

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY



SCRUTINY PANEL 3 – HOMELESSNESS

(PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY)

CORE QUESTIONS – EXPERT ADVISORS

The Scrutiny Panel is currently undertaking a review: Pre-Decision Scrutiny: To review how the Borough Council and its partners prevent homelessness and respond to those without homes in the borough

Key Lines of Enquiry

- To gain an understanding of the work currently being undertaken by Northampton Borough Council (NBC), partnerships, statutory and voluntary organisations to address homelessness
- To assess the extent of homelessness and rough sleeping in the borough assess the initiatives currently in place to tackle homelessness
- To examine the Council's Severe Weather Provision
- To gain an understanding of the effect on the health, wellbeing and the safety of homelessness people, including rough sleepers
- To gain an understanding of the causes and barriers to support homelessness
- Identify any specific groups that are not accessing services

The expected outcomes of this Scrutiny Review are:

- To reduce homelessness in the borough of Northampton
- An understanding of the local authority homelessness role and the services provided in Northampton
- A review of existing homelessness services in Northampton, in order to assess their quality and effectiveness and identify any significant gaps in service

CORE QUESTIONS:

A series of key questions have been put together to inform the evidence base of the Scrutiny Panel:

1. Please describe your understanding of the nature, causes and extent of homelessness and rough sleeping, and the impact that homelessness has on the health, wellbeing and safety of homeless people.

Homelessness has many causes some we have encountered are: a change to benefits with sanctions , PRS landlords selling houses, relationship breakdowns due to addictions, lack of PRS, customers with Complex needs unable to maintain a tenancy, crack house closures, accrued rent arrears.

Large amounts of EUs sleeping rough with no recourse, no specific support to access documents, support back to work (as what used to happen).

Rough sleepers from other areas sleep in the borough as there is no provision in their own LA for non priority homeless or substance misuse services. Northampton has these services.

Organisational concern that rough sleeping has become underground, although not visual in town centre many sleeping where not seen / outside of town centre.

Rough sleeping has a negative effect on both physical and mental health. If customers are not picked up in a timely manner their well being deteriorates and they can also become used to rough sleeping and therefore difficult to engage and house. The longer someone rough sleeps the worse any addiction gets and also high percentage gain another addiction. Rough sleeping is very unsafe for anyone numerous rough sleepers have been assaulted, abused and bullied. The longer someone rough sleeps the more complex their needs become

2. Please describe the services, assistance and support that are available to people who are homeless, including rough sleepers.
3. Please provide details of the contribution that your organisation is making (through its work and the initiatives in which it is involved) to tackle, prevent and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping in the borough.

NAASH provides the support within Oasis House and subsidises this service to ensure a high level of support is provided to each customer. NAASH works as an advocate for the customers and partnership works with the landlord to sustain their tenancies and address any issues which have prevented them from maintaining a tenancy previously.

NAASH manages a no second night out service which has 11 beds in a manned project and an additional 51 units of accommodation within Northampton, to whom 2 tenancy sustainment officers are allocated to the units. NAASH recently leased 14 properties from a private landlord who was going to sell them and evict the tenants. NAASH took on the tenants along with the properties. These customers have a mix of issues including substance misuse, mental health, no access to LA housing register, rent arrears, workers with no deposits for PRS, couples who cannot access other supported housing projects, customers with no recourse can be taken in for a fixed period to enable them to find work, those evicted from other NAASH projects (where the risk is manageable)

NAASH initially subsidise the rents for workers on low income and assist them to access affordable long term housing, NAASH has a budget to undertake community events to benefit both the community and give customers a sense of purpose. Gardening and clearing projects have been undertaken in local church grounds regularly,

NAASH currently NAASH works closely with the Police to reduce ASB and street drinking from its customers, S2S to engage those with an addiction, The Bridge Substance Misuse Programme to enable customers to fill their time productively, The Police / probation to refrain customers from street drinking, offending, private rented landlords to provide additional properties where needed, NPH to access long term housing for those eligible

NAASH regularly moves customers around the services to prevent eviction and ensure appropriate placements are completed.

NAASH has also worked to house customers on release from prison where they had accessed services before their sentencing.

4. Please provide details of the action that your organisation is taking to improve the health, wellbeing and safety of homeless people.

NAASH uses their ability to move people around their services to ensure a timely placement is offered. NAASH works in partnership with a local GP surgery, who provides both mental health and physical support on site at Oasis House for all NAASH customers to use. This GP surgery also supports NAASH staff within their work, this enables NAASH staff to refer in at an early opportunity for concerns around someone mental health, physical health or substance misuse.

NAASH has contact within the PRS and supports landlords who in turn provide some accommodation to the customer group NAASH deals with. NAASH is working with PRS landlords to encourage more to work in partnership and hopefully provide additional accommodation / move on from the hostels.

NAASH is proactive around exclusions with its customers living within its No second night out project to prevent evictions. This enables customers to keep

their tenancy but gives flexibility to staff to prevent anyone in an unmanageable state from entering the manned project.

Anyone who has been in NAAH services are made aware that they can always access for advice at any point.

5. Please provide details of the local Homelessness Strategy and Rough Sleepers Strategy and how their implementation is being monitored and assessed.
6. Please provide details of the arrangements that have been put in place to provide rough sleepers with emergency shelter during severe weather.

NAASH has provided this annually prior to 2016. This will now be provided to male rough sleepers in the night shelter.

7. Please provide us with any statistics and data you hold in relation to the number of people / households that are homeless, and details of the methodology you have used to count the number of people sleeping rough.
8. Are you aware of any specific groups that are not accessing local services and, if you are, please can you provide details and describe the reasons why some homeless people are difficult to engage and support?
9. Are there any significant gaps in service and do the services link together well enough?
There is a gap where someone has complex needs as hostel environments' are not conducive to their support needs.
10. How can we increase awareness of the services, assistance and support available to people who are homeless, including rough sleepers?

More outreach during the day and night and clear information given on what is provided where. Information posters at strategic points in the borough

11. What action is being taken to ensure that all agencies and members of the public know what to do if they know that someone is homeless or sleeping rough?

NAAASH is an active part of Killing with Kindness held yearly in the town centre. NAASH undertake public education around this alongside the Police and NBC

12. Do you have any other information you are able to provide in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping?