

Overview and Scrutiny

Homelessness



Phil Harris
21 July 2016

What we will be focusing on

- **Definition of 'homelessness' and 'rough sleeping'**
- **Overview of legislation**
- **Causes and effects of homelessness**
- **Relevant council policies and strategies**
- **Nature and extent of homelessness**



‘Statutory homelessness’

- **Households that meet specific criteria of priority need set out in legislation and to whom a homelessness duty has been accepted by a local authority**
- **May not literally be living without a roof over their heads**



‘Rough sleeping’

- **Sleeping, about to bed down or bedded down in the open air (streets, tents, doorways, parks and bus shelters, etc)**
- **Living in places that are not designed for habitation (stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, stations, cars, etc)**



‘Rough sleeping’

For counts and estimates, we do not include:

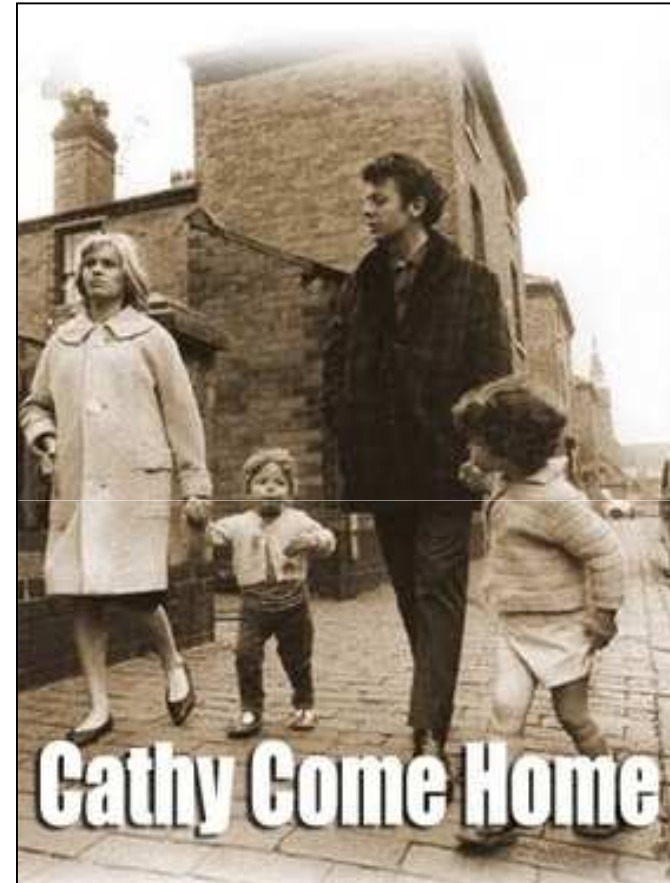
- People who are living in hostels or shelters
- Squatters, travellers or people who are living in campsites or other sites for recreational purposes or organised protest



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Overview of the legislation

- **Housing (Homeless Persons Act) 1977**
- **Housing Act 1996**
- **Homelessness Act 2002**
- **Duty to ensure the provision of advice and assistance for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness**



Overview of the legislation

- **Are they eligible?**
- **Are they homeless or threatened with homelessness?**
- **Are they considered to be in priority need?**
- **Can they establish a local connection?**
- **Is their homelessness deliberate (intentional)?**



Overview of the legislation

Priority need:

- Households containing a dependent child and/or a pregnant woman
- **16 & 17 year olds**
- 18 - 20 year olds who were previously in care
- **Individuals who are deemed 'vulnerable'**



Overview of the legislation

Local connection:

- Have lived in area for 6 months in the last 12 or 3 years in the last 5
- **Close family live in the area and have done for at least 5 years**
- **Are working in the area**
- **Other special reasons**



Overview of the legislation

“ A person becomes homeless intentionally if he deliberately does or fails to do anything in consequence of which he ceases to occupy accommodation which is available for his occupation, and which it would be reasonable for him to continue to occupy” “...an act or omission in good faith on the part of a person who was unaware of any relevant fact shall not be treated as deliberate”



Overview of the legislation

If main duty is owed:

- Must ensure that suitable accommodation is available until a settled home is available
- This may involve the provision of temporary accommodation
- Duty discharged by offer of a 'suitable' home



Overview of the legislation

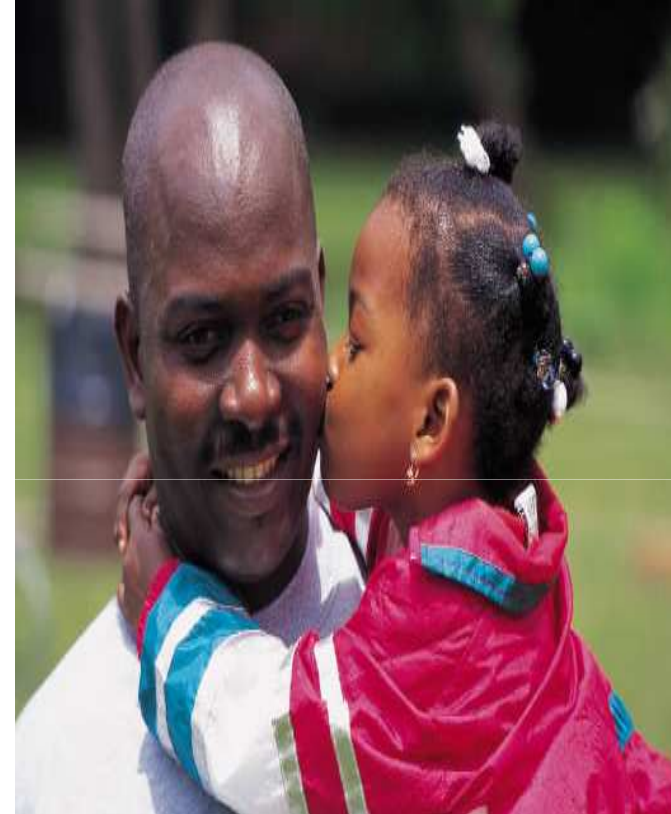
If main duty is not owed:

- Must provide advice and assistance to help them find accommodation for themselves
- If in priority need, must ensure accommodation is available for reasonable period to allow household time to find a home



Causes of homelessness

- **Loss of private rented accommodation**
- **Relationship breakdown**
- **Friends or relatives no longer willing to accommodate them**
- **Financial difficulties**
- **Shortage of suitable, affordable housing**



Causes of homelessness

- **Shortage of social rented housing**
- **Limited access to the private rented sector**
- **Lack of vacancies in supported housing**
- **Family breakdown**
- **Loss of employment and/or loss of income**



Causes of homelessness

- **Abuse or neglect**
- **Leaving prison or hospital in an unplanned way**
- **No recourse to public funds**
- **Tenancy breakdown (rent arrears, ASB, abandonment, etc)**



Causes of homelessness

- **Unmet support needs**
- **A danger to others**
- **An unwillingness or inability to engage**
- **Mental ill-health**
- **Misusing alcohol and/or drugs**
- **Taking legal highs**



Effects of homelessness

- **Disruption of schooling, healthcare, employment and support networks**
- **Lack of space / privacy (affects relationships, homework and friends)**
- **Reduced self-esteem**
- **More financial strain (meals, transport and removals and storage)**



Effects of homelessness

- **Physical / mental health**
- **Self-esteem, confidence and personal hygiene**
- **Isolation, risk of assault, loss of support networks**
- **May abuse alcohol and drugs, and commit petty crime / ASB**
- **Nowhere safe to store personal possessions**



Relevant policies / strategies

- **Corporate Plan**
- **Housing Strategy**
- **Homelessness Strategy**
- **Rough Sleepers Strategy**
- **Empty Homes Strategy**
- **Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy**
- **Housing Allocations Policy**



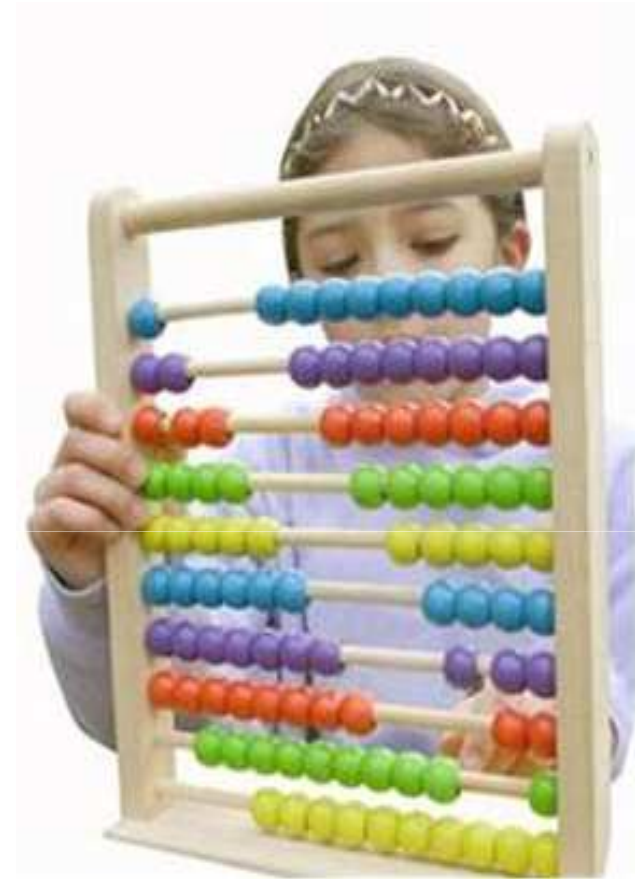
Homelessness in Northants

- **705 homelessness acceptances in 2015/16 (up 28% on 2014/15)**
- **Northampton had 45% of County's acceptances**
- **Kettering, Wellingboro and Corby had 40% of County's acceptances**
- **Increased most in Corby (219%) & Kettering (94%)**



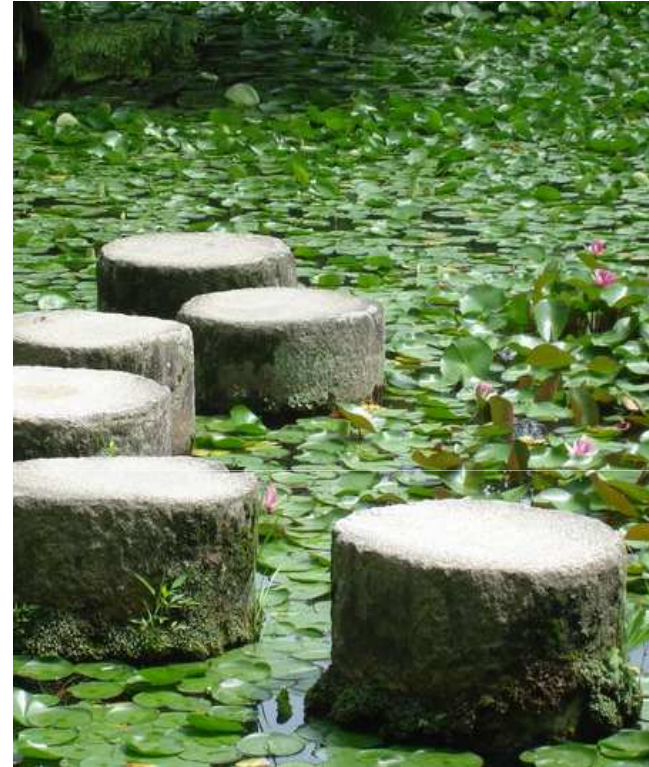
Homelessness in Northampton

- **321 homelessness acceptances in 2015/16 (up 11% on 2014/15)**
- **Around three quarters of 'accepted' families are lone parents**
- **One third of the decisions made were that applicant was 'not homeless' or was 'intentionally homeless'**



Homelessness in Northampton

- **During a borough-wide 'count' on 24/03/16, we found 21 rough sleepers**
- **It is hoped this will be reduced to about 15 by early in August 2016**
- **Approximately half of the rough sleepers are East European**



And finally ...

**“I have never felt accepted,
never found the right people
to help me, support me.
But you have done all that
and more in only a few hours”**



**“Thank you for keeping in contact
with my Dad. Please feel free to
tell [him] anything”**



Further information

- **Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)** www.gov.uk
- **Shelter** www.shelter.org.uk
- **Homeless Link** www.homeless.org.uk

