



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPERS

The Scrutiny Panel is currently undertaking a review: Homelessness and Rough Sleepers

The purpose of the Review is

- To review the way in which the Council and its partners engage with rough sleepers¹, consider the best way in which 'Housing First'² can be used to reduce rough sleeping in the borough, and understand the nature and extent of 'hidden homelessness'³ and how it can best be addressed.

- 1 For the purpose of rough sleeping counts and estimates, '**rough sleepers**' are defined as people who are sleeping / bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments) or sleeping in buildings or other places that are not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, etc).
- 2 The '**Housing First**' approach was first developed in New York by the Pathways to Housing organisation in 1992 and has proved very successful in the USA, Canada and Europe. Unlike other supported housing models, individuals do not need to prove they are ready for independent housing, or progress through a series of accommodation and treatment services. There are no conditions placed on them, other than a willingness to maintain a tenancy agreement. Housing First is designed to provide long-term, open-ended support for their ongoing needs. Through the provision of intensive, flexible and person-centred support, 70-90% of Housing First residents are able to remain housed. Having a settled home improves health and wellbeing and reduces ineffective contact with costly public services.
- 3 '**Hidden homelessness**' is a term that is used to describe the people who become homeless but do not show up in official figures. This includes people who become homeless but find a temporary solution by sofa surfing (staying with family members or friends) or living in hostels, nightshelters, squats or other insecure accommodation.

CORE QUESTIONS:

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

- 1 Please provide details of what contact or involvement your organisation has with people who are homeless (sleeping rough or 'hidden') and the services and organisations that are able to address their needs.
- 2 Please provide details of your understanding of the causes and extent of rough sleeping in the borough.
- 3 Please provide details of your understanding of the impact that rough sleeping has on the safety, life expectancy and health of people who are sleeping rough, and the implications that rough sleeping have for safeguarding and community safety.
- 4 Please provide details of your understanding of the nature of the work that is currently being undertaken by Northampton Borough Council and local groups, services and organisations to engage with people who are sleeping rough in the borough.
- 5 Please provide details of your understanding of how effective Northampton Borough Council and local groups, services and organisations have been in engaging purposefully with people who are sleeping rough and helping them to come off the streets.
- 6 What changes would you like Northampton Borough Council and local groups, services and organisations to make in order to engage more effectively with people who are sleeping rough and to help them come off the streets, in a planned way, as quickly as possible?
- 7 In what ways do you think the 'Housing First' model can be used most effectively to reduce rough sleeping in the borough, and in what ways (if any) could your organisation work differently to ensure its success?
- 8 Please provide details of your understanding of the nature and extent of 'hidden homelessness' in the borough, including the profile of the people affected and what contact (if any) they have had with Northampton Borough Council, Northampton Partnership Homes and/or other local advice and support providers.
- 9 Please can you suggest ways in which services and organisations can connect with, and meaningfully engage with, harder to reach groups?
- 10 How are data, statistics and demographics gathered and used to meet the needs of men and women who are homeless?

- 11 What do you think are the main reasons for hidden homelessness and why do you think people sofa surf and are without settled accommodation?
- 12 How effective do you think the Council is at informing people and organisations about its homelessness policies and procedures, and in what ways could it improve its communication?
- 13 Do you have any other information you are able to provide in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping?
- 14 Do you have any other recommendations for the Scrutiny Panel to consider including within its final report?