

# Northampton Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-23



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## Development of this Strategy

The Council is required to produce and publish a Homelessness Strategy no less than once every five years and to keep it under review.

The purpose of the Strategy is to set out how the Council and its partners will tackle, prevent and reduce homelessness in the area.

In recent years, substantial amendments have been made to the primary homelessness legislation – most notably the [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#) which came into effect in 2018 – and the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) has published its [Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2018](#).

In August 2018, the MHCLG also published its national [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#).

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy takes into account the new legislation and guidance and is based on the results of a Review of Homelessness in Northampton that was undertaken during autumn 2019.

The Review of Homelessness is available in full in Appendix A, but the key findings have also been included in the next section of this Strategy. More information about the national and local context and legislation relevant to this Strategy is available in Appendix B.

In developing this Strategy, the Council organised a series of stakeholder events:

- On 24 July 2019, a half day multi agency Rough Sleepers Workshop was attended by 50 representatives from local services and organisations
- On 1 October 2019, a second half day multi agency Rough Sleepers Workshop took place, attended by representatives from a wide range of services and organisations, to review Northampton's strategy for tackling rough sleeping
- On 15 November 2019, a half day multi agency Family Homelessness Workshop was attended by 40 people from 16 different organisations. This included Registered Providers, Northamptonshire County Council and a wide range of voluntary and community sector organisations.

During these events, stakeholders identified the strategic priorities and how all services and organisations can work better together to tackle, prevent and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping in Northampton.

Some of the strategic objectives – such as improving collaborative working – apply to all aspects of homelessness whilst others relate specifically to families, or single people or childless couples, who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

## **Future of this Strategy**

Local government in Northamptonshire is in the process of being re-organised.

In May 2019, the Government announced the creation of two new Unitary Councils in Northamptonshire: one in West Northamptonshire and one in North Northamptonshire.

The West Northamptonshire authority will cover the existing districts of Daventry, Northampton and South Northamptonshire, and is due to come into effect in April 2021.

Although this three-year Strategy will be replaced by West Northamptonshire's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy in April 2021, Officers from the three Councils and the County Council are already working together to develop a new Strategy that will ensure that the transition is as smooth as possible and Northampton's approach to homelessness is continued and improved in conjunction with the other authorities.

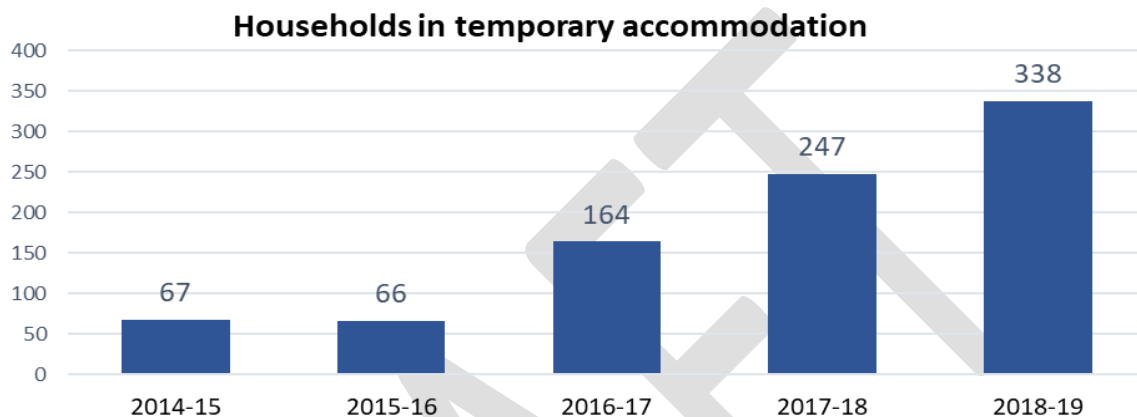
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# The Review of Homelessness

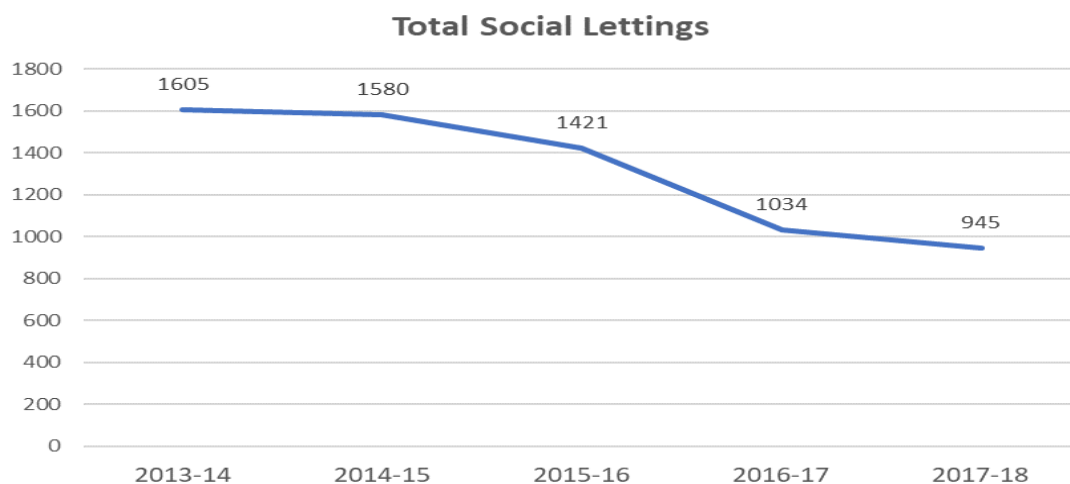
Full details of the Review of Homelessness are contained in Appendix A.

In summary, the key findings are as follows:

- The number of homeless households for whom the Council has accepted a rehousing duty has increased significantly over the past few years. Together with a severe shortage of suitable move-on accommodation, this has resulted in a large increase in the number of homeless households (families and single people) living in temporary accommodation:



- Higher temporary accommodation numbers have resulted in the Council becoming increasingly reliant on expensive nightly-purchased temporary accommodation that is procured from private landlords.
- The increase in the number of homeless households accepted for rehousing is driven by two main causes: the ending of tenancies in the private rented sector and households being excluded by their parents or other members of their own family.
- This in turn is affected by: (a) diminishing affordability in the private rented sector and the structural problems that are making it difficult for households on a low income to access the private rented sector, and (b) the year-on-year decline in general needs social lettings and households' reducing access to affordable housing.



- Although new homes are being built for affordable rent, this new housing supply has not kept pace with the steady decline in social lettings in recent years.
- Violent and non-violent relationship breakdown remains a main cause of homelessness.
- Since the 2011 Census, the increase in households renting privately and the decline in homeownership have continued, both in absolute numbers and proportionately.
- In line with the main causes of homelessness, most of the households approaching the Council when they are threatened with homelessness are living in the private rented sector or living with family or friends.
- The profile of the households approaching the Council for assistance under the homelessness legislation is disproportionately young (compared to all residents of Northampton) and disproportionately likely to be headed by a female main applicant.
- A notable aspect of the demographic profile of approaching households is the prevalence of single main applicants; only 17% had a partner in their household.
- A large minority of main applicants were in work (41%)
- Three quarters of households had no recorded support needs. Structural homelessness appears to be a bigger driver for approaching households than unmet support needs and personal causes of homelessness.
- Mental health problems are the most common support need, even more so among rough sleepers. Most rough sleepers had multiple support needs, including addiction issues.
- Rough sleeping has increased and the Nightshelter continues to receive a steady stream of referrals. Although we acknowledge the limitations of the methodology that the Government has set for conducting Rough Sleeper Counts – and the fact that such Counts provide only a ‘snapshot’ figure that does not include everyone who is sleeping rough – we estimate (based on our six-days-a-week Outreach sessions and the intelligence we receive from local services) that, on any one night, 50 - 60 people sleep rough in Northampton.

<b><i>Rough Sleepers Count</i></b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
<i>Total</i>	19	25	14	13	26	28
<i>% change from previous year</i>	+111%	+32%	-44%	-7%	+100%	+8%

## Strategic objectives

From the findings of the Review of Homelessness and the Workshops held with partners, four strategic objectives were identified for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, each with several sub-objectives and actions.

### **① Creating effective and collaborative partnerships**

A recurring theme during the Strategy development process was the importance of instilling a culture of homelessness prevention within all organisations and not just the statutory services. Everyone agreed that more can and should be done to harness the full potential of all services and organisations in the borough.

Creating effective and collaborative partnerships is essential in order to assist the sharing of information and resources. This way of working will have a positive impact on the other strategic objectives and the implementation of the Action Plan.

### **② Preventing homelessness through early and targeted intervention**

Together with the creation of effective partnerships, early and targeted intervention are regarded as essential in the approach to tackling, preventing and reducing homelessness.

The priority is to enable households and any organisations they are engaging with to take appropriate action to prevent homelessness at an early stage when more options are available. This needs to focus on the main causes of homelessness: the loss of private rented accommodation and relationship breakdown (including family exclusion).

### **③ Reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation and ensuring a sufficient supply of suitable housing for homeless households**

Managing a large number of homeless households in temporary accommodation takes up a lot of time and can have an adverse effect on the amount of time that the Council is able to spend on preventing homelessness and meeting households' housing needs.

As well as the impact that being without settled accommodation has on the lives and life chances of the hundreds of households living in temporary accommodation, the financial impact on the Council's budget of having such a large number of homeless households in expensive form of temporary accommodation requires urgent action.

### **④ Reducing rough sleeping and enabling rough sleepers to thrive**

Rough sleeping has increased and represents the most visible form of homelessness.

The Council is committed to reducing rough sleeping in line with the commitments that the Government has made in its national Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Objectives One and Two – and the corresponding actions in the Action Plan – will contribute positively to the achievement of this objective. However, the Workshops also emphasised the need to create an environment in which rough sleepers can thrive, realize their full potential and escape a cycle of homelessness.

Addressing the high level of support needs among rough sleepers will be an important factor in a) helping people to access accommodation, but also b) to help those currently unable to do that manage better, and access services they need regardless of their housing situation.

## **Overarching principles**

During the Strategy Workshops, stakeholders were keen for certain governing principles to be adopted when the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy is implemented.

Although separate from the strategic objectives, these overarching principles are instrumental to the development of a common approach that is applied to all priorities and, where appropriate, to the way in which local services are delivered.

- **A person-centred approach**

A recognition that everyone is different and has their individual needs and capabilities, and that a ‘one size fits all’ approach may not work for them.

Although it can be useful to analyse data to draw out common trends amongst people needing support and to develop appropriate actions, it is important to remain focused on individual circumstances and preferences and, wherever practicable, involve people in the design and delivery of the support they are receiving.

- **Strengths-based practice**

To avoid a deficit-based approach that focuses wholly on risk and what individuals are lacking, services should focus on individuals’ assets (skills, resources, goals and aspirations) and do everything they can to enable people to help themselves as much as they can and develop their own resources and resilience.

Both principles are consistent with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the accompanying Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018: to take a holistic view of an individual’s circumstances and encourage and support them to resolve their own housing issues as far as they are able.

Our intention is that these principles will be evident in the Strategy and Action Plan and the forums that emerge to develop further ideas and actions.

## Objective One: Creating effective and collaborative partnerships

During the development of the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy, there was strong support for the idea of creating a more collaborative environment in which all services and organisations communicate better with one another, there is a lot less duplication, and effective and collaborative partnerships are able to flourish.

It was agreed that the establishment of a **Single Homelessness Forum** and a **Family Homelessness Forum** – which will meet regularly and will be attended by relevant organisations and interested parties – will encourage collaboration and partnership working.

Regular meetings of the Single Homelessness Forum and Family Homelessness Forum will afford stakeholders the opportunity to exchange ideas and good practice, identify solutions, provide comment, express concerns and make recommendations. They will also provide a platform for the continuous development of Northampton's approach to homelessness.

Although the Single Homelessness Forum and the Family Homelessness Forum have different memberships and points of discussion, they share the same broad objectives:

- Strengthening the relationships between the Council and local services and organisations by creating a platform for the voluntary and community organisations to develop relationships with one another and improve the way in which they co-ordinate their work, independently of statutory services.
- Sharing best practice and striving to improve standards. The forums provide the opportunity for stakeholders to discuss what is and is not working, and to identify common issues and frustrations that can be addressed and resolved together.

The Single Homelessness Forum held its inaugural meeting on 15 October 2019 and is scheduled to meet quarterly from 14 January 2020.

The Family Homelessness Forum is due to hold its inaugural meeting in the spring of 2020.

### **Enabling collaboration: Improving access to services and support**

Everyone attending the Strategy Workshops agreed that the creation of a shared directory of services – containing details of the services available for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Northampton – would improve everyone's understanding of the services, what they offer, what they don't offer and how people can access them.

Everyone agreed, also, that a shared directory of services would provide all organisations with the understanding of one another's services that they will need in order to work more collaboratively and prevent homelessness through early and targeted intervention.

A directory would also improve awareness of services available for specific and vulnerable groups, ensuring these people can access targeted support. A visual flow diagram displaying



the different pathways available would complement the directory, so that agencies can have a visual aid to easily understand the options.

It will be for the two Forums to determine the contents of the directory of services and how the information should be kept up to date.

### **Joint Protocols**

The Single Homelessness Forum and Family Homelessness Forum have attracted the support of Registered Providers, including the Council's arms length management organisation, Northampton Partnership Homes.

The meetings will afford the opportunity for members of the Forums to talk directly with Registered Providers about housing allocations, tenancy sustainment and pre-eviction protocols, and to raise any concerns. It is hoped that this will result in better tenancy sustainment and fewer evictions.

It is anticipated that Adult Social Care and Children's Services will be actively involved in the Single Homelessness Forum and Family Homelessness Forum respectively, and in the drafting or updating of Joint Protocols. A substantial amount of the service improvement work will be undertaken, between meetings, by 'Task and Finish Groups'.

Members of the Forums will also be able to address specific areas of concern affecting homeless households, such as the migration to Universal Credit which is expected to take place during the lifetime of this Strategy. The Duty to Refer will also be a point of discussion, so that members can contribute to the continuous improvement of the referral process.

### **Future Northants**

To ensure that Northampton continues to benefit from the time and effort that is invested in the establishment of effective and collaborative partnerships in the borough, we will continue to work collaboratively and proactively with South Northants Council and Daventry District Council – by inviting them to send representatives to the Forums and producing a joint or merged Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy that will be in place by April 2021.

The Housing and Wellbeing Service at Northampton will also continue its active engagement with programme teams overseeing the transition to Unitary, ensuring that our influence is felt in the reshaping of local government. Particular attention will be paid to services currently provided and commissioned by Northamptonshire County Council to try to maximise the quality and availability of the support available.

Work is already being undertaken by several Councils to develop a 'whole-county' approach to preventing families becoming intentionally homeless, in conjunction with Children First Northamptonshire. We will ensure this work is not lost and carries over as the Councils transition to Unitary and with the creation of a new Children's Trust.

## **Objective Two: Preventing homelessness through early and targeted intervention**

For most people who are threatened with homelessness – and the services that are working with them – the best outcome is achieved by acting quickly to prevent them becoming homeless in the first place.

Early and targeted intervention to prevent homelessness is a primary focus of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which created a new Prevention Duty, owed to all eligible households threatened with homelessness within 56 days.

Acting quickly to prevent homelessness is important for everyone (single people, childless couples and families with children) and, over time, it will help to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation and the number of people sleeping rough.

### **Changes to the Housing Advice & Options Service**

A new staffing structure in the Borough Council has already been agreed and will have been fully implemented by the time this Strategy comes into effect. During the lifetime of the Strategy, regular monitoring will ensure that the Service is meeting its objectives and achieving its potential.

The Housing Advice & Options Service is being re-organised but also expanded, and improved homelessness prevention is an important driver behind the changes and the new roles created. A Homelessness Reduction Manager will oversee the Homelessness Prevention and Homelessness Assessment teams, and these teams will no longer be generic but have specialised roles to work with certain types of cases.

Two Housing Triage Officers will undertake initial enquiries and help guide households along appropriate housing pathways. Dedicated Private Sector Housing Advisers will provide tenants in the private rented sector with the expert advice and assistance they need to avoid homelessness and either remain where they are or find suitable alternative accommodation. A Home Visiting Officer will work proactively with households that have been asked to leave by their friends or family.

### **Creating self-serve Housing Advice**

Enabling people to help themselves as much as they can is another principle of the Homelessness Reduction Act and accompanying Code of Guidance.

There is scope to create more interactive and user-friendly web pages on the Council's website to encourage their use, especially amongst younger people and certain vulnerable group such as care leavers and people leaving prison.

During the Strategy Workshops, stakeholders said that they felt that younger people were often unaware of the assistance that is available, and that action is needed to increase awareness. Creating mobile friendly tools to access this information will help to address this

problem and improve our offering to younger people, who represent a large proportion of those who approach the Housing Advice & Options Service for help.

### **Accessing and sustaining tenancies in the private sector**

In addition to the creation of new dedicated roles in the Housing Advice and Options Service, there are other measures that are required to ensure that we are making the most of Northampton's large private rented sector.

As the loss of private rented accommodation is one of the main causes of homelessness in Northampton and there is not enough social / affordable rented accommodation to meet demand, it is essential that the Council is even more proactive in its engagement with the private rented sector in order to prevent homelessness and meet housing need.

The Landlord Forum has been meeting regularly since 2015, but could play a more pivotal role in building stronger and more effective relationships with a broader range of landlords.

The meetings already provide local landlords with the opportunity to learn about the Council's services and what they can offer to private landlords. The meetings could also be used to provide the Council with an insight into the barriers and difficulties that landlords experience when they let to households on low incomes who are claiming Housing Benefit or Universal Credit to help them to remain in their homes or find suitable alternative accommodation in the private rented sector.

We will raise awareness of the Council's social lettings agency, Guildhall Residential Lettings, and the benefits for landlords of the various landlord packages. These packages will be reviewed at certain points during the life of the Strategy to determine how successful they have been and whether they can be improved.

### **Tackling family exclusions**

One of the main causes of homelessness is the exclusion of the household from the home of a family member or friend. Most often, it will be a young person or family who is asked to leave by their parents.

The new Housing Advice & Options Service will help to address this by ensuring that a Home Visiting Officer is available to work with these households. After completing a holistic assessment of the household's housing needs and financial resources, the Officer will work with the household to address their needs and help them secure suitable settled housing.

Experience has shown that excluders can be open to keeping people in their homes ('Homeless at home') if there is a longer-term plan and a realistic prospect of finding their family member or friend alternative accommodation.

There is also some evidence from the Review of Homelessness that young adults of 18-21 and LGBT+ people are at higher risk of family exclusion. We will work with local partners to ensure vulnerable groups can access targeted support to tackle this increased threat of homelessness.

## **Domestic Abuse and Violence**

Domestic abuse and violent relationship breakdown are a major cause of homelessness.

Where possible and appropriate, we will continue to work with our partners to ensure people are able to remain safely in their homes. We will also take steps to maximise the number of refuge spaces, and improve move-on from the refuges to free up spaces.

We will ensure specific attention is given to the different needs of families and single homeless people and that there are appropriate options for both.

## **Raising Awareness of Homelessness**

To foster a culture of early prevention we want to ensure there is an education and outreach initiative to increase awareness of homelessness among Northampton residents and services. The Single and Family Homelessness Forums will consider the best ways the Council and local partners can inform and engage with the public.

This may involve creating and sharing materials to share or accompany other workstreams. For example, the Single Homelessness Forum is exploring the potential for an alternative giving scheme. This would be an opportunity to connect with and inform the public, as well as tackling myths and stigma around rough sleeping.

The initiative will also specifically try to address the needs of young people, through approaching schools and youth services. We want to ensure that people know about local services and the support that is available or how they can help others.

## **Objective Three: Reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation and ensuring a sufficient supply of suitable accommodation for homeless households**

The sharp rise in the number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation was highlighted as one of the main issues in the Review of Homelessness in Northampton.

Not only has the overall number increased, but there has also been an increase in the length of time that homeless households spend in temporary accommodation.

Although it is hoped that this Strategy will improve the way in which services and organisations work together to prevent homelessness, the speed with which households are able to move out of temporary accommodation will primarily be affected by the amount of social / affordable rented accommodation that is let to homeless households.

### **Increasing the supply of affordable housing**

Increasing the supply of affordable housing is the most effective way of improving homelessness prevention and relief rates. Increased supply will also provide more move-on for households that are already in temporary accommodation and reduce the average length of time that households spend in temporary accommodation.

Our ambition is to continue delivering a Housing Revenue Account housebuilding programme of 150 – 200 new homes a year.

### **Improving move-on into social housing**

As part of our plans for reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation, we have increased the proportion of general needs properties that are allocated to households for whom the Council has accepted a rehousing duty.

We have also identified the need to intervene more proactively in certain cases when a household's move into social / affordable rented housing due to over-running construction or void works. We will work with partners to address these delays on a case by case basis and, where appropriate, we will make alternative offers to speed up their move.

### **Using more suitable and cost-effective temporary accommodation**

The large increase in the number of households living in temporary accommodation has increased the use of expensive nightly-purchased accommodation.

Although the use of self-contained, nightly-purchased temporary accommodation helped to improve the quality of temporary accommodation and reduce the Council's reliance on out of borough accommodation and B&B, there is an urgent need to reduce its use.

One of the options is to increase the number of council homes that are used for temporary accommodation. Other options include making optimum use of 'Homeless at home'. We are

also interested in working with Registered Providers to try to increase the supply of affordable good quality temporary accommodation.

### **Improving the standard of local housing**

The Council's Housing Enforcement Team plays an important role in ensuring the suitability of housing in the private rented sector.

An Additional HMO licensing scheme is due to come into effect in February 2020 and criminal, rogue and irresponsible landlords who knowingly let out substandard, unsafe, unlicensed housing are being targeted through enforcement action.

The Council is committed to making sure that the supply of accommodation in the private rented sector is of a good standard and that all landlords are complying with the law.

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## Objective Four: Reducing rough sleeping and enabling rough sleepers to thrive

In Northampton, rough sleeping remains persistently high. It is unsafe and unacceptable for anyone to be homeless and on the streets. Together with our partners we want to reaffirm our commitment to doing everything we can to reduce, and ultimately eliminate the need for people to sleep rough on the streets of Northampton.

We also want to ensure that whilst people remain street homeless they can access appropriate services that address their immediate needs, and help them overcome the challenges they face in getting off the street.

The Government's target is to have zero rough sleeping nationwide by 2027. This Strategy sets out our plan to work towards this objective in the borough over the next few years.

This Strategy will continue with many of the themes of the Multi-Agency Strategy 2016-19, adapting and enhancing agreed measures wherever possible. The lessons learned from that Strategy and the agreed objectives will inform our approach from 2020.

The development process involved multiple workshops with the express purpose of renewing and improving our partnerships and to learn from the past few years.

### **Single Homelessness Forum**

Developing and implementing the required actions to reduce rough sleeping is an ongoing process that needs continual input and co-operation.

During the Workshops there was widespread support for re-establishing a Single Homelessness Forum that will improve communication, engage stakeholders and provide partners with the opportunity to formulate specific actions.

Some of the actions put forward in the Action Plan are purposefully broad and are not 'SMART', reflecting the need to jointly develop ideas further to make them workable.

The Single Homelessness Forum will be independently chaired and will meet every three months. It will seek to attract a wide membership and to engage with all relevant organisations that can contribute positively to the discussions and improve the outcomes.

Within the Forum there will be Task and Finish Groups assigned specific projects to tackle between meetings. This will ensure the Forum can achieve progress in manageable smaller groups to feedback clear recommendations to the wider members.

The Task and Finish groups will be flexible and different work programmes will emerge over the lifespan of the Strategy, but key concerns will include; street distribution of food and other items, night shelter provision, and alternative giving schemes.

As well as developing and implementing actions, the Forum will be able to explore additional sources of funding, for extra provision or innovative practice delivered by partners. There may be funding opportunities available to voluntary and community

organisations, and the Forum can be a platform to discuss and develop bids, potentially in partnerships.

## **Communities of Practice**

Homeless Link's Partnership Team facilitate Communities of Practice (CoP) to harness the experience, ideas, and energy of people working in homelessness services. It offers the opportunity for more frontline workers to have their say and it ensures that staff working at all levels can contribute to continuous improvement.

Establishing a Community of Practice in Northampton will enhance our work by encouraging frontline workers from different organisations to come together to find creative solutions for the issues they face. These issues will include working with rough sleepers with high and complex needs, such as mental health problems, a history of offending, and drug or alcohol dependency.

Between the Single Homelessness Forum and the CoP, we will ensure that partners are engaged from senior management to the frontline, and that strategic and operational issues are both discussed on a regular basis.

## **Funding for specialised roles and outreach**

The Single Homelessness Pathway Service has already been established through the restructure of the Housing Advice & Options Service.

For 2019/20, Government funding was secured through the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) (£215,400) and Rapid Rehousing Pathway (£265,400) to fund 11 posts:

- Rough Sleepers Co-ordinator
- Housing Transitions Officer (Prisons & Approved Premises)
- 2 x Street Outreach Workers
- Mental Health Outreach Worker
- 4 x Rough Sleeper Navigators
- 2 x Tenancy Sustainment Officers

Our aim is to secure an extension of this funding in order to continue providing a Street Outreach Service six days a week and continue tackling, preventing and reducing rough sleeping in the borough.

During the past year, we have been able to gather detailed information about the specific needs of rough sleepers in the area.

We know, for example, that of the 51 rough sleepers known to the service:

- 38 (75%) have mental health problems
- 34 (67%) have offending behaviour
- 26 (51%) have drug problems
- 22 (43%) have alcohol problems



A large proportion of this cohort of rough sleepers fit into more than one of the above categories, demonstrating the multiple and complex needs of many rough sleepers. A similar pattern of need is shown for people using the Night Shelter.

## **Offending Behaviour**

Given the prevalence of ex-offenders among rough sleepers, it is important to improve work in this area. Through our Single Homelessness Pathway service and the members of the Forum we will review the specific support available and consider how it can be improved.

Increasing access to employment, volunteering, and training schemes will be a key consideration, as well as peer support. Several local partners already offer assistance in these areas but there is scope to expand and improve provision.

## **Shared working**

As well as expressing an interest in establishing a shared directory of local services, the stakeholders who attended the Strategy Workshops were very keen to explore the merits and feasibility of developing shared assessment forms and processes. Subject to client consent, there is scope to share more information and assessments and save time.

We have established a multi-agency Tenancy Sustainment Panel that meets weekly to discuss former rough sleepers who are living in supported housing but are at risk of becoming homeless again due to rent arrears, anti-social behaviour or their failure to comply with the other tenancy / licence conditions.

Shared working through the Tenancy Sustainment Panel will enable us to identify these problems and to intervene early to prevent homelessness.

## **Peer support**

The stakeholders who attended the Strategy Workshops felt that existing and former rough sleepers – and other people who have lived experience of homelessness – remain a largely untapped resource. Many local services already have staff and volunteers with lived experience of homelessness, but we want to make even better use of their knowledge and pathways out of rough sleeping.

By increasing integrated peer support within existing services, rough sleepers will be able to get help from people who know their circumstances and can share what worked in their own lives.

There is an opportunity to increase engagement with services and their impact by getting the input of people with lived experience of homelessness. The Single Homelessness Forum will be able to consider how best to enhance this further across services, and the challenges and risks posed.

## **Increasing provision for women**

Specific support and accommodation for women was a gap in provision that was highlighted in feedback in the Strategy Workshops. For instance, the Nightshelter currently only provides bed spaces for men. Therefore, we want to address this and develop more services designed specifically to meet the needs of women.

A winter shelter for women will be open in Northampton from December 2019 until the end of March 2020, providing bed spaces for up to 11 women. In the longer term, we would like to set up a Women's Shared Housing Project that would be operated by NAASH. Other organisations -such as the Hope Centre- have also expressed an interest in developing this type of provision.

## **Specific groups**

Evidence gathered through the Review of Homelessness raised the issue of certain hard to reach groups, including up to 25 Eastern Europeans who sleep in makeshift shelters or tent encampments on the outskirts of Northampton. The profile of rough sleepers from annual Counts also shows a consistent sizeable minority of EU nationals sleeping rough. They can face additional obstacles such as a language barrier or having no recourse to public funds.

The new Single Homelessness Pathway Service already includes a Rough Sleeper Navigator who speaks Latvian, Lithuanian and Russian. The Hope Centre is working with specialist Polish language providers to offer help with applications for settled status and other support. This has helped us to build relationships and gain a better understanding of these groups. We want to ensure this capability continues and that we are always able to engage effectively with all rough sleepers, and they are able to access the required support and understand their options.

In addition to these groups, we will continuously gather information through street services to discover if other rough sleepers or those at risk of rough sleeping require specific support or face greater difficulties. For example, young people, ethnic minorities, or LGBT+ people. Where needed, Task and Finish Groups within the Forum will be formed to consider the needs of these groups, and feedback required actions.

## **Day Centres and Provision**

Feedback from workshops highlighted the role of day centres, and the day activities and services available to rough sleepers both through these centres and elsewhere in the town. We know that how people spend their days can have a big impact of how they manage at the Night Shelter, or indeed any settled accommodation they can eventually access.

We will ensure adequate day provision continues to help rough sleepers manage better on the streets, and wherever possible prepares people to sustain suitable accommodation. For entrenched rough sleepers, for whom leaving the streets may be more difficult, day activities and services can make a big difference to their lives.

We acknowledge that for certain rough sleepers the pathway to settled accommodation can be long and challenging. Sleeping rough should not prevent people getting access to appropriate provision for their health, including addiction issues, or any other needs they have.

Given the high levels of dependency to alcohol or drugs, and mental health problems, a large part of this provision will focus on treatment services. Our approach to addiction and mental health treatment services will be in two parts:

1. Maximising the availability of treatment services by working with partners and Future Northants to influence future commissioning, as well as exploring any funding opportunities.
2. Maximising engagement with available services by supporting rough sleepers. The outreach service already has a mental health worker to help link people with appropriate treatment. We aim to build on this, and through outreach and day centres provide a suitable platform for people to get the help they need.

Another aspect of provision that can be developed further is support for accessing training and employment. This is an important part of helping rough sleepers develop the capability to function in settled accommodation and be able to sustain a life off the streets.

This may include access to a computer and 1-1 assistance through a day centre, and other activities such as skills workshops and interview training. The Single Homelessness Forum will consider how best to improve the help available, and where it can be delivered.

### **Better Use of Supported Housing**

We want to ensure there is a pre- eviction protocol in place for supported housing in addition to general needs, and it is adhered to by Registered Providers. The Tenancy Sustainment Panel will be able to monitor this and make sure every opportunity is taken to help people keep their accommodation.

Equally, for those able to live independently, we recognise the need to improve move-on from supported housing. Currently, some people who may be able to move on from supported housing are spending too long there due to a lack of move on options. This leads to fewer vacancies for those in higher need.

The Single Homelessness Forum will be tasked with considering how to improve the flow through supported housing, improving access for current rough sleepers and other single homeless.

### **Strengths-based practice**

We want to explore commissioning joint training in trauma informed care, motivational interviewing and developing strengths-based practice. As this approach would be most effective if practiced by all services throughout Northampton, this will involve a shared commitment and the training of a number of different organisations. How this can be delivered will be discussed by the Single Homelessness Forum.

## Action Plan 2020

<b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE ONE: Creating effective and collaborative partnerships</b>				
<b>Action</b>	<b>Target and Outcomes</b>	<b>Lead(s)</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
<b>1.1. Set up a Family Homelessness Forum</b>	Attract representatives from a range of organisations (including Social Care, Registered Providers, private landlords and voluntary and community sector organisations) and promote best practice and collaborative working through better communication.	Housing Advice and Options Manager -NBC	Members of the Family Homelessness Forum	(Meets quarterly)  First meeting to be held by April 2020.
<b>1.2. Invite 'Future West Northants' local authorities to participate in the Single Homelessness Forum and the Family Homelessness Forum</b>	Assist the smooth transition to the new unitary authority by involving Daventry District Council, South Northants Council and Northamptonshire County Council in the work of the Forums.	Housing Advice and Options Manager – NBC	Daventry DC, South Northants Council and Northamptonshire County Council	June 2020
<b>1.3. Evaluate the effectiveness of Northampton's 'Duty to Refer' arrangements, taking into account the feedback obtained from the Single Homelessness Forum and the Family Homelessness Forum</b>	Ensure that the 'Duty to Refer' arrangements are fit for purpose and that all referrals are responded to by the end of the next working day. Amend the arrangements after taking into account the feedback from the Forums.	Homelessness Reduction Manager – NBC  Chairs of the Single Homelessness Forum and Family Homelessness Forum	Single Homelessness Forum and Family Homelessness Forum	April 2020

<p><b>1.4. Produce an online directory of local services</b></p>	<p>Agree on what is required in relation to the online directory / database (and who will maintain and edit it) and consider potential platforms to use. Create complementary visual flow diagrams for different pathways.</p> <p>Collect, validate, approve and publish the information about local services.</p>	<p>Rough Sleepers Co-ordinator – NBC</p> <p>Homelessness Reduction Manager – NBC</p>	<p>Single Homelessness Forum and Family Homelessness Forum</p>	<p>June 2020</p>
<p><b>1.5. Ensure Northamptonshire’s Housing Protocol for Care Leavers is kept up-to-date and that all parties that have signed up to it are complying with it</b></p>	<p>Review (and amend, as appropriate) the Care Leavers   Protocol and put in place appropriate monitoring arrangements to ensure that all parties are complying with it.</p>	<p>Homelessness Reduction Manager – NBC</p> <p>Single Homelessness Pathway Manager – NBC</p>	<p>Leaving Care Team</p> <p>Single Homelessness Forum</p>	<p>June 2020</p>
<p><b>1.6. Ensure Northamptonshire’s Pre-Eviction Protocol is kept up-to-date and all of the largest Registered Providers in the borough have signed up to it and are complying with it.</b></p>	<p>Review the Pre-Eviction Protocol and put in place appropriate monitoring arrangements to ensure that Registered Providers are complying with it.</p> <p>Protocols should also extend to supported housing in addition to general needs.</p>	<p>Homelessness Reduction Manager – NBC</p>	<p>Registered Providers</p>	<p>September 2020</p>
<p><b>1.7. Ensure Northamptonshire’s Housing Protocol for Homeless 16 &amp; 17 Year Olds is kept up-to-date and that all parties that have signed up to it are complying with it</b></p>	<p>Review (and amend, as appropriate) the Homeless 16 &amp; 17 Year Olds Protocol and put in place appropriate monitoring arrangements to ensure that all parties are complying with it.</p>	<p>Homelessness Assessment Team Leader – NBC</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Team</p>	<p>Children First Northamptonshire</p> <p>Single Homelessness Forum</p>	<p>September 2020</p>

		Leaders – NBC		
<b>1.8. Review the impact of the managed migration of Housing Benefit claimants to Universal Credit</b>	Work with Registered Providers (through the Single Homelessness Forum and the Family Homelessness Forum) to assess ongoing migration to Universal Credit and explore options for mitigating any negative outcomes. Any agreed steps will be added to future versions of the Action Plan.	Housing Benefit Manager-NBC  Homelessness Reduction Manager - NBC	Family Homelessness Forum	Ongoing – until 2023
<b>1.9. Actively engage with Future Northants to influence the reshaping of homelessness services in West Northants</b>	To maximise the quality and availability of services for homeless households, including provision of refuges and mental health, drug and alcohol services.	Head of Housing and Wellbeing – NBC	Daventry DC, South Northants Council and Northamptonshire County Council  Single Homelessness Forum and Family Homelessness Forum	Ongoing
<b>1.10. Work with Daventry DC, South Northants Council and key stakeholders to develop, consult on and approve a West Northamptonshire Homelessness &amp; Rough Sleeping Strategy by 1 April 2021</b>	To ensure that a new Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy is in place when West Northamptonshire Council comes into effect on 1 April 2021.	Housing Advice and Options Manager – NBC	Daventry DC and South Northants Council  Single Homelessness Forum and Family Homelessness	April 2021

			Forum	
<b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE TWO: Preventing homelessness through early and targeted intervention</b>				
<b>Action</b>	<b>Target and Outcomes</b>	<b>Lead(s)</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
<b>2.1 Implement the restructure of the Housing Advice &amp; Options Service</b>	<p>Complete the recruitment and induction of all staff, ensuring that a personal development plan is produced for all staff and managers who are taking on a new or substantially different role.</p> <p>Ensure that, with the provision of additional management capacity, the restructure improves performance, productivity and outcome.</p>	<p>Head of Housing &amp; Wellbeing – NBC</p> <p>Housing Advice and Options Manager – NBC</p>	N/A	April 2020
<b>2.2 Improve the housing and homelessness pages on the Council’s website, and provide customers with comprehensive and interactive advice in line with Homelessness Code of</b>	<p>Increase awareness and use of online homelessness advice, particularly for young people, and promote a self-serve approach to housing issues.</p> <p>Receive positive feedback from MHCLG</p>	<p>Homelessness Reduction Manager – NBC</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Team</p>	<p>Single Homelessness Forum and Family Homelessness Forum</p> <p>People with lived</p>	June 2020

<b>Guidance 2018</b>	about the quality of advice offered.	Leaders -NBC	experience of homelessness	
<b>2.3 Make optimum use of H-CLIC homelessness data collection and reporting to identify and evaluate common trends and causes</b>	<p>Provide the Single Homelessness Forum and Family Homelessness Forum with regular reports on homelessness trends and the main causes of homelessness.</p> <p>Invite the Single Homelessness Forum and Family Homelessness Forum to provide the Council with additional data that can then be used to provide a fuller picture of the homelessness situation in Northampton.</p>	<p>Homelessness Prevention Team Leaders – NBC</p> <p>Homelessness Assessment Team Leader – NBC</p> <p>Single Homelessness Pathway Manager – NBC</p>	Single Homelessness Forum and Family Homelessness Forum	September 2020 – then ongoing periodically
<b>2.4 Maximise private landlords' take-up of the management and lettings options offered to private landlords by the social lettings agency</b>	Publicise and promote the options and financial incentives available in order to encourage private landlords to let their housing to households nominated by the Council and, in doing so, enable the Council to prevent homelessness and discharge its homelessness duty.	<p>Social Lettings Agency Manager - NBC</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Team Leaders - NBC</p>	Private landlords Landlord Forum	April 2020
<b>2.5 Review and evaluate the success of the management and lettings options offered to private landlords by the social lettings agency</b>	Determine which options and incentives are most effective in encouraging private landlords to let their housing to households that are nominated by the social lettings agency.	<p>Social Lettings Agency Manager - NBC</p> <p>Homelessness</p>	Landlord Forum Family Homelessness Forum	September 2020



		Prevention Team Leaders – NBC		
<b>2.6 Ensure that the Home Visiting Officer visits every household that is threatened with homelessness by family exclusion</b>	Identify and target cases with family relationship breakdown and exclusion in order to make the most of the opportunities to prevent homelessness.	Homelessness Prevention Team Leaders – NBC	Family Homelessness Forum	Ongoing
<b>2.7 Consider the merits and feasibility of introducing a joint mediation procedure for households whose threatened homelessness is due to the breakdown in family relationships</b>	Evaluate the impact that the joint mediation procedure has had on homelessness prevention in South Northants, identify best practice and assess the merits and feasibility of introducing such a scheme in Northampton.	Homelessness Prevention Team Leaders - NBC	Family Homelessness Forum	October 2020
<b>2.8 Identify the main barriers to timely move-on from refuges and propose appropriate solutions</b>	Recommend solutions to the lack of suitable and timely move on from refuges in order to ‘free up’ space for other households that are in urgent need of a safe place to stay.	Homelessness Prevention Team Leaders-NBC	Family Homelessness Forum	September 2020
<b>2.9 Develop educational/outreach initiative for single and family homelessness.</b>	To raise awareness of homelessness among residents, businesses and local services. Including where they can access help, and how they can best help themselves and others.	Homelessness Reduction Manager – NBC	Single and Family Homelessness Forums	September 2020
<b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE THREE: Reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation and ensuring a sufficient supply of suitable accommodation for homeless households</b>				

Action	Target and Outcomes	Lead(s)	Partners	Target Date
<b>3.1 Ensure that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) housebuilding programme delivers at least 150 new council homes a year</b>	Build at least 150 new affordable rented council homes each year from 2019/20.	Head of Housing & Wellbeing - NBC	Northampton Partnership Homes	Ongoing
<b>3.2 Implement the 14 actions in the Temporary Accommodation Action Plan (April 2019)</b>	Develop procedure of reviewing all cases where move-on from temporary accommodation to social housing nomination has been delayed by 4 weeks.	Housing Advice and Options Manager – NBC Social Lettings Agency Manager – NBC Temporary Accommodation Team Leader – NBC	Private landlords, Registered Providers and Northampton Partnership Homes	Ongoing
<b>3.3 Include people with lived experience in the design and delivery of homelessness services</b>	Improve service user engagement and the impact of homelessness services (including the action required to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation) by involving people with lived experience of homelessness in the design of services.	Homelessness Prevention Team Leaders – NBC Homelessness Assessment Team Leader – NBC Temporary Accommodation Team Leader - NBC	Family Homelessness Forum	June 2021

<b>3.4 Implement the Additional HMO licensing scheme</b>	Improve standards in the private rented sector and maximise the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) that are licensed.	Private Sector Housing Manager - NBC  Housing Enforcement Manager – NBC	Landlord Forum, DASH, University of Northampton, Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service and the Northampton Student Landlord Network	1 February 2020 for five years
<b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE FOUR: Reducing rough sleeping and enabling rough sleepers to thrive</b>				
<b>Action</b>	<b>Target and Outcomes</b>	<b>Lead(s)</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
<b>4.1 Hold regular meetings of the Single homelessness Forum</b>	Attract representatives from a range of organisations (including the churches and voluntary and community sector organisations) and promote best practice and collaborative working through better communication.	Chair of the Single Homelessness Forum  Single Homelessness Pathway Manager – NBC	NBC, Northampton Hope Centre, Churches Together in Northampton and members of the Single Homelessness Forum	(Meets Quarterly)  Ongoing
<b>4.2 Explore the options for introducing ‘shared’ single homelessness assessment forms and processes</b>	Assess the merits and feasibility of introducing a single assessment process to collect information about service users’ circumstance which can then be shared (with the person’s expressed consent) with other organisations when needed.	Single Homelessness Pathway Manager – NBC	Single Homelessness Forum	Dec 2020

<p><b>4.3 Identify the main barriers to timely move-on from Oasis House, other hostels, and supported housing, and propose appropriate solutions</b></p>	<p>Recommend solutions to the lack of suitable and timely move on from Oasis House and supported housing in order to 'free up' space for other homeless people in urgent need of a place to stay.</p>	<p>Single Homelessness Pathway Manager – NBC</p>	<p>Single Homelessness Forum</p>	<p>June 2020</p>
<p><b>4.4 Develop an evidence-based strategy for future night shelter provision in Northampton, together and agree on the principles we will apply in relation to sustainability, safeguarding and governance.</b></p>	<p>Agree on the scale and type of nightshelter provision that is needed in Northampton – and a set of priorities and principles that everyone will adhere to in relation to new and existing provision.</p> <p>This evidence-based strategy will be used to support future funding bids.</p>	<p>Head of Housing &amp; Wellbeing – NBC</p> <p>Single Homelessness Pathway Manager – NBC</p>	<p>Northampton Hope Centre, Churches Together in Northampton and members of the Single Homelessness Forum</p>	<p>April 2020</p>
<p><b>4.5 Review and evaluate the role and effectiveness of Northampton's Emergency Nightshelter in tackling, preventing and reducing rough sleeping in Northampton</b></p>	<p>Publish an evidence-based appraisal (including the lessons learned) of the role and effectiveness of the Shelter in helping to tackle, prevent and reduce rough sleeping in Northampton.</p>	<p>Head of Housing &amp; Wellbeing – NBC</p> <p>Nightshelter Co-ordinator - NBC</p>	<p>Northampton Hope Centre, Churches Together in Northampton and members of the Single Homelessness Forum</p>	<p>June 2020</p>

<p><b>4.6 Provide dedicated housing and support specifically for women</b></p>	<p>Provide a shared house that is designed to meet the specific needs of women who are sleeping rough.</p>	<p>Single Homelessness Pathway Manager – NBC</p>	<p>NAASH Single Homelessness Forum</p>	<p>June 2020</p>
<p><b>4.7 Deliver joint training in trauma informed care, motivational interviewing and strengths-based practice</b></p>	<p>Provide frontline staff with skills and understanding to deliver strengths-based practice and adopt a consistent, person-centred approach.</p>	<p>Single Homelessness Pathway Manager</p>	<p>Single Homelessness Forum</p>	<p>December 2020</p>
<p><b>4.8 Include people with lived experience in the design and delivery of rough sleeper services</b></p>	<p>Improve service user engagement and the impact of rough sleeping services by involving people with lived experience of homelessness in the design of services.</p>	<p>Single Homelessness Pathway Manager</p>	<p>Single Homelessness Forum</p>	<p>October 2020</p>
<p><b>4.9 Establish a Community of Practice that meets quarterly</b></p>	<p>Provide frontline staff who are working in homelessness services with the opportunity to share ideas, information and good practice, and work together to solve problems and improve services.</p>	<p>Single Homelessness Pathway Manager – NBC</p>	<p>Homeless Link</p>	<p>(Meets Quarterly) From April 2020</p>
<p><b>4.10 Secure continuation funding from MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Initiative to support the work that is already being done to tackle, prevent and reduce rough sleeping in Northampton</b></p>	<p>Government funding secured to enable Northampton to continue employing the additional staffing (recruited in 2019/20) throughout 2020/21, and to fund some new rough sleeping services.</p>	<p>Head of Housing &amp; Wellbeing – NBC Single Homelessness Pathway</p>	<p>Single Homelessness Forum</p>	<p>April 2020</p>

		Manager – NBC		
<b>4.11 Review and improve provision of food and other donations on the street</b>	Task and finish group will make recommendations for best practice and effective systems	Hope Centre/ Single Homelessness Pathway Manager	Single Homelessness Forum	June 2020
<b>4.12 Evaluate help available for young people (under 25) and make recommendations for improvement</b>	A Task and Finish Group will consider how to address the needs of young single homeless people, giving specific actions for improvement.	Single Homelessness Pathway Manager	Single Homelessness Forum	October 2020
<b>4.13 Evaluate specific support available for ex-offenders and make recommendations for improvement</b>	A Task and Finish Group will consider how to address the needs of ex-offenders on the streets, giving specific actions for improvement.	Single Homelessness Pathway Manager	Single Homelessness Forum	October 2020
<b>4.14 Evaluate move on from supported housing and make recommendations for improvement</b>	A Task and Finish Group in the Forum will be tasked with evaluating problems with move on. To pinpoint what is causing people to get stuck in supported accommodation and how to reduce this.	Single Homelessness Pathway Manager	Single Homelessness Forum	October 2020