Hope's offer is the volume of fresh food, especially veg and fruit. Many foodbanks mostly have access to ambient food only, and have much more limited amounts of fresh. This reflects the donation pattern. Hope avoids this by growing a lot of veg ourselves on our extensive allotments, and by sourcing fresh food. Some foodbanks grow a little veg

themselves, but not in the serious manner Hope attempts (as an example, we have 14x as much growing land as Re:Store).

There is some wrap around support at some local foodbanks, and at Hope. We have a student social worker attending most sessions to refer into Hope's wider provision. This is unconditional in offer.

We feed about 250 people a week.

There is also Elsie's café, or Shop Xero. Technically this is not a food poverty project, as anyone can go in and buy; it's main ethos is food waste rather than poverty, though inevitably people on low incomes go to their shop, so it makes some contribution.

It should also be recognised that Hope's day centre and street based food distribution offers food support to some of the most destitute, including the homeless. Long before there were food banks, there were soup kitchens, feeding not just homeless people, as they still do. We see up to 130 people a day in the Hope day centre.

## **7. How can the Borough Council, together with its partners, can collectively respond to food poverty?**

We have indicated that greater co-ordination of food aid would be welcome, but not necessarily by the Borough, but the Borough can be influential in encouraging this, as could NCC. Food aid is a voluntary sector/faith community thing, and given so little funding is made available, attempting to co-ordinate that which it does not fund would not be appropriate. If funding were available then it would be a different matter, but the key role and leadership of the independent sector should be recognised and retained.

We have talked about setting an example by wages etc earlier.

The Borough and NCC could also make larger amounts of land available for growing veg, but this would need revenue support for gardeners. A local sustainable food strategy would be a good idea, as Hope played a significant role within during 2018 but has been unable to continue due to other pressures in 2019.

Making available free or discount warehouse space to enable Hope or others to organise and store food would be a help. Our current warehouse is a major financial challenge. Making shop space available would be really helpful.

## **8. In your opinion what are the specific issues relating to food poverty?**

The shortage of food to provide to people in need is the single, overwhelming issue.

The overwhelming canard of food poverty is that it can be 'solved' by greater use of food 'waste', or surplus food, mainly from supermarkets. Supermarkets are becoming very adept at managing their stock lines so the amount of fresh, short life food they have is reducing all the time. We have said before, what they make available is literally only the things they cannot sell, much of which is very unhealthy. Shops give away almost nothing fresh, and little of nutritional value, and they never supply ambient in volume, as profit rules here. You can access better stuff through upchain communication with the industry via Fareshare etc but locally only really Hope and Shop Zero are organised enough to do this, and again, volume is really quite limited and in practice Hope and others pay to receive this, it's not free.

This is an example of local waste food availability from a shop, notification of which arrived as this was being typed:



Dear Robin,

You have been allocated a surplus donation. The following is available to collect:

Tea: 0.28 trays

Soft Drinks & Juices: 0.22 trays

**Collect from:** ALDI

**Location:** ALDI, ALDI NORTHAMPTON - EARL STREET, Earl Street,  
Northampton, NN1 3AU

**Collect by:** 3rd January 2020 13:00

To see more information about this donation, [click here](#)

To change your subscription details [click here](#)

This is par for the course. If we attempted to collect all of the waste/junk food from supermarkets, it would go a very short way towards meeting dietary needs, and waste a lot of time. There simply is not enough waste food to feed even a small percentage of those in need.

(I have not discussed the restaurant sector here, it's a minor and potential minor contributor.)

There is a wider ethical point here: do we really want to create a system where poor people eat food the supermarkets feel is unfit to sell to 'normal' people? They have a right to eat the same food as anyone else. This is a matter of food justice or the right to food.

Most of what Hope offers has been donated by the general public. There is quite simply not enough food in *any* category available to feed all of the people who could be in need or even might seek help. If all of the most acutely in need group came in for food aid, i.e the c.5000 people identified above, the collective food aid providers of Northampton simply could not feed them. We could do so perhaps for a few weeks after Christmas, when our stores are full, but they would be emptied before Easter. There simply is not enough donated food, or food waste available to meet the potential level of need out there at the present time. To achieve this would require food retailers to donate a much higher volume of food, including fresh produce and ambient food at scale, and the general public to donate vastly more, and for a much larger amount of food to be grown by Hope or others. This is not a matter of small scale tinkering, but really significant change in behaviour and attitude by everyone, including advertising to overcome stigma and encourage take up.

Hope is exploring sourcing fresh or even ambient food on the wholesale market and will trial this in 2020. This will effectively just be a shop where we don't aim to make the excessive profit of the ordinary food retail sector, but do cover costs, where access is again restricted to those on low incomes. Lease of a building or shop at zero cost would be a great help here, enabling us to keep the food price low.

**9. Are you aware of the existence of “holiday hunger” and what is its impact?**

This is simply another way of describing poverty, breaking down food poverty into yet another category.

**10. Please supply details of the support that your organisation or group offers?**

We have described this in previous answers.

**11. Please supply details of your thoughts on suggested solutions regarding food poverty.**

We have done so in previous answers.

**12.Are you aware of the number of people who are registered for pupil premium? Please supply details.**

We have no knowledge of this.

**13.Do you have further information or comments regarding food poverty which you would like to inform the Scrutiny Panel?**

No.

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## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

### SCRUTINY PANEL 1: FOOD POVERTY

**Rachel McGrath – Deputy CEO Northamptonshire community Foundation and facilitator of Northamptonshire Food Poverty Network – 14 January 2020**

- Northamptonshire Food Poverty Network was convened in 2012 as part of the community leadership role of Northamptonshire Community Foundation when it recognised as a grant maker and funder an emerging trend of an increasing number of food banks and food aid providers applying for funds and the increase of local communities experiencing food insecurity
- During 2013 and 2014 the community foundation received £10,000 over the two year period to convene the network and support the strategy of the council to tackle poverty in Northamptonshire. Other key members of the network were also funded including Phoenix Resource Centre receiving £10,000 per year over two years to provide storage and transport support to sharing resources between food banks. This funding ended by 2015.
- Since 2016 Northamptonshire Food Poverty Network has strategically aligned with a network of food poverty alliances through the national End Hunger UK campaign and commits to campaigning, training and events. Local campaigns and events have included launching a Fair Deal for Kids appeal with Northampton Chronicle and Echo:  
<https://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/news/how-can-8-400-northampton-children-be-living-hand-to-mouth-in-2018-we-relaunch-fair-deal-for-kids-campaign-1-8445606> , End Hunger UK campaign week, media and campaign training for network members, regular press releases of food insecurity, working in partnership with Oxfam to bring a food insecurity exhibition to Northampton: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQmEEjBUiSM> , promoting the findings of the Children’s Future Food Inquiry, working on a campaign with BBC Radio Northampton focusing on child food insecurity and a programme of events bringing in national charity and aid agencies to talk about policy and best practice to tackle food insecurity. Northamptonshire Community Foundation continues to fund members of the network and key food aid providers to deliver their services. The End Hunger UK Campaign seeks to raise awareness of food poverty and is supported by a coalition of

national charities and local food poverty alliances including Northamptonshire Food Poverty Network. It calls on the Government to do their part to address the root causes of food poverty and ensure public policy reduces rather than exacerbates food poverty. We also provide an online food aid directory. A recent campaign win is the commitment of the measurement of food insecurity by the Government. The first statistics are due for release in April 2020:

<https://www.endhungeruk.org/2019/02/27/campaign-win-uk-government-agrees-to-measure-household-food-insecurity/>

- **Government, councils, health bodies and other statutory agencies should play a central role in reducing food poverty in the UK. This should complement the role of the voluntary and community sector. Action by government, councils and others should address the root causes of food poverty and avoid unreasonable demands being placed on charities, faith organisations, volunteers and others responding to local need.**

### **What is food poverty or food insecurity?**

The Department of Health defines food poverty as *'The inability to afford, or to have access to, food to make up a healthy diet.'*

Food poverty currently affects 8.4 million people in the UK who struggle to get enough to eat. This includes many households with people in work, families with children, as well as older and disabled people.

It can affect children who lack free school meals during the holidays; parents on low incomes going without food so that their children can eat; working people whose low wages leave them struggling to buy healthy food; or older people unable to prepare meals without support.

### **What are the causes?**

Hunger and unhealthy diets are symptoms of poverty. The root causes are the structural inequalities in household incomes and access to food. This includes low and insecure wages impacted by zero hour contracts and/or pay that does not reflect the minimum living wage; an inadequate welfare safety net; lack of access to affordable and healthy food.

The government must urgently address these inequalities. All households must have enough money to thrive, not just survive, through a living wage or an adequate welfare safety net, and healthy food should be more readily available and less expensive than unhealthy food.

**Key local contributory factors identified by members of Northamptonshire Food Poverty Network on rising food insecurity and child food insecurity:**

- Housing – particularly no of families in temporary accommodation, no of families in overcrowded accommodation eg family of 2 adults 2 children are now not classed as overcrowded if they live in a one bed flat. Many of our families live in these cramped conditions – how can this help family life?
- Universal credit – and the rise of food bank usage
- Long term impact on children – being raised in poverty with parents who are not supported and who are unable to offer aspiration
- Reduction in funding for essential services – CAMHS, Social care – thresholds getting higher so that more people are not getting any support
- Demise of services for families – closure of children’s centres, cuts to support voluntary organisations
- lack of services and that in our area it was really just us , Free2Talk and the schools
- Schools could play a role to encourage both local and national Government to take matter seriously---real lack of awareness
- Theresa May AS Prime Minster offer of policy to support those who are ‘just about managing’; instead the numbers have increased and many more people are struggling – people in work are in poverty. Nationally, there are not enough policies that are not accommodating people who are working but struggling.
- Locally, the issues around Surestart are still manifesting itself – many of the above low income families would use that agency for advice and consultation and also exacerbated by the whole cut to library services. Many projects have closed down or reduced their service offer which has a knock on effect.
- There’s an expectation that a voluntary organisation will be picking up a lot of this - they too are struggling to meet the needs.
- There is a lack of staffing resources and so there is a lack of collaborative problem solving between public services and charities.
- Brexit will add to the above pressure as policies stand and has overtaken the above issues relating to poverty.
- Universal credit, especially for people who had never had to budget for a month at a time and for the long first period when you first go on it.

- Housing - both NPH and private landlords and how many families we come across are living in conditions listeners would be shocked by for example people are now expected to use their living space as a bedroom so we have families with 2 young children in a one bed flat etc
- Effects of long term unemployment and also how difficult it is to start work when you know if you come off universal credit and the job then doesn't work out you will have to wait another 5 weeks for any payment to come through.

## Key evidence and data

### United Nations Philip Alston Report on extreme poverty in the UK 2019:

<https://undocs.org/A/HRC/41/39/Add.1>

**Summary:** The Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Philip Alston, undertook a mission to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from 5 to 16 November 2018. Although the United Kingdom is the world's fifth largest economy, one fifth of its population (14 million people) live in poverty, and 1.5 million of them experienced destitution in 2017. Policies of austerity introduced in 2010 continue largely unabated, despite the tragic social consequences. Close to 40 per cent of children are predicted to be living in poverty by 2021. Food banks have proliferated; homelessness and rough sleeping have increased greatly; tens of thousands of poor families must live in accommodation far from their schools, jobs and community networks; life expectancy is falling for certain groups; and the legal aid system has been decimated. The social safety net has been badly damaged by drastic cuts to local authorities' budgets, which have eliminated many social services, reduced policing services, closed libraries in record numbers, shrunk community and youth centres and sold off public spaces and buildings. The bottom line is that much of the glue that has held British society together since the Second World War has been deliberately removed and replaced with a harsh and uncaring ethos. A booming economy, high employment and a budget surplus have not reversed austerity, a policy pursued more as an ideological than an economic agenda.

### Poverty Report: <https://socialmetricscommission.org.uk/social-metrics-commission-2019-report/>

**Summary:** More than 14 million people, including 4.5 million children, are living below the breadline, with more than half trapped in poverty for years, according to a new measure aimed at providing the most sophisticated analysis yet of material disadvantage in the UK. The measure seeks to forge a fresh political consensus between left and right over how to define and track poverty, with the aim of encouraging better-targeted poverty interventions, and making it easier to hold politicians to account. It finds poverty is especially prevalent in families with at least one disabled person, single-parent families, and households where no one works or that are dependent for income on irregular or zero-hours jobs.

**Children's Future Food Inquiry:** <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/childrens-future-food-inquiry/>

**Summary:** In a society that believes in compassion and justice, it is unacceptable that children's development is being restricted by the effects of poverty. The number of children experiencing symptoms of food insecurity, or whose family income is evidently insufficient to afford a healthy diet amounts to between 2.5 and 4 million; between 20% and 30% of all children in the UK. We cannot allow this to continue. One in three children (4.1million) are living in poverty in the UK. For their families to be able to afford the Government's recommended diet, they would have to spend an estimated 35% of their income on food, once their housing costs have been taken care of. This is not a realistic option, given the restrictive effects of the rising cost of living, prevalence of low-paid, insecure jobs, and the freeze on benefits. On average, after housing costs, households with children spend around 18% of their income on food. A proportion of children living in poverty experience food insecurity. UNICEF estimates on the basis of a small but nationally representative survey that 2.5 million (19%) British children live in food insecure households. This means that there are times when their household does not have enough money to acquire enough food, or they cannot buy the full variety of foods needed for a healthy diet. The devastating consequences Hunger is an extremely debilitating experience. It damages physical health. It is a cause of great personal distress. It is a social harm. Food insecurity brings profound anxiety and stress into family life which can trigger depression, aggressive behaviour in children, a sense of hopelessness, and overwhelming stress for parents struggling to give their children the best start. It affects children's school attendance, achievement and attainment: children who are hungry in class cannot concentrate or may be disruptive. In addition, the long summer holidays are estimated to result in weeks of learning loss for some children through a combination of social isolation, low levels of stimulation and activity, and poor diets. Food insecurity also affects the quality of children's diets, which brings increased risks of obesity and poor child growth. The magnitude and importance of childhood food insecurity requires systemic change, rather than short term, ad hoc projects.

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## OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Statutory and Social Overcrowding</b>
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<b>Meeting Date:</b>	14 January 2020
<b>Accountable Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Stephen Hibbert

### 1. Purpose of this Briefing

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- 1.1 During the Overview & Scrutiny Review of Food Poverty, members of the Scrutiny Panel requested information about Statutory and Social Overcrowding and how overcrowded households are assessed under the Housing Allocations Scheme.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Briefing is to provide the Overview & Scrutiny Panel with the definition of Statutory Overcrowding (as set out in Part 10 of the Housing Act 1985) and an understanding of what is meant by 'Social Overcrowding'.
- 1.3 This Briefing also explains how overcrowded households are currently assessed under Northampton's Housing Allocations Scheme and describes the changes that will be recommended during the development of West Northamptonshire's Scheme.

### 2. Definition of Statutory Overcrowding

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- 2.1 Two standards – the '**room standard**' and the '**space standard**' – are used to assess whether a home is 'statutorily overcrowded' under Part 10 of the Housing Act 1985.
- 2.2 If either or both of these standards are breached, the home will be deemed to be statutorily overcrowded.

#### The Room Standard

- 2.3 Section 325 of the Housing Act 1985 specifies that there is overcrowding wherever there are so many people in a house that any two or more of those persons, being ten or more years old and of opposite sexes (and who are not living together as a couple) have to sleep in the same room.

- 2.4 For these purposes, children under the age of ten may be disregarded and a room means any room normally used as either a bedroom or a living room. A kitchen can be considered to be a living room provided it is big enough to accommodate a bed.
- 2.5 When interpreting this definition, a local authority looks at how the sleeping arrangements within the premises could be organised, rather than how they are actually organised.
- 2.6 This means, for example, that a man and a woman living as a couple with two children of opposite sexes and aged ten years or more who have two living rooms (for example, bedrooms) may not be statutorily overcrowded because each member of the couple could occupy a separate room with one of the children (of the appropriate sex).
- 2.7 Under Section 325 of the Housing Act 1985, there is no limit on the number of people of the same sex who can live in the same room. However, there may be a contravention of the space standard (see below).

### The Space Standard

- 2.8 The space standard involves the calculation (undertaken in two ways) of the number of people permitted for the dwelling. The lower number (of the two calculations) is the permitted number for the dwelling.
- 2.9 The **first test** is based on the number of living rooms in the dwelling (disregarding rooms of less than 50 square feet) and the following levels of occupancy:
- One room = two persons
  - Two rooms = three persons
  - Three rooms = five persons
  - Four rooms = seven and a half persons
  - Five rooms or more = ten persons plus two persons for each room in excess of five rooms
- 2.10 For the purpose of this test, a child below the age of one does not count and a child between one and ten counts as a half person.
- 2.11 The **second test** is based on floor areas of each room:
- Less than 50 square feet = no-one
  - 50 square feet to less than 70 square feet = half a person
  - 70 square feet to less than 90 square feet = one person
  - 90 square feet to less than 110 square feet = one and a half persons
  - 110 square feet or larger = two persons.
- 2.12 Northampton Partnership Homes' website contains advice on how housing applicants can establish whether or not they are statutorily overcrowded (see **Appendix 1**).

### **3. Meaning of Social Overcrowding**

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- 3.1 Although the term 'social overcrowding' is often used in Northampton, it is not a term that has any legal basis or definition.

- 3.2 It is understood that the term was first used many years ago to distinguish between statutory overcrowding and situations in which a household has fewer bedrooms than specified in the Housing Allocations Scheme Lettings Criteria (see **Appendix 2**).
- 3.3 'Social overcrowding' is not a term that is used by other local authorities. Many use the term 'overcrowding' to describe a situation in which a household has one bedroom less than they need, and 'severe overcrowding' to describe a situation in which a household has at least two bedrooms less than they need.

#### **4. Assessment of Overcrowded Households on Northampton's Housing Register**

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- 4.1 At present, households that are overcrowded but not statutorily overcrowded will only be able to join Northampton's Housing Register if they have other housing needs or their accommodation is having a serious impact on their health or wellbeing.
- 4.2 Housing applicants who are statutorily overcrowded and eligible to join the Housing Register and will be placed in the Emergency Band of the Housing Register.

#### **5. Development of West Northamptonshire's Housing Allocations Scheme**

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- 5.1 Work is underway to develop a new Housing Allocations Scheme for West Northamptonshire. This needs to be in place by 1 April 2021.
- 5.2 Officers from Northampton Borough Council and Northampton Partnership Homes have agreed that the new Housing Allocations Scheme should enable all overcrowded households to join the Housing Register if they are eligible.
- 5.3 Although consideration will need to be given to the merits of these and other changes, Officers are recommending that:
- Tenants of West Northamptonshire Council or partner Registered Providers who are living in West Northamptonshire, are severely overcrowded and have at least two bedrooms less than the number of bedrooms to which they would be entitled to under the Housing Allocations Scheme will be placed in **Band A** of the Register. This will take into account all rooms that can reasonably be used as bedrooms;
  - Tenants of non-partner Registered Providers who are living in West Northamptonshire, are severely overcrowded and have at least two bedrooms less than the number of bedrooms to which they would be entitled to under the Housing Allocations Scheme will be placed in **Band B** of the Register. This will take into account all rooms that can reasonably be used as bedrooms; and
  - Tenants of West Northamptonshire Council or partner Registered Providers who are living in West Northamptonshire, are overcrowded and have one bedroom less than the number of bedrooms to which they would be entitled to under the Housing Allocations Scheme will be placed in **Band B** of the Register. This will take into account all rooms that can reasonably be used as bedrooms; and

**Phil Harris**  
**Director of Housing and Wellbeing**  
**01604 837871**

### Information taken from Northampton Partnership Homes website [www.nph.org.uk/overcrowding](http://www.nph.org.uk/overcrowding)

## Overcrowding

It can be very stressful living in accommodation which is overcrowded.

There are many households across the town which have a lot of people living in them. Unless the overcrowding exceeds the government's standards, or you have other housing needs, you are unlikely to be accepted on to the Housing Register.

To check if your accommodation is overcrowded, NPH follows the same room standards and space standards defined by the Government's 1985 Housing Act.

If your household exceeds either the room standard or the space standard then you are likely to be overcrowded by law (statutory overcrowded).

## How to check for overcrowding

If you think you are overcrowded:

### 1. Calculate the number of rooms

All bedrooms and living rooms are counted as rooms you can sleep in. It does not matter which rooms you actually sleep in.

Your home should have a separate room to sleep in for each:

- couple
- single adult 21 or older
- two people of the opposite sex aged 10 or over

The government's room standard says your home is legally overcrowded if it does not have this.

Children under 10 years are not counted.

Under the room standard, a couple with a boy and a girl aged under the age of 10 in a one bedroom flat are not overcrowded.

### 2. Calculate the amount of space

This calculation gives the number of rooms that are enough for you and your family.

There are two ways you can work this calculation out:

- look at the number of rooms you have
- look at the floor area in your home.

The answer to each calculation will give you the number of rooms that are sufficient for you and your family.

If the answer is different for each, the lower number is used.

To count the number of people:

- don't include children under 1 year old
- children aged 1 to 9 years count as a half
- anyone aged 10 or over counts as one person

Count the number of rooms:

- include bedrooms and living rooms but don't include any rooms under 50 square feet.

Number of rooms

The number of rooms considered enough for your family is:

- 1 room for 2 people
- 2 rooms for 3 people
- 3 rooms for 5 people
- 4 rooms for 7.5 people
- 5 or more rooms for 2 people per room

Floor area

The minimum floor area considered enough for your family is:

- 50 - 69 square feet (4.6 - 6.4 square metres) for 0.5 people
- 70 - 89 square feet (6.5 - 8.3 square metres) for 1 person
- 90 - 109 square feet (8.4 - 10.1 square metres) for 1.5 people
- 110 square feet (10.2 square metres) for 2 people

**PROPERTY LETTINGS CRITERIA**

Accommodation will be let in accordance with the following criteria

<b>Household Makeup</b>	<b>Bedroom Assessment</b>
A single person	Bedsit/studio flat or 1 bedroom flat
A couple or an applicant who is pregnant	1 bedroom flat
A single pensioner or applicant who requires ground floor accommodation	1 bedroom flat or bungalow
Pensioners above the Pension Credit age who require ground floor accommodation due to support and proven medical reasons	1-2 bedroom flat or bungalow
A one child family	2 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
A two child family of the same sex or opposite sex if the child is under 10 years of age	2 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
A two child family of the same sex under 16	2 Bedroom flat, maisonette or house
A two child family with children of opposite sex and over the age of 10	3 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
A three child family	3 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
A four child family depending on the family make up	3 bedroom flat, maisonette or house 4 bedroom house
A five child family	4, 5 or 6 bedroom house
A six plus child family	4, 5 or 6 bedroom house

For the purpose of this lettings criteria, a child is someone who is under the age of 16 and therefore will be considered eligible for family accommodation.

Applicants with children aged 16 or over will only be considered for flats or maisonettes.

Applicants with children under the age of 16 can place bids for flats on any floor.