



## **NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **SCRUTINY PANEL 3**

### **HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPERS**

**8 NOVEMBER 2018**

#### **BRIEFING NOTE: SITE VISITS**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At its inaugural scoping meeting, Scrutiny Panel 3 (Homelessness and Rough Sleepers) agreed that it would undertake various site visits to inform its evidence base.
- 1.2 In setting its scope (terms of reference), the Scrutiny Panel suggested site visits to the following:
  - Hope Centre and Oasis House
  - Women's Refuse
  - Manchester
  - Accompanying the Outreach Workers on a Rough Sleepers' count
  - The Bridge Project
- 1.3 Detailed below are the findings from the various site visits.

## **2 SITE VISITS**

### **2.1 Hope Centre and Oasis House**

- 2.1.1 Councillor Cathrine Russell, Chair, Councillors Sally Beardsworth and Jane Birch, together with Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, visited the Hope Centre and Oasis House on Tuesday, 7 August 2018.
- 2.1.2 There are a number of partners that contribute to Oasis House:

- Midland Heart
- Hope Day Centre
- NBC outreach
- NAASH
- Hope Enterprise

- 2.1.3 Maple Access Partnership is no longer available from Oasis House; clients have to attend its surgery.
- 2.1.4 The majority of clients to the Hope Centre have mental health issues; which increases dramatically once individuals become homeless. It was noted that there is a significant link between the use of cannabis and mental health. The life expectancy of a Rough Sleeper is 47.
- 2.1.5 The site visit observed the day centre. A number of clients were eating breakfast. Tea, coffee and squash is provided free of charge as are a number of pastries and other food. Should individuals require a cooked breakfast a small charge is required. There is also a small charge for cereals.
- 2.1.6 Lunch is also provided at the centre. There is a small cost for the lunch. Individuals can also use the showers.
- 2.1.7 Clothes are donated and individuals can buy items for a small cost (30 pence per item). There is a real need for underwear. This is provided free of charge.
- 2.1.8 Various groups and sessions are put on during the day such as foot care, cookery, art, life skills, gardening, sport, Internet café (free of charge for 90 minutes use).
- 2.1.9 The Hope Centre has good working relations with a number of organisations including:
- NAASH
  - CAN
  - Bridge
  - S2S
  - Re-Store
  - Growing Well (Blackthorn Good Neighbours)
  - Community Law
  - Doddridge Centre
  - Bellinge Community House
  - Deaf Connect
  - Free 2 Talk

- 2.1.10 The Site Visit observed the art room and some of the art work produced and being produced. Some excellent work was observed.
- 2.1.11 Around 100-120 individuals use the day centre daily, which is open six days a week, 8:30am to 1pm. The focus on Saturdays is around Rough Sleepers and Sofa Surfers. The Night Shelter is open at 9pm daily and therefore there is a gap of provision from 1pm to 9pm for the small number who stay there. However for the 100-110 people who don't use the night shelter, that gap is from when we close to when we open again. Clients have to be 18 years old or over and can be either male or female to use the Hope Centre or Oasis House.
- 2.1.12 Individuals can live at Oasis House in the short term, but individuals have stayed for up to three years. Oasis House is managed by Midland Heart and NAASH.
- 2.1.13 Councillors also visited Hope Enterprises. Hope Enterprises is a social enterprise and community interest company set up by Northampton's Hope Centre, a charity, with more than 40 years' experience working with the town's homeless.
- 2.1.14 Through giving training and work, at a fair rate of pay, in a supportive environment, Hope Enterprise helps people to re-join society.
- 2.1.15 Hope Enterprises has five elements: -
- Hope Catering - contract catering and buffets for business meetings, parties and events, alongside training in catering.
  - Hope Tools - a recycling and training social enterprise, refurbishing second-hand garden tools
  - Hope PAT Testing - routine safety checking for all electrical appliances
  - Hope Gardening – growing food and offering horticultural experience and therapeutic gardening
  - Hope foodclub – a social supermarket club where food and toiletries are available at discount prices to those on low incomes
- 2.1.16 The site visit observed refurbished tools that had been refurbished by Hope Tools. The site visit also observed a number of individuals taking part in the Aspire Course which has the purpose of providing skills to attendees for gaining employment, such as social skills and various qualifications.
- 2.1.17 The site visit spoke with a client to the Hope Centre – Miss A.

*“Miss A had taken part in the Homeless Campaign Project that teaches attendees life skills. The Hope Centre had nominated Miss A to take part. As part of the Project Miss A had been to London and was scheduled to attend again in September, 2 days a week. As part of the project attendees go on field trips and visit museums. She is very proud to be able to help people that are homeless. Miss A was not on the streets for long and now lives in a hostel; she advised that she became homeless due to an error with benefits and felt that she had not at that time received any support. She had been evicted from her home that she had lived in since 1994. Miss A’s son is currently sofa surfing and her daughter lives in a separate hostel. The whole family has been dispersed. Community Law had been unable to assist Miss A when she was being evicted. Miss A felt that there is a lack of provision for people to have a shower and a good night’s sleep; she felt a number of smaller units, similar to Oasis House, across the town would be of real benefit.”*

## **2.2 Women’s Refuge**

2.2.1 Councillor Cathrine Russell, Chair, Councillors Sally Beardsworth and Jane Birch, together with Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, visited a Women’s Refuge on Tuesday, 7 August 2018.

2.2.2 The refuge visited has space for five:

- 1 plus two beds
- 1 plus three beds
- 1 plus two beds
- A single room
- 1 plus two beds

2.2.3 The rooms are of a good size. The refuge is normally full.

2.2.4 The Support Worker at the refuge assists the women to apply for housing for example via the homeless/housing application route. Some women stay at the refuge for up to 12 months. A six month stay at the refuge is the norm. 24/7 support is provided at the refuge.

2.2.5 Often women who come to the refuge have often been “drawn to a bad boy.” There is the need for early prevention and women have quite often been living in poor conditions, have no hobbies, no social life and live their lives via social media. Their priorities are often the mobile phone, males and smoking. The cost to live in the Refuge is £15 per week to cover heating, water and washing. The Support Worker aims to help the women with their priorities. Life skills are taught so that they are ready to move on from the refuge.

- 2.2.6 The Site Visit felt that there is not enough bed space in accommodation in the town for homeless women. Women are able to stay at Oasis House but not at the Night Shelter. There are a lot of women who are “hidden homeless”.
- 2.2.7 There is a men’s refuge in Kettering . The majority of men have been subject to honour abuse. There is a need for more refuges across the country.
- 2.2.8 The site visit spoke with two women currently staying at the Refuge – Miss B and Miss C.

*“Miss C came to the refuge from another area of the county in late July 2018. She had come from a low support refuge but needed more support. She had had an abusive partner. She had had her own flat and had lived there, with her young child, both working and attending college. She had to leave due to her abusive partner. He had also been manipulative. Due to the fact that she was an EU Citizen she was not entitled to benefits. The tenancy had been in her name and also her partner’s. Therefore, he was entitled to be in the flat also. Miss C expected her partner to change, but he hadn’t. Miss C began to drink heavily and had left her child with another resident in the low level support refuge for 1 and ½ days. The Police and Social Services had been called and her child is now in foster care. Miss C is working to regain custody of her child. Miss C gave background to her childhood that she had been treated differently to her siblings as her mum felt she was very like her father and had been controlling towards Miss C. Miss C had had a controlling parent and then a controlling partner. Miss C advised that she wants her own home with her child, a job and a normal life.”*

*“Miss B comes from a different county. She had been with her ex partner for two years and had starting taking drugs, socially to begin with and then it became an addiction. She was currently on a methadone programme. She had started to take drugs when a close friend had been found dead. Her ex partner was very controlling and violent. Miss B’s mother had taken her child from her when she began taking drugs. The ex partner would provide the drugs. Miss B confirmed that the Police had been called 13 times regarding her ex partner’s violence towards her and eventually they came out again when he was abusing her in the street and witnesses had called the Police. The ex partner was given a 28 day ban from making contact with her, but he still made contact. Due to the fact that Miss B has a property in another county she cannot go on the housing list in Northampton unless she gives up this property; Miss B advised that by doing this she would be making herself intentionally homeless. The Support Worker at the Refuge is assisting regarding housing*

*needs. Miss B wants to live with her son and be completely free from drugs.”*

## **2.3 EMMAUS, CARLTON VILLAGE**

- 2.3.1 Councillor Cathrine Russell, Chair, Councillor Sally Beardsworth, together with Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, visited a Emmaus Village Carlton, on Monday 13 August 2018.
- 2.3.2 The site visit met with the Chief Community Officer and the Support Manager and had a tour of the site also.
- 2.3.3 Emmaus is an international charity with 300 communities worldwide; of which 29 are in the UK. The first Emmaus community in the UK is the one based in Cambridge. Emmaus Carlton Village, has 42 beds with 4 solidarity beds. All rooms have beds, wardrobe, bedside cabinet, TV and Wifi. Wifi is available throughout the site.
- 2.3.5 Emmaus Village Carlton, is a charity with a Board of Trustees who are very active. Since 2001 they have raised over £3.5 million for capital projects. Currently their turnover is almost £1.2 million.
- 2.3.6 Residents to Emmaus communities are known as companions; upon arrive they sign a licence agreement that they will be housed and will work in the Social Enterprise.
- 2.3.7 Emmaus Village Carlton, is the one of the largest Emmaus communities in the UK. There are three accommodation blocks, the majority have an en-suite. Companions have use of a shared laundry room, IT suite and communal lounge, dining room, gym and games room comprising pool table, darts and table tennis.
- 2.3.8 Companions to Emmaus Village Carlton, are either self-referred or referred by an Agency. Their needs are looked at to ascertain whether they can be supported. Carlton is a remote location and may not be suitable to all prospective companions. Individuals with complex mental health needs, and ongoing drink or alcohol addictions cannot be supported at Emmaus Village Carlton.
- 2.3.9 The community has one Support Manager and two Support Workers. The licence agreement requires companions to be clear of alcohol for the first 28 days to ascertain whether there is a dependency issue. Companions should be clear of illegal drugs or psychoactive substances at all times and will be randomly drugs tested to ensure this. There does not have to be geographical connections for individuals to be considered for staying at the community. The community can accommodate both men and women. Their stay is not time limited; it is a safe place for people to move on from. Ex-Offenders

with low need can be referred to Emmaus.

2.3.10 Emmaus Village Carlton, has a medical centre that it refers to. It is located around 15/20 minutes' walk away but support workers will often drive companions to the centre or pay for public transport.

2.3.11 Upon arrival companions sign off benefits, other than housing benefit. They receive an allowance of £42 a week. Money is also put aside for them in a holiday fund and a leaving fund.

2.3.12 Children can visit companions on the site. Relevant safeguarding checks take place.

2.3.13 The village has a stock of toiletries and companions can purchase these for 50p an item.

2.3.14 Companions undertake training whilst residing at the village including:

- Level 2 warehouse training
- Forklift training
- Bike repair
- Food hygiene

The aim is to provide a majority of training that is accredited. Emmaus Village Carlton also offers volunteering opportunities.

2.3.15 Companions receive three meals a day. Breakfast is provided for them, which they make themselves, consisting of toast and cereals. A mixed hot and cold lunch is provided along with a hot evening meal. A healthy diet is provided. The community has recently begun to grow its own vegetables. The community is also in dialogue with a bee keeper regarding a bee hive for the site.

2.3.16 Contact is maintained with companions that move on from the community. There have been 10 positive moves in the last 12 months. The aim of the charity is to give companions a purpose, confidence, self-respect, somewhere to live, and it was highlighted that this ethos really works.

2.3.17 People can donate to the community, such as furniture, clothes, toys, bikes, clocks etc. The community can collect furniture donations free of charge but there is a small charge for delivery.

2.3.18 The social enterprise is open to the public six days a week, being closed on Mondays.

## **2.4 MANCHESTER**

- 2.4.1 The Deputy Chair will aim to visit Manchester over the next few months and report her findings to a future meeting.

## **2.5 BRIDGE PROJECTS**

- 2.5.1 Councillors Cathrine Russell, Sally Beardsworth, Jane Birch and Ian Bates (Co-Optee\_ visited the Bridge Project on 3 September 2018. They met with the Manager of the Project and various “Members”.
- 2.5.2 This resource is aimed at people who are attempting to or have overcome addictions around drugs and alcohol and who consider they could possibly be ready to look for a change in their lifestyle and hopefully find a job and if need be a permanent home.
- 2.5.3 The Site visit was shown around the facility by Vince Carroll who heads up the Bridge in Northampton. The Site Visit arrived at lunchtime and there were a number of “members” enjoying lunch and socialising with friends. The Manager explained that when they accept someone to come onto their programme, they are given a contract to which they commit to; which allows them to use the facilities at the Bridge; have 1:1 meetings with professional staff who are available, use the gym, and various other services such as aromatherapy and hair dressing. The Bridge provides hot meals every day to Members who are attending as well as an IT suite as well as opportunities for Members to relax in their Games Room, gym and well equipped Music Room.
- 2.5.4 Members are required to sign in using a swipe card and in this way their attendance is monitored which can sometimes indicate that a Member is having difficulty in maintaining regular trips to the Bridge and participating in sessions and group work.
- 2.5.5 Staff sometimes visit Members at home to assess whether or not there are difficulties and whether they need additional support.
- 2.5.6 The Site Visit felt that Vince’s commitment and understanding of the Members’ needs and complex situations is impressive and the concept which drives the Bridge has been applied to a number of different resources around the county. In Northamptonshire at any one time there can be up to 800 Members in the different resources which follow the Bridge Programme.
- 2.5.7 Members are in control and in charge of their programme at the Bridge and as long as they are prepared to co operate and work within basic principles of cleanliness, respect, honesty and leave their substance issues at home.



### **3 CONCLUSIONS**

3.1 From the site visits undertaken, it was concluded that:

- The Hope Centre has good working relations with a number of organisations.
- The majority of clients to the Hope Centre have mental health issues.
- The Hope Centre is extremely well used but the Scrutiny Panel was concerned that there is a lack of provision for homeless people during the hours of 1pm and 9pm when the Night Shelter opens.
- The Scrutiny Panel, from its visit to a Women's Refuge, noted that often women who come to the refuge are "drawn to a bad boy". There is a real need for early prevention and the Scrutiny Panel welcomed the support and advice given to the women by the Support Workers.
- The Scrutiny Panel felt that there is not enough bed space in accommodation in the town for homeless women. From the evidence provided to it, the Scrutiny Panel felt that there are a lot of women who are "hidden homeless".
- There is a need for more Refuges, for both men and women, across the country as a whole.
- The Scrutiny Panel was pleased to be able to speak with both clients using the Hope Centre and two women currently staying in a Refuge.
- From its site visits, the Scrutiny Panel further concluded that there is a lack of supported temporary accommodation locally, similar to that offered by Emmaus.
- The Emmaus village is extremely well run and provided a welcoming environment. The aim of the village is to give companions self-respect, something to do, somewhere to live, and it was highlighted that this ethos really works.
- The Scrutiny Panel welcomed the work undertaken by the Bridge Project and noted the value that it provided to its Members.

### **4 RECOMMENDATION**

4.1 That the information provided in this briefing note informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

Author: Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of Councillor Cathrine Russell, Chair, Scrutiny Panel 3 – Homelessness and Rough Sleepers

7 September 2018