

Homeless & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2024

Summary: The Homeless Act 2002 requires all Local Authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their area and publish a Homelessness Strategy based on its findings every 5 years.

Options considered: 1. Do nothing. This option was discounted as the Act requires a review is carried out and published every 5 years
2. Review the homelessness within the area. This option was adopted as it ensures the Council carries out its duties as per the Homeless Act 2002.

Conclusions: A review of homelessness has been undertaken and the key findings from the review of the current services have identified 5 Aims to carry forward to improve and enhance the service.

Recommendations: **Cabinet adopt the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024**

Reasons for Recommendations: To ensure that the Councils Homelessness Strategy is reviewed and published as determined by the Homeless Act 2002.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS AS REQUIRED BY LAW

(Papers relied on to write the report, which do not contain exempt information and which are not published elsewhere)

National Drivers:
Homeless Act 2002 & The Homelessness Code of Guidance
Localism Act (2011)
Making Every Contact Count (2012)
The Welfare Reform Act (2012)
The Deregulation Act (2015)
The Care Act (2014)
Homelessness Reduction Act (2017)
Rough Sleeping Strategy August (2018)
Local Policies:
Housing Strategy
Tenancy Strategy
Empty Homes Policy
Housing Allocation Scheme

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 Section 1(1) requires all Local Authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their area and publish a Homelessness Strategy based upon the findings of the review every 5 years. North Norfolk District Council have undertaken reviews in 2003, 2008, 2014 & the recent review 2019
- 1.2 The Strategy covers homelessness, homelessness prevention and rough sleeping and seeks to deliver an enhanced housing options service, responds to the Acts of Parliament and statutory guidance that sets out the Governments intentions for protecting homeless people, preventing homelessness and ending rough sleeping.
- 1.3 In formulating the strategy, a housing authority will need to consider the necessary levels of activity required to achieve the aims set out in the paragraph below and sufficiency of the resources available to them as revealed by the review under Section 3(1) of the 2002 Act a homeless strategy means a strategy to:
 - a) Identifying action that can be taken to prevent homeless in the district;
 - b) Providing suitable services and accommodation for people who are, or may become homeless; and
 - c) Supporting people who are homeless or potentially homeless and those who were formally homeless and need support, to prevent them becoming homeless again.
- 1.5 The Strategy must cover:
 - 1) Advice and Information
 - 2) Early Identification
 - 3) Pre-Crisis Intervention
 - 4) Preventing Recurring Homelessness
 - 5) Partnership arrangements

2. Key Findings

- 2.1 With continuing demands and challenges and following recent changes to Welfare Reform and the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 the council has worked extremely hard to ensure that the customer has been the main focus whilst striving to improve the service and implement the Council's aspirations and aims.
- 2.2 Historically, homelessness within North Norfolk had been relatively low with 90 households being accepted in 2013/14 and 206 homeless decisions being made in 2014/15 compared to 201 in 2003/04. Evidence now shows that since 2013/14 there has been a steady increase of customers presenting to the authority as homeless or at risk of being homeless, this is despite the council putting in place prevention measures and offering early advice to individuals that approach the service.
- 2.3 At the end of financial year 17/18 the authority made decisions on 191 homelessness applications, accepted duties to house 124 and prevented 66 clients from being homeless.

- 2.4 Since the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 evidence shows the authority is now working with individual customers for a longer period of time and the nature of these cases is increasingly becoming more complex with ongoing support being provided by the team. Within the county of Norfolk there has been a reduction of support services and this is now impacting on the team. During financial year 2018/2019 the team assessed the following cases:

Initial Assessment	430
Assessed as owned a duty	421
Prevention Duty owned	279
Relief Duty owned	142
Not Homeless	9

- 2.5 The main reason for customers seeking assistances with homelessness has remained consistent over the years with the main reasons being as follows:
- 123 households in 2018/19 were given notice by their landlord
 - 89 households were under threat of losing their social housing tenancy
 - 73 families/friends being unable to accommodate

- 2.6 In the 2011 census the population of North Norfolk was 101,499 and is made Approximately 52% females and 48% males. The average age of people in North Norfolk is 47, while the median age is higher at 5.

Most clients presenting to the authority are in the 25-44 age group with 75+ age group being negligible.

- 2.7 Within the Housing Reduction Act 2017 there is now a requirement to capture around data around support needs of clients where the authority has accepted duties under the Prevention & Relief duty.

3. Successes from the last Strategy

- 3.1 This Strategy will continue to build on the success of the previous Homeless Strategy 2014 – 2019 which identified 5 key aspirations being:

- Work with registered providers
- Improve Housing Advice/Options/Solutions
- Not to place any families in Bed & Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and for no longer than 6 weeks and provide suitable temporary accommodation
- Aspiration to deliver the challenge set to deliver 'A Gold Standard Service'
- Deliver Customer focused Service Standards

- 3.2 Details of these success can be shown in Appendix 1 with the main document

4. Key Objectives for North Norfolk District Council in Preventing Homeless & Rough Sleeping 2019 – 2024

- 4.1 The review of homeless within the district has identified that there have been A significant number of achievements. However, to ensure the service continues to provide an excellent level of service we need to ensure that the council continues to challenge service delivery. Taking this on board there are

some key areas of work that have been identified to improve service delivery but also to continue with the strong working relationship we have with both statutory and voluntary agencies.

4.2 Early intervention and Prevention of Homelessness

To achieve our aim, we will:

- Ensure Housing Options services continue to be accessible offering a range of housing options to meet individuals housing and support needs.
- Produce guidance for officers in the allocation of financial assistances in preventing homelessness.
- Continue to Strengthen partnership working around the prevention of homelessness with Registered Providers, Norfolk Local Authorities and Norfolk County Council.
- To produce a Service Level Agreement with Registered Provides that supports the work the teams do in proactively prevent homelessness due to rent arrears.
- Support & work in partnership with local Registered Providers to sign up-to meet the 9 Commitments of “Homes for Cathy” to relieve Homelessness.
- To keep under review, the joint working Protocols with Norfolk County Council for 16/17 year olds and Intentionally Homeless families.
- Continue to work with the Early Help Hub to intervene at the earliest opportunity to prevent people from becoming homeless.
- Provide a seamless service with a single named Housing Options Officer working with the applicant from initial interview to closure.
- To work with the Norfolk Integrated Housing and Community Support Service led by Together to support people with poor mental health.
- To work with the Mental Health Trust in production of a county wide Mental Health Discharge and Homelessness Prevention Protocol.
- To work with the Local Prison to produce a county wide Prison Release and Homelessness Prevention Protocol.

4.3 Increase Access to Good Quality Accommodation in the Private Rented Sector

To achieve our aim, we will:

- Pilot a Private Rented Sector Officer to work with landlords to provide a range of suitable options for homeless clients this could include:
 - Private Sector Leasing
 - Long term lets
 - Short term lets
- Pilot Tenancy Sustainment Officer – the post holder will give additional reassurance to private landlords to encourage them to take clients that have been rough sleeping or have a history of rough sleeping to enable the tenant to sustain long term tenancies.
- Pursue the formation of a trusted landlord with the intention of
 - acquiring a suitable mix of long term lets to meet identified need.

4.3 Working with local partners to provide solutions which prevent homelessness

To achieve our aim, we will:

- Work with local partners to ensure the wider needs of all households are considered when developing Housing Support plans and ensure that support is provided to access and sustain accommodation
- Work with the current refuge provider 'Leeway' to improve move on plans for domestic abuse victims leaving refuges.
- Promote more joined up working with other registered providers, health, prison and probation services to prevent homelessness on discharge where appropriate
- Work closely with partners in the criminal justice sector through Multi-Agency Risk Assessment conference (MARAC) and multi-agency public protection arrangement (MAPPA) arrangement to provide appropriate support and advise.
- Continue to work closely with Norfolk County Council in ensuring the provision of hostels and supporting housing provision for people who have been homeless or who are at risk of being homeless remains within North Norfolk. Currently these services are provided by Notting Hill Genesis for adults and young people being The Benjamin Foundation & Empanda.

4.4 Reduce the incidence of Rough Sleeping in the District

To achieve this the authority will:

- Employ Rough a Sleeper Co-Ordinator
- Employ a Complex Health Worker
- Employ a Tenancy Sustainment Officer
- Spot Purchase Accommodation for identified rough sleepers to enable assessment of needs to be carried out
- Provide tenancy starter packs once rough sleeper has secured accommodation
- Offer Tenancy Training courses
- Adopt a 'No Second Night Out Model' or an effective local alternative

4.5 To Reduce the use of temporary accommodation for households accepted as homeless and where temporary accommodation has to be used to ensure that it is a reasonable standard and in a location which enables the household to maintain stability.

To achieve our aim, we will:

- To keep under review, the available temporary accommodation units to ensure that we have a suitable supply of good quality temporary accommodation that can be used to meet the needs of all households that approach the authority
- Support the purchase and supply of suitable properties across the district to be used as temporary accommodation
- Produce a Temporary Accommodation Procedure along with risk assessment, suitability requirement and out of area protocol.

- To actively reduce the need for temporary accommodation by working with customers in a more proactive way to prevent or relieve homelessness

5 Consultation

5.1 The principles of the Homelessness Strategy was discussed at Overview & Scrutiny, to which they made two recommendations being:

1. To recommend that costings and resource implications be included in the Strategy.
2. To recommend that costings and resource implications be included in the Strategy.

The document was available on the council's website and key partners were email and through a recent article within the EDP this highlighted that the document was out to consultation.

5.2 Four responses were received to the consultation; these were from:

Robert Cooper, Head of Integrated Commissioning Norfolk County Council/Norwich CCG

Maureen Begley, Commissioning Programme Manager, Adult Social Care, Norfolk County Council

Katie Docherty, Housing Manager, Broadland Housing Association

Linda Owen member of the public

5.3 Please find attached copies of the emails received which shows the comments made, these suggestions have been were appropriate built into the body of the Strategy.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The Homeless Act 2002 requires all Local Authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their area and publish a Homelessness Strategy based on its findings every 5 years.

The proposed Homelessness Strategy 2019-2024 has been subject to wide consultation and now requires adoption by the Council. Once adopted the new Strategy will form the basis of delivering the key objectives that have been highlighted within the strategy. It will also ensure that the service the customer receives is both informative and relevant to their individual circumstances.

7 Implications and Risks

Once the Homeless Strategy has been adopted by full Council, the implementation of the strategy will commence.

8 Financial Implications and Risks

There are no related costs to the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy

9 Sustainability

There are no specific sustainability issues related to the Homelessness Strategy

10 Equality and Diversity

An equality impact assessment has been carried out within the Allocation Scheme

11 Section 17 Crime and Disorder considerations

There are no specific Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations related to the Homelessness Strategy. The Strategy does link with the Allocations Scheme which does allow us to state that where an applicant has been guilty of behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant we can disqualify them so they are unable to join the housing register until such a time as it can be shown that they would be suitable to be a tenant.