

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

ACTION PLAN: SCRUTINY PANEL - Homelessness (Pre-Decision Scrutiny)

Recommendations from Scrutiny Panel (Homelessness (Pre-Decision Scrutiny) completed in April 2017

Proposed dates for monitoring implementation of accepted recommendations

Report received by Cabinet	Response received by Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Monitoring activity	Monitoring complete
June 2017	November 2017	June 2018, May 2019 and January 2020	

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Council undertakes a comprehensive review of homelessness in the borough and develops a new 5 year Homelessness Strategy that is designed to substantially reduce the number of households that become homeless and the number of homeless families that are living in temporary accommodation.

Action	Implementation/ responsibility by:	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a comprehensive review of homelessness • Produce a 5 year, multi-agency homelessness strategy 	<p>Housing Strategy Officer</p> <p>Housing Strategy Officer</p>	<p>An additional Project Officer will be recruited on a fixed-term contract to support this work.</p>	<p>Review to be completed by November 2018 Strategy to be produced by March 2019</p>	<p>This piece of work was initially put on hold to enable Officers to focus on the successful implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (which came into effect on 3 April 2018) and reducing the Council’s use of Bed & Breakfast and out-of-borough temporary accommodation.</p> <p>Publication of the Government’s Rough Sleeping Strategy (August 2018), together with the proposed restructure of the Housing Options & Advice Service, the development of a 14-point action plan for reducing the use and cost of temporary accommodation and the discussions that were taking place with SNC and DDC about the need to work together to produce a West Northamptonshire Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy subsequently delayed Northampton’s homelessness review and the production of its new homelessness strategy.</p>

				<p>During the Summer and Autumn of 2019, a review of homelessness was carried out and a series of half day homelessness strategy workshops were held with a wide range of stakeholders. These have informed the development of Northampton's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy which has now been circulated to key stakeholders for final comments.</p> <p>Following the next meeting of the Single Homelessness Forum on 14 January 2020, the Council will commence a 28 day consultation on the draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy with a view to it being approved by Cabinet in April 2020.</p> <p>In the meantime, the Housing & Wellbeing Team is working closely with Senior Officers of SNC and DDC to carry out an evidence-based review of housing need and homelessness in West Northants that will inform the development of a West Northants Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy that will be approved in time for 'vesting day' in April 2021.</p>
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RECOMMENDATION 2: The Council establishes a Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group to direct, co-ordinate and monitor the action that the Council and its partners take to tackle, prevent and reduce homelessness in the borough

Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group 	Housing Advice & Options Manager	To be achieved within existing resources	February 2020	<p>Implementation of Northampton's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy will be monitored through the quarterly meetings of the Single Homelessness Forum and the Family Homelessness Forum.</p> <p>Progress will also be monitored by NBC's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Implementation Group which will meet monthly and will be attended by all of the Responsible Officers.</p>

RECOMMENDATION 3: The Council publishes an information leaflet, (electronic, paper base and in languages commonly known to be spoken by rough sleepers), for distribution to all Agencies, services and more widely available to members of the public, which sets out very clearly how its homelessness and housing advice services are organised – together with details of the services provided by other organisations and services – and how people can access them.

Action	Implementation/responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write, design and publish an information leaflet 	Housing Advice & Options Manager	To be achieved within existing resources	October 2018	Business cards, together with leaflets in a variety of languages, have been produced to provide rough sleepers and members of the public with information about the Single Homelessness Service, Street Outreach Team, SWEP and the Nightshelter.

			<p>Information is also available on the Council's website.</p> <p>In December 2019, the Council completed its root-and-branch restructure of its Housing Options & Advice Service which has created the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Single Homelessness Pathway Service (including the Nightshelter, a Street Services Team and three Housing Transitions Officers working with prisons, hospitals and the Leaving Care Team) • A Homelessness Prevention Service (including housing triage officers and a team of specialist housing advisers) <p>These changes – together with the new services that the Government is funding in 2019/20 through its Rough Sleeping Initiative – will need to be reflected in the leaflets.</p> <p>During discussions about the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy, stakeholders asked the Council to prioritise the production of a comprehensive online directory of the services that are available to homeless people in the borough.</p>
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				<p>The Rough Sleepers Co-ordinator has been working with local services and organisations to produce an online directory that is due to 'go live' in April 2020.</p> <p>The Housing Advice & Options Team is producing a guide to the Council's homelessness and housing advice services (including how to access them and how they are organised) that is due to be published in February 2020.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 4: A comprehensive review of rough sleeping services is carried out to ensure that all services are operating efficiently and effectively, and that there is no unnecessary duplication of effort between the Nightshelter, the Hope Centre, Oasis House, NAASH and other services.</p>				
Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the way in which rough sleeping services are operating 	Housing Advice & Options Manager and Housing Strategy Officer	To be achieved within existing resources	October 2018	Significant changes have been made to the way in which rough sleeping services have been delivered since the conclusion of the Overview & Scrutiny Review.

				<p>The appointment of a Single Homelessness Adviser in May 2018 complemented the work of the Street Outreach Team and Nightshelter and made it even easier for rough sleepers to access help, advice and support.</p> <p>New assessment arrangements and the use of Personal Housing Plans (a statutory duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act) had a significant impact on rough sleeping services and the role of other support services.</p> <p>In January 2019, the Council made a successful funding bid to run an all-weather Winter Shelter and expand its Street Outreach Team to deliver a 7-day-a-week service for 6½ weeks from 14 February – 31 March 2019.</p> <p>Two subsequent bids for funding resulted in Northampton being awarded another £480K to fund 11 rough sleeping posts in 2019/20:</p>
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rough Sleepers Co-ordinator • Two Street Outreach Workers • Mental Health Outreach Worker • Four Rough Sleeper Navigators • Housing Transitions Officer (Prisons & Approved Premises) • Two Tenancy Sustainment Officers <p>During May and June 2019, the MHCLG and Homeless Link facilitated a series of very useful discussions between the Council, the Hope Centre and Churches Together in Northampton in order to address and resolve tensions which had developed in the relationship between the Council and local homelessness services.</p> <p>During those meetings, everyone agreed that relationships would be improved by the establishment of a Single Homelessness Forum and the co-production of a new Rough Sleeping Strategy.</p>
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				<p>The review of rough sleeping services has been ongoing since the Scrutiny Review of 2017 and it has been assisted by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The changes that have been made in response to the Homelessness Reduction Act• The time and thought that has gone into the restructuring of the Housing Advice & Options Service and the job descriptions of the Officers and Managers who will be delivering the Single Homelessness Service.• The development of new services that have attracted MHCLG funding (following a comprehensive review and evaluation of the services already in place and the type of services that are needed).• Significant improvements in the way in which the Nightshelter, the Hope Centre, Oasis House, NAASH and other services are working together to tackle, prevent and reduce rough sleeping in the borough.
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RECOMMENDATION 5: A Homelessness Forum is established that engages with other statutory and non-statutory Agencies.

Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Homelessness Forum 	Housing Advice & Options Manager	To be achieved within existing resources	September 2018	<p>Although it was originally proposed that a Homelessness Forum would be established in Autumn 2018, the Officer recruited to set up the Homelessness Forum and other initiatives did not perform well, so was released early.</p> <p>As explained in the response to Recommendation 4, the Council has set up a multi- agency Single Homelessness Forum which will meet quarterly. The Forum's inaugural meeting was held in October 2019 and its next meeting is scheduled for 14 January 2020.</p> <p>Following a successful Workshop in November 2019, it has been agreed that the Council will set up a Family Homelessness Forum that will meet quarterly to deal with all homelessness issues <u>except</u> those relating to single homeless people and childless couples. The first meeting of the Forum is due to take place in February 2020.</p>

RECOMMENDATION 6: The Council carries out an annual review of rough sleeping in the borough that goes beyond the limitations of the Statutory requirements, for example personalised Development Plans are produced for each rough sleeper and that these continue to be implemented even after they have moved into permanent housing.

Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out an annual review of rough sleeping 	Housing Advice & Options Manager	To be achieved within existing resources	December 2018	<p>The Council is working closely with the Hope Centre and Churches Together in Northampton with a view to achieving a consensus on the nature and extent of rough sleeping in the borough.</p> <p>Our aim is use the annual Rough Sleepers Count <u>and</u> SWEP, the Nightshelter and the intelligence collected by members of the Single Homelessness Forum to inform this assessment.</p> <p>Since the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (which came into effect in April 2018), every rough sleeper who has engaged with the Council's Single Homelessness Adviser, Street Outreach Workers or Housing Options & Advice Team has been helped to develop a Personal Housing Plan which continues to be monitored and updated until the person is rehoused and it is handed on to their new landlord.</p>

				<p>One of the conditions attached to the rough sleeping funding that the Council receives from the MHCLG is that, once every two months, a rough sleepers count is carried out by the Street Outreach Workers and reported to the Government.</p> <p>Better information sharing arrangements between local services, together with the delivery of a six-days-a-week Street Outreach Service, has significantly improved our knowledge and understanding of the people who are sleeping rough in the borough.</p>
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RECOMMENDATION 7: There is active and meaningful involvement of individuals who have lived experience or service users with the development and delivery of services, and the implementation process.

Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service users & individuals with lived experience will be routinely and meaningfully involved in shaping and delivering services 	Housing Advice & Options Manager	To be achieved within existing resources	March 2019	<p>Nightshelter guests are already routinely involved in shaping services</p> <p>Individuals with lived experience have been involved in the development of Northampton's draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy and will continue to be invited to attend the meetings of the Single Homelessness Forum</p>

				The successful implementation of the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy will ensure that service users and people with lived experience of homelessness are actively and meaningfully involved in the development and delivery of services.
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RECOMMENDATION 8: The Council considers its approach to assisting individuals with multiple and complex needs

Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council will review the way in which it (and other services) assists people who have multiple and complex needs 	Housing Advice & Options Manager	To be achieved within existing resources	October 2018	The appointment of a Mental Health Outreach Worker (for 12 months, using funding from the Rough Sleeping Initiative) in June 2019 has supported our efforts to assist people who have multiple and complex needs. As the postholder is seconded to the role from NHFT, they have strengthened the links between homelessness services and mental health services in the borough.

				<p>The appointment of the four Rough Sleeper Navigators (for 12 months, using funding from the Rough Sleeping Initiative) in 2019/20 has ensured that homeless people are always accompanied to important appointments when this is needed.</p> <p>Arrangements are being made to establish a multi -agency 'Task & Targeting Group' that will meet regularly to discuss how best to help and support rough sleepers who have multiple and complex needs. Meetings are due to commence in February 2020.</p> <p>It is envisaged that Northampton's approach to people who have multiple and complex needs will be informed by the lessons learned from the Task &Targeting Group.</p>
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RECOMMENDATION 9: The existing arrangements for meeting the health needs of homeless people (including rough sleepers) are reviewed and strengthened – informed by a Health Needs Audit - to ensure that rough sleepers and people who are living in temporary accommodation are not only aware of, but are also helped to connect with, local support services.

Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and strengthen the arrangements for meeting the health needs of rough sleepers and people living in temporary accommodation 	Housing Advice & Options Manager	To be achieved within existing resources	October 2018	<p>This piece of work was delayed, due to the need to concentrate on other, more urgent operational matters. However, the Head of Housing has attended meetings with the Public Health Team to plan a 2019/20 health screening programme that is targeted at, and delivered to, homeless people.</p> <p>When the new Temporary Accommodation Team has been recruited and has settled in, homeless households will be provided (as a matter of routine) with information about local health and support services.</p> <p>The appointment of the four Rough Sleeper Navigators (for 12 months, using funding from the Rough Sleeping Initiative) in 2019/20 will ensure that homeless people can be accompanied to appointments when this is necessary.</p>

RECOMMENDATION 10: Details of the medical advice and treatment available to people who are homeless and/or sleeping rough – at various locations, including Maple Access and Oasis House – are communicated to all organisations and services in order that they can be shared with people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details of the medical advice and treatment available will be collected and shared with all organisations and services 	Rough Sleepers Co-ordinator	To be achieved within existing resources	September 2018	This information is already widely known by local services. However, it will be included in the online directory of local services that is planned for April 2020 (see response to Recommendation 3) and in a leaflet produced for homeless people in April 2020.

RECOMMENDATION 11: The Council develops an ambitious plan, using SMART outcomes, for minimising its use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation and out-of-borough temporary accommodation

Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An ambitious plan will be developed to minimise the Council's use of B&B and out-of-borough temporary accommodation 	Head of Housing & Wellbeing	To be achieved within existing resources	April 2018	This was completed in April 2018. Although the overall number of homeless households in temporary accommodation has continued to rise, the vast majority of homeless households continue to live in self-contained accommodation in the borough. Very few households containing a pregnancy or dependent child(ren) are placed in Bed & Breakfast.

RECOMMENDATION 12: The Council works imaginatively and collaboratively with Northamptonshire County Council, and other Agencies and organisations, to provide more support for homeless families in temporary accommodation and mitigating any adverse effects on the families' finances and the children's schooling and healthcare.

Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council works with the County Council to support homeless families in temporary accommodation 	Head of Housing & Wellbeing	To be achieved within existing resources	October 2018	The importance of this action has reduced, due to the sharp fall in the number of children placed in temporary accommodation outside of the borough. The proposed reorganisation of local government in Northamptonshire offers an opportunity for improving services in the future.

RECOMMENDATION 13: All nightly-purchased temporary accommodation that is used by the Borough Council should provide free Wi-Fi facilities.

Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All B&Bs used by the Council will provide free Wi-Fi facilities 	Housing Options & Advice Manager	To be achieved within existing resources	April 2018	This was completed in April 2018.

RECOMMENDATION 14: It is recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that when monitoring takes place, a previous service user is asked to attend the meeting to provide information.

	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A former service user will be asked to attend the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to provide information 	Head of Housing & Wellbeing	To be achieved with existing resources	June 2018	This occurred during the Scrutiny Review of Homelessness & Rough Sleeping in 2018/19.
Recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee				
RECOMMENDATION 15: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as part of its monitoring regime, reviews the impact of this report in six months' time.				
Action	Implementation/ responsibility by	Resources required/available	Target date	Achievement/Completed
Included onto the O&S Monitoring Work Programme 2017/2018	Added to the O&S Monitoring Work Programme - Overview and Scrutiny Committee	n/a	Monitoring to take place in June 2018 and May 2019	