



Cabinet Member Report for Housing and Wellbeing

Northampton Borough Council

11th March 2019

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

In January 2019, SWEP was activated twice and, with the help and support of a team of 52 volunteers, the Council's Housing and Wellbeing Team opened an emergency Winter Shelter for 14 nights during the following periods:

- Period One: Thursday, 17th January – Wednesday, 23rd January 2019 (7 nights)
- Period Two: Sunday, 27th January – Saturday, 2nd February 2019 (7 nights)

During (and leading up to) this period of cold weather, the Winter Shelter received a total of 102 referrals, including self-referrals from people who approached the Shelter direct.

A total of 80 people (65 men and 15 women) stayed at least one night in the Winter Shelter and, between them, they stayed a total of 353 nights. Of the people who stayed, the youngest was aged 18, the oldest was aged 60 and the average age was 38. Almost half are non-UK nationals.

In Period One, 58 people (47 men and 11 women) stayed at least one night and, of these, 17 (29%) only stayed one night and only 14 (24%) stayed 6 or 7 nights.

In Period Two, 52 people (46 men and 6 women) stayed at least one night. Although 28 (54%) stayed for 3 or more nights, only 7 (13%) stayed 6 or 7 nights.

Winter Shelter and Expanded Street Outreach Team

On 14th February 2019, the Winter Shelter opened as an all-weather Winter Shelter and the Street Outreach Team was expanded to enable outreach work to be undertaken every day of the week.

Funded by Central Government, the all-weather Winter Shelter – supported by a team of 40 volunteers – and the expanded Street Outreach Team will continue until 31st March 2019.

As well as providing people who are sleeping rough with somewhere safe, warm and dry to stay, they provide an opportunity for positive engagement with people who are homeless.

During the first 14 nights, a total of 62 people (53 men and 9 women) have stayed at least one night in the Winter Shelter and, of these, 22 men and 3 women have stayed for at least 7 nights. The Street Outreach Team has engaged with a total of 77 people.

Northampton's Emergency Nightshelter

Last month, the Nightshelter completed its second successful year.

Since first opening its doors on 6th February 2017, the Nightshelter has provided almost three hundred men with emergency accommodation and, of these, it has so far helped 197 of them to move on successfully into settled accommodation.

Between them, 140 volunteers have donated more than 14,300 hours of their spare time to provide the Nightshelter and its guests with the help and support that they need.

Hospital Discharge Scheme

Our hospital discharge scheme has grown from strength to strength and, during the past four years, it has rehoused 158 patients, enabled 103 patients to return home when they thought they would not be able to do so, and provided housing advice to another 158 patients.

The scheme has delivered better outcomes for patients and has made a significant difference to people's lives, promoting their independence and reducing hospital re-admissions. It has freed up hospital beds that can then be prioritised for those with a medical need.

Apart from homelessness, mental health remains the main issue for patients assisted by the hospital discharge scheme, followed by substance abuse, family breakdown and clinical health.

Colleagues working in health and social care have embraced the scheme, and 'Housing' is now an integral part of the hospital discharge process. The scheme has helped to build a strong partnership of health, social care, housing and voluntary and community sector services.

Social Lettings Agency

As Members are aware, the unprecedented increase in the Council's use of temporary accommodation – and the urgent need to address the large number of homeless families placed in Bed & Breakfast and out-of-borough accommodation – necessitated the redeployment of the Social Lettings Agency staff to concentrate on the management of temporary accommodation.

Although this redeployment has improved the housing conditions of hundreds of homeless households, it has severely limited the Housing Options & Advice Service's ability to prevent homelessness and help people to access good quality private rented accommodation.

In the Council's 2019/20 Budget, additional funding is being provided to support the restructure of the Housing Options and Advice Service and enable an additional 12 staff to be appointed, including a dedicated Temporary Accommodation Team.

When the Temporary Accommodation Team is in place, the Social Lettings Agency staff will revert back to their primary role of procuring a plentiful supply of affordable private rented accommodation that can be used to meet housing need and prevent homelessness.

In the meantime, an assertive Tenancy Sustainment Team (comprising a Housing Options Adviser and a Lettings Negotiator) has been established to work proactively with private landlords and letting agents who have served notice on their tenants, in order to secure the renewal of the tenancy for 12 months or, where this is not possible, negotiate enough time for the tenants to find alternative accommodation before they become homeless.

Northampton Partnership Homes

100th Anniversary of Council Housing

31st July 2019 marks the 100th anniversary of council housing.

Northampton Partnership Homes and the Council are planning a series of events to mark this important milestone.

I will be providing more details of these events in future reports.

Lakeview House

A 45-bed older persons housing scheme at Lakeview House, Churchill Avenue has now been completed and received its official opening, by Michael Ellis MP, on 1st March 2019.

Kings Heath Garage Sites

Works to redevelop garage sites in Kings Heath (providing 23 new homes) have commenced.

Neighbourhood Regeneration Works Update

Neighbourhood regeneration works at Thorplands have commenced and have received a warm welcome from tenants and the local community.

Works to redevelop the former Tanners Pub site have also commenced.

Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing