

**Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy**

**2020-2025**

**Front cover image to follow**

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## Foreword

Welcome to Newcastle-under-Lyme's fifth Homelessness Strategy, which sets out how we, along with our partners intend to meet its priorities and future actions for preventing and tackling homelessness over the next five years. It aligns with our Corporate Plan and all of its corporate objectives.

Our new strategy aims to continue the work of preventing people from becoming homeless and supporting those who are faced with homelessness issues; we have recognised the increasing issue of rough sleeping and have identified actions to reduce it.

I am very pleased to endorse this strategy, knowing that the delivery of its aims will enable us to deliver good services which will impact positively on many people's lives.

I would like to extend my thanks to all our partners who have contributed to this document.

Cllr Waring

## Introduction

We published our last Homelessness Strategy in 2016 and this strategy will build upon the achievements we made in our last strategy. Under the Homelessness Act 2002, we have a statutory duty to review and refresh our Homelessness Strategy every five years. This strategy sets out the Council's priorities for the development of its homelessness strategy for the period of 2020 to 2025.

This strategy is informed by an updated Homelessness Review which sets out the picture of homelessness in Newcastle. Consultation on the development of the Strategy has run through 2019 and involved partner agencies, in particular our Homelessness Forum.

Our overall vision for our strategy is;

*'To ensure that homeless levels in the borough remain as low as possible through prevention and to provide in partnership effective and quality services to those affected by homelessness'.*

The strategy has four priorities and for each priority our main considerations are set out along with key actions for ourselves and partners. The actions will be set out in more detail in a separate action plan.

This strategy covers the borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme. Some of our services are delivered across local authority boundaries and even on a sub-regional basis. This is due to the various partnership projects we are involved in where we recognise the benefits and efficiencies of working together and the funding opportunities that have been made available to us.

## Corporate Context

This strategy has been developed to ensure that appropriate links have been made to other relevant strategies and action plans, especially the Housing Strategy which is the overarching document for our service and key to the wider housing issues and actions which impact on homelessness.

This strategy aligns and has key commitments with the Council Plan and all four of its priorities:

- Local Services that Work for Local People
- Growing our People and Places
- Healthy, Active and Safe Borough

- A Town Centre for All

## Key facts

In addition to wider social and economic challenges that have contributed to homelessness and rough sleeping issues in the Borough, there are also a range of factors that can lead to homelessness which have been identified from the findings of our Homelessness Review.

Headline data from review,

- The new statutory duties placed upon us by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 mean more people qualify for assistance than under the previous legislation.
- In addition to the national main causes of homelessness and loss of last settled home, Domestic Abuse, non-violent relationship breakdown and landlords wishing to sell or re-let their private rented tenancies are regular reasons why households in Newcastle are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- The majority of priority need homeless households are those with dependent children, mental illness or disability and Domestic Violence.
- Households aged between 18 and 44 are the most common group owed a prevention or relief duty in the Borough.
- Homelessness is not just a housing issue, many people faced with or at risk of homelessness have complex needs beyond the need for housing.
- There has been a significant increase in households placed in temporary accommodation which places a strain on our resources.
- The number of individuals who sleep rough in Newcastle remain in single figures per night and are relatively comparative to previous years. The 2019 annual rough sleeping estimate was 6 (subject to final Homelessness link verification). In 2018 the annual rough sleeping estimate was 4 and 5 in 2017.

## The Challenges

# WELFARE REFORM IMPACTS



Concerns about welfare reform have highlighted that claimants are having increasing financial problems affecting their ability to secure and maintain accommodation.

# AFFORDABILITY

Property Prices remain high resulting in difficulties for households being able to afford suitable accommodation.



# HOUSING SUPPLY

Suitable accommodation remains limited resulting in longer waiting time for properties.



# FUNDING UNCERTAINTY

Funding from government for Homelessness prevention services are time limited, often only guaranteed for one or two years.

## Strategic Priority 1

### Preventing Homelessness

The Housing (Homeless persons) Act 1977, Housing Act 1996 and the Homeless Act 2002 placed statutory duties on local housing authorities to prevent and tackle homelessness in their areas.

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 has placed a legal duty on councils to offer more support to a wider range of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and to intervene earlier. The HRA has not made any changes to the main duty but it puts in some additional steps in place with the aim of improving the prevention of homelessness to a greater number of people.

Before making a decision under the main duty, all local authorities in England must now work with anyone who is at risk of becoming homeless within 56 days to:

1. Agree and help them with a Personal Housing Plan for the next 56 days that will:
2. Seek to prevent them from becoming homeless, irrespective of whether or not they are in priority need, may be intentionally homeless or have a local connection and if this fails:
3. Seek to relieve their homelessness by helping them to find somewhere else, if they are still homeless after 56 days then consider what the Council's duty is under the main duty.
4. Everyone seeking assistance is required to agree the actions of their personal housing plan, if they refuse to cooperate then the Council does not have to offer any further help and is no longer under any duty to help.
5. Some organisations, such as hospitals, prisons, social care, job centres and the armed forces are now under a duty to refer anyone who wants help because they may become homeless within 56 days to a local housing authority of their choice.

Preventing homelessness at the earliest convenience remains the primary focus of our Council.

#### 1.1 Early Interventions

Our main priority will always be to prevent homelessness wherever possible, ideally through the provision of robust housing advice early on which enables a household to remain in its current accommodation. Due to the challenges we face assisting households to access suitable and appropriate accommodation, we are more than ever working hard to keep households in their current accommodation. Where this is not possible we support the transition into alternative accommodation. This approach is firmly embedded within our Newcastle Housing Advice service.

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act whilst challenging in terms of supporting infrastructure and resources, did not require a complete culture shift for the NHA service as preventing homelessness has always been their primary focus. Preparation for the HRA included training for all staff, a new and robust IT system and referral arrangements made with a wide range of partners.

Our Newcastle Housing Advice Service (NHA) has a range of prevention options available to residents. We want to ensure that the interventions we offer are effective in preventing homelessness, which in turn will reduce the demands on our frontline staff and should also assist in reducing the need for us to use temporary accommodation.

We recognise for early intervention, there is the need to ensure that there is a wide range of easily accessible information available to enable those who can self-help to access our resources and follow advice and guidance to remedy their personal situations. As our service is continuing to get busier we want to enable customers who are able to self-serve, are able to do so by offering comprehensive

online advice and self-help tools, which in turn will reduce demands on the team. This will also enable the team to focus their time and expertise on our more complex and vulnerable customers.

For customers who are more complex and vulnerable, we recognise there is the need to identify any underlying issues and risks they may have as early as possible and ensure that relevant services are able to intervene to prevent homelessness. This means encouraging our partners to work with us by fully embracing the prevention ethos in the delivery of their services. It is important that customers are swiftly referred to the correct organisations already providing assistance rather than other agencies working in isolation and who may be taking on unnecessary responsibilities.

## **1.2 Continuous Service Improvement**

Sustaining and developing further homelessness prevention measures is key to providing more flexible and responsive services. We are committed to providing excellent fit for purpose homelessness and housing advice services to all our customers. Our commissioning processes ensure that agencies who deliver services on our behalf have experience and can demonstrate a wealth of knowledge and expertise.

Our NHA service is no exception, we have a professional team who possess an in depth knowledge with many years of experience in housing advice and homelessness issues. There are processes in place to ensure that this knowledge is retained and developed further. Staff have regular refresher training to ensure that the service is able to respond to developments in homelessness and housing law.

## **1.3 Annual Review of Homelessness Strategy**

We remain in an extremely financially challenging time and this strategy has the role to ensure that resources ploughed into homelessness services are used to their full potential. This means that during the life of this Strategy, if budgets dictate we may need to look at what is currently being delivered, prioritise and if required reshape and restructure that provision in accordance with the demands of the changing market. With this in mind, our Strategy will in effect be constantly under review and its purposefulness and effectiveness considered annually.

## **1.4 Commission Services to Prevent Homelessness**

Our Newcastle Housing Advice service is supported by a number of complementary homelessness services. These services offer practical assistance to specific groups in order to prevent homelessness. The ability to strategically commission specific services with our partners is critical in enabling us to deliver effective proactive services that will prevent homelessness and ensure that repeat homelessness is minimised.

As we plan to review the position of this Strategy on an annual basis, the findings will inform our future commissioning processes and enable us to respond to emerging local issues. Our commissioning processes ensure that services are compliant to equality and diversity issues and accessible to all our residents.

### **We will**

- Ensure that the prevention and relief of homelessness remains the primary focus at NHA.
- Continue to strengthen and improve the working relationships with our partners across the Borough and North Staffordshire to ensure all those effected by or at risk of homelessness receive the best outcomes.
- Monitor and act upon the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 within our services and partners.

- Annually review our Homelessness Strategy.
- Respond to local needs when embarking upon the procurement of future homelessness services.

## Priority 2

### Supporting Households into sustainable housing solutions

A key part of preventing and relieving homelessness is being able to access suitable accommodation.

#### 2.1 Short Term Temporary Accommodation

We have a duty to secure short term temporary accommodation for unintentionally homeless households in priority need under Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended). The circumstances when we will usually place households in temporary accommodation are:

- Pending the completion of inquiries into their homeless application.
- When an application is accepted until suitable secure accommodation becomes available.
- Under severe weather provisions.

The range of temporary accommodation options available to us are: Bed and Breakfast accommodation, temporary accommodation units, hostel accommodation in other local authority areas (although places are limited), private rented stock and refuges for women fleeing domestic violence.

We try to limit the use of all types of temporary accommodation in the Borough for alternative more long term sustainable options. Historically we have been extremely successful in our low usage by managing our requirements through our temporary accommodation unit and occasional use of Bed and Breakfasts. However, during the past few years and even more so since the introduction of the HRA we have seen an increase in the need for and use of temporary accommodation.

Despite increasing the number of temporary accommodation units available to us to 10, the increase in demand has occurred at a time when the range of accommodation options available to us has become more restricted. Funding restrictions, local connection criteria, and competing demand for bed spaces by other statutory agencies have led to a reduction in the choice of appropriate temporary accommodation options available to us. This has meant that we are still reliant upon Bed and Breakfast accommodation (sometimes out of the area) which is seen the most unsuitable choice of temporary accommodation.

To exacerbate our problems further, the increase in customers with more complex needs has meant that we have also been faced with the challenge that some providers are unwilling or do not have the resources to accommodate more complex individuals, deeming them too high risk.

The increase in numbers and limited accommodation options available to us is a cause for concern, it puts additional pressure on our staff who are trying to help households. We are looking for innovative solutions which also provide suitable support services.

#### 2.3 Long Term Affordable and Sustainable Accommodation

The need for affordable and sustainable housing in Newcastle goes above and beyond homelessness, improving access to permanent accommodation is a much broader priority and meeting the need for more permanent affordable housing is fully addressed in our Housing Strategy. We recognise that the provision of affordable housing can reduce the length of time homeless households have to wait for

re-housing and in certain circumstances can help people address their housing needs at an earlier stage without having to make a homelessness application. Therefore this strategy will focus upon what improvements we can make on the long term housing options for households who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness.

### **2.3.1 Long Term – Social Housing**

We have already acknowledged that we are no longer able to meet our objective of providing affordable sustainable accommodation as quickly as possible for homeless households solely through social housing stock alone. The turnover of register provider's (social landlords) stock has slowed, which means we have fewer opportunities for re-housing homeless households in this type of tenure. Therefore it is important for us to ensure that effective use is made of the housing stock that is available.

Part of NHA's remit is to operate the Council's Housing Register and Allocations Policy. Applicants who join the Housing Register are assessed in line with the criteria set out in the Housing Allocations Policy, which awards a 'Banding' priority to applicants based upon their housing needs and is the mechanism for letting social housing in the Borough. Applicants are then able to express an interest in properties that are advertised under the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme.

### **2.3.2 Long Term - A Suitable Private Rented Sector Offer**

Our objective is to provide affordable sustainable accommodation as quickly as possible for homeless households, as this will remove the need to provide temporary accommodation. It is clear that we are no longer able to meet this objective by relying solely on the social rented accommodation in our Borough. The pressures on waiting lists for social rented housing mean it's really important that we also make the best use of the alternative stock available, especially in the private rented sector. The private rented sector has an important role to play especially for households who cannot access social housing or afford to buy.

#### **Promoting Access**

As with temporary accommodation and social housing, demand for private rented stock in our Borough is continually increasing. When appropriate we will encourage private rented sector pathways as prevention measure. We are realistic with our customers about their options, what is available and affordable and we can support people into the private rented sector to meet their housing needs.

There are good working relationships in place with landlords, estate and letting agents and our housing benefit department, all who play a key role in assisting us in preventing homelessness and enabling access to the private rented sector. Within the NHA housing team there is a dedicated role to explore innovative ways to secure access and good quality accommodation in the private rented sector for our customers. Since the beginning of the role the officer has completed 26 Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme sign ups, 22 of these were able to access the Deposit and Rent In Advance agreements, 4 solely accessed the Deposit scheme and 1 benefited from the Private Rented Scheme One off Payment Scheme.

We recognise the importance of the private rented sector in providing households with suitable housing options and want to develop our links into the sector further. Our focus is to increase the number of partners we work with in the private rented sector and develop the relationships we have with landlords further.

#### **Quality of Stock**



Our Housing Services Team work within the private rented sector to ensure that the stock is of good condition. The service takes a pro-active approach in the provision of advisory services, sign posting and providing advice on financial support that may be available to improve property condition. The service supports and promotes the North Staffordshire Landlord Accreditation Scheme and facilitates training to help landlords understand best practice and legal requirements, including tenancy management and the correct use of Section 21 legal notices.

The Team also works with a range of partners to encourage empty property owners to bring their empty properties back into use. They work closely with owners to advise and assist them into bringing their properties back into use and if necessary will use the enforcement powers available to ensure a positive outcome.

### **Supporting Landlords**

The right landlord for our customers is someone who is accredited, understands their letting responsibilities and works with us to keep the rents low in return for the range of services / incentives we are able to offer.

We provide support to landlords through a variety of ways including our website, a specific private sector officer at NHA, regular newsletters, forums and officer advice and assistance. Whilst completing the homelessness review, feedback highlighted that landlords would like more support and assistance with households if things go wrong further into the tenancies.

### **Supporting Tenants**

The ideal tenant is someone who cares for and keeps the property tidy, doesn't cause anti-social behaviour or a nuisance to neighbours and pays the rent on time.

We recognise that an effective way of preparing customers for independent living and giving them a greater chance of sustaining their tenancy successfully is to provide pre-tenancy training. However, during consultation on this strategy our partners indicated that the provision of pre tenancy training could mean that for those that do not participate in such training, it's becoming even harder to access accommodation. We support the offer of pre tenancy training and any work that prepares customers for the realities of independent living.

We will always seek to maximise the income of our customers and ensuring they are able to access all the benefits to which they are entitled. We recognise customers with money problems can be at high risk of losing their current accommodation if they don't pay their rent. If appropriate we will support our customers to access money and benefit advice and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs).

### **We will**

- Continue to work with our register provider partners to ensure that the nominations through Housing register are working and we gain appropriate access to Social Housing Stock.
- Continue to work with registered providers to increase the supply of social housing. Opportunities for this are through section 106 agreements with private developers or through registered providers undertaking their own independent housing developments. The Housing strategy will continue to monitor and feed into this area of our activity.
- Review and develop the private rented sector offer in the Borough.
- Continue to work and engage with landlords, estate and letting agents in the Borough.
- Investigate opportunities where our homelessness households can access empty properties that have been brought back into use.
- Continue to ensure that information is readily available to landlords to facilitate understanding of the responsibilities involved in rented properties.

- Continue to ensure that our customers are offered a full range of advice and assistance to maximise their income.
- Work with our partners to identify ways to encourage and take on pre-tenancy training.

### Priority 3

#### **Work in partnership to address homelessness in Newcastle**

Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping requires collective actions across the Borough. No one person or organisation can deliver solutions to homelessness on their own. We want to make sure throughout this strategy, that our partners understand what is needed to reduce homelessness and how important their contributions are.

#### **3.1 Partnership Working**

Effective partnerships are key to preventing homelessness, this ethos has been strengthened further by the HRA, the need to identify any underlying issues and risks our customers may have is paramount in enabling us to intervene and either prevent or address homelessness. This means encouraging our partners to work with us by fully embracing the prevention ethos in the delivery of their services. Alongside this, is the new Duty to Refer within the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, it is becoming increasingly necessary to ensure that different services embed the prevention ethos within their work streams.

Our Homelessness services are commissioned by the Council in partnership with a number of organisations who deliver services on our behalf. In addition to the services we commission there are a wide range of organisations who provide services which assist in tackling homelessness without receiving any funding from us, these include support providers, housing providers, the advice sector, the voluntary sector, charities, churches and other faith groups. Other statutory agencies such as probation, health and social care providers and education also have a pivotal role.

We understand that just like us, there is an uncertainty for our partners in relation to what demands are going to be placed upon them in the future and therefore it is important to ensure that all our services run efficiently and customers are swiftly referred to organisations already providing assistance, we co-ordinate as many services energies, ideas, talents and expertise as possible.

We believe that through the work of our previous homelessness strategies we have built and developed a wide range of successful partnerships, in this strategy we will continue to strengthen those relationships with particular focus being given to mitigating the impacts of Welfare Reforms, Domestic Abuse and improving the health and wellbeing of our customers.

##### **3.1.1 Mitigating the impact of Welfare Reform**

The impact of welfare reform is something we cannot address in isolation. The reforms have reduced the income levels of many households, placed restrictions upon the type of housing a household can apply for and resulted in additional rental costs for those who are seen as under occupying tenancies.

Universal Credit which is administered by the Department of Works and Pensions, provides a single monthly payment to one member of the household, this is paid in arrears.

Potential implications for our customers include debt, rent arrears, an increased demand for smaller properties and housing transfers, budgeting and money management issues as households move onto Universal Credit and a higher risk of those in financial difficulties of becoming homeless. In order to

limit the risk of homelessness arising from the changes brought about by welfare reforms, we will need to manage the impacts and work closely with our partner agencies.

To date we have been proactive in addressing the impacts of the reforms and have trained staff so they are able to prepare, support and advise households affected by the changes. Customers are regularly referred to appropriate services, which provide financial and money advice about benefits, budgeting and debt management.

### **3.1.2 Domestic Abuse**

Domestic abuse remains a main cause of homelessness in the Borough, with many presentations made by Domestic Abuse survivors. Households at risk of domestic abuse often have to leave their homes and the area they have lived. Alongside our role in tackling homelessness we also have an active role in identifying and referring victims for help and support.

Newcastle has a well-established multi agency response to domestic abuse and we are a key partner in local domestic violence partnerships and when appropriate provide representation at the Newcastle Multi Agency. We have also been successful in the receipt of a joint funding bid with Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Moorlands Councils and Glow. The funding has provided a joint domestic abuse housing advice advocate that operates across the three local authority areas plus units of supported accommodation in the private sector, again spread across the three local authority areas.

### **3.1.3 Improving the health and wellbeing of our customers**

Housing has always had a significant role in helping to improve people's health, be it through the homelessness prevention work we deliver to the provision of grants and adaptations that enable people to stay in their own homes. These services have always been part of our role, however, historically there has been little co-ordination between the delivery of housing and health services. Local clinical commissioning groups are now responsible for the commissioning of healthcare services and local health and wellbeing boards are now responsible for determining their commissioning priorities.

The links between health and homelessness are recognised but there remain health inequalities for those that are homeless or insecurely housed. Our team at NHA are increasingly seeing more people with complex needs. Mental health, drug and alcohol services are vital, as are basic primary health care requirements such as being able to see a GP, health visitor or a dentist, and access routine health screening services.

## **3.2 Housing Pathways**

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 identifies the need for local authorities and their partners to develop clear housing pathways that include accommodation and support for key client groups. As a non-stock holding local authority it is clear that we can't do this alone.

We acknowledge that for some of our most vulnerable customers a more bespoke pathway approach would benefit their journey from institutional and supported accommodation into more settled and sustainable long term accommodation. We have identified that at present the key client groups that would benefit most from a housing pathways approach are vulnerable adults with complex needs and young people.

Young people are particularly vulnerable and we will work with services that specialise in providing specialist support and assistance to young people. There is a Staffordshire wide protocol for 16 & 17 year olds, which we are signed up to. However, we have a lack of emergency accommodation for this

age group and will be looking at ways of increasing future provision. Effective joint working with Children Services is crucial in assessing and supporting the often chaotic needs of young people.

### **3.2.1 Personal Housing Plans**

As a local housing authority the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 requires us to carry out an assessment on all cases who are eligible. Following this assessment we must work with the customer who has applied for help, to agree actions to be taken by both parties to ensure that the person has and is able to retain suitable accommodation. Depending upon individual needs of the customer, the personal housing plans will include the involvement of a wide range of our partner agencies.

### **3.2.2 Duty to refer**

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 also places a duty on certain agencies to refer their customers if they are at risk of becoming homeless. This is to ensure that an individual's housing situation is considered when they come into contact with wider public services. It should also encourage all of those involved in building stronger relationships based on local need and circumstances. Those with a duty include public authorities working in the criminal justice system, hospitals, social care services, job centres and the armed services.

Our work around developing sustainable housing pathways is an important element which also contributes to priority 1 – preventing homelessness.

### **3.3 Working in partnership to support the development of diversional activities, employment, skills and training**

We recognise that employment, education, training and the development of skills all play a role in preventing homelessness. However it can be difficult for unemployed people to get back into work and even harder to get and hold down a job when homeless. During our consultation process our partners also identified that more needed to be done to support individuals into diversional activities which would result in doing something meaningful with their time, prior to entering more formal employment or education opportunities. The benefits of offering opportunities to learn new life skills, participate in activities can improve health and wellbeing whilst also addressing isolation. The development of opportunities for planned activities is something we are keen to see an increase of within the Borough. Our partnership's team is currently involved in a restorative justice pilot project which is working with partners to get people involved in a variety of worthwhile activities in the Borough to fill their time.

### **3.4 Delivery of our Strategic Aims**

#### **3.4.1 Homelessness Forum**

The main forum to drive forward the aims, objectives and actions from this strategy is our Homelessness Forum. The forum is made up of strategic partners and stakeholders who provide accommodation and support services within the Borough. The forum acts as a platform to share good practice, information and for us to provide direction on our strategic responsibilities. The forum also aids us with our commissioning requirements, as we are able to consult with partners over the development of future services based upon local needs.

#### **3.4.2 Rough Sleeper's Action Group**

This is a long standing multi-agency group that comes together fortnightly with the aim of collectively working through solutions for individual rough sleepers across both Newcastle and Stoke On Trent. The group has a broad membership and is always well attended, members discuss the needs of individuals and produce targeted actions which support our rough sleepers off the streets. Each

member is signed up to an information sharing agreement which enables intelligence to be shared across the group swiftly.

### **We will**

- Challenge and resolve barriers to effective service delivery across the Borough.
- Continue to work on the development and improvement of protocols and pathways with statutory and voluntary providers which will enhance access opportunities and prevent homelessness.
- Build on the current referral arrangements introduced under the Duty to Refer within the HRA to other agencies.
- Continue to develop joint working relationships, raise awareness of joint initiatives and when appropriate implement joint training.
- Ensure we continue to monitor and identify our local needs, and be able to feed these into future strategic plans.
- Work with those who deliver drug and alcohol services to ensure joined up support is in place.
- Ensure our homelessness services are accessible to all our customers and partners.

## **Priority 4**

### **Tackling Rough Sleeping**

The Government aims to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. In August 2018 it launched its National Rough Sleeping Strategy, within the strategy is the requirement that all Homelessness Strategies are reviewed and rebadged by the end of 2019 to include a specific focus on addressing rough sleeping. The National strategy has three pillars, prevention, intervention and recovery. Whilst recognising that rough sleeping is the most extreme form of homelessness the strategy acknowledges that to fix it, requires that the whole system is working to prevent all forms of homelessness.

At a local level the number of people sleeping rough is low, but is still too many. No one should have to sleep rough and we need to ensure we have sufficient provision in place to support people sleeping rough. We have seen an increase in the number of individuals at risk of rough sleeping and the number of referrals made to our outreach service. The number of individuals who sleep rough remain in single figures per night and have been relatively comparative to previous years; however we recognise that more must be done to provide appropriate pathways off the streets for those who are sleeping rough in our Borough.

We have also seen a dramatic increase in begging particular in the town centre by people who may look homeless but are not necessarily homeless. Public awareness of homelessness (in particular rough sleeping) and its impact on people and communities has grown significantly.

### **Outreach Service**

We jointly commission our Rough Sleeper's Outreach service with Stoke-on-Trent City Council, the service provides assertive outreach and support to those who are sleeping rough within the boundaries of Newcastle and Stoke-on-Trent. The support provided aims to help rough sleepers move off the streets with a view of securing accommodation and access to other services. The service follows the No Second Night out ethos, where the aim is for no one to spend a second night sleeping rough. We have had this joint commissioning arrangement for a number of years and the service works very well across both areas with an extensive knowledge base.

## **Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator**

A successful bid was made to the MHCLG Rough Sleeper Initiative funding to provide a Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator for the Borough. The role has a wide remit and works with all who have an interest in rough sleeping, ranging from council staff & members, partners who provide services that support rough sleepers. The role will also develop working relationships, develop initiatives, promote services and reach out to all areas of our communities. The responsibility of the role is to ensure rough sleeping issues are understood more widely and to work with all areas to collectively deliver a joined up approach on the rough sleeping aims within this strategy. This role also leads on any rough sleeping funding opportunities, business cases and also works with the MHCLG to share best practice and provide monitoring.

### **We will**

- Via our outreach service continue to respond to reports of rough sleeping and ensure this response adequately engages with rough sleepers.
- Raise awareness to the public on the extent of homelessness and rough sleeping and street begging and what the council and partners are doing about it.
- Develop the local make it count scheme.
- Look at options which would support the accommodation of people rough sleeping including the severe weather emergency protocol (SWEP) to ensure a multi-agency approach can be called upon to end their street homelessness.
- Develop closer links with voluntary and community agencies, such as foodbanks and faith based organisations to promote effective local responses and consistency in tackling homelessness across the Borough.
- Ensure those considered not in 'priority need' receive the same level of advice and assistance as those who trigger the statutory definition.
- Explore the viability of launching a Housing First model of support to the most complex and vulnerable to sustain tenancies.
- Deliver, monitor and review existing rough sleeping services to ensure value for money and the objectives are met.
- Work closely with the MHCLG rough sleeper advisor on existing and new grant opportunities to shape services for 20/21 and beyond.
- Gather data on the rough sleeping population to inform future bids for funding and feed into future service provision.
- Work with other statutory partners on identifying gaps in services for the most complex individuals.

## Action Plan

Priority 1	Preventing Homelessness			
Action	Lead Responsibility	Resources	Timescale	Comments
Ensure that the prevention and relief of homelessness remains the primary focus at NHA.	Housing Strategy	Within current resources	Ongoing for the duration of strategy.	
Monitor and act upon the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 within our services and partners	Housing Strategy Homelessness Forum	Within current resources	Monitor quarterly and review annually	
Annually review our Homelessness Strategy	Housing Strategy Homelessness Forum	Within current resources	Annually	
Respond to local needs when embarking upon the procurement of future homelessness services	Housing Strategy	Within current resources	Ongoing	Mapping current provision, consider best practice and consider the feasibility of implementing in the Borough.
Priority 2	Supporting Households into sustainable housing solutions			
Action	Lead Responsibility	Resources	Timescale	Comments
Continue to work with our register provider partners to ensure that the nominations through Housing register are working and we gain appropriate access to Social Housing Stock	Housing Strategy Lettings Forum	Within current resources	Quarterly	Quarterly monitoring via the lettings forum

Continue to work with registered providers to increase the supply of social housing	Housing Strategy and Development Control	Within current resources.	Ongoing	
Review and develop the private rented sector offer in the Borough	Housing Strategy NHA	Within current resources.	2021	
Continue to work and engage with landlords, estate and letting agents in the Borough	Housing Strategy	Within current resources	Ongoing	
Investigate opportunities where our homelessness households can access empty properties that have been brought back into use	Housing Strategy Private Sector Housing	Within current resources	2020	
Continue to ensure that information is readily available to landlords to facilitate understanding of the responsibilities involved in rented properties	Housing Strategy	Within current resources	Ongoing	
Continue to ensure that our customers are offered a full range of advice and assistance to maximise their income	Housing Strategy Partnerships	Within current resources Commissioning Budgets	Ongoing	
Work with our partners to identify ways to encourage take up on pre tenancy training	Housing Strategy Registered Providers	Within current resources	2020	
<b>Priority 3</b>	<b>Work in partnership to address homelessness</b>			



Action	Lead Responsibility	Resources	Timescales	Comments
Challenge and resolve barriers to effective service delivery across the Borough	Housing Strategy	Within current resources	Ongoing	
Continue to work on the development and improvement of protocols and pathways with statutory and voluntary providers which will enhance access opportunities and prevent homelessness	Housing Strategy	Within current resources	Ongoing	
Build on the current referral arrangements introduced under the Duty to Refer to other agencies within the HRA	Housing Strategy NHA	Within current resources	2020	
Continue to develop joint working relationships, raise awareness of joint initiatives and when appropriate implement joint training	Housing Strategy	Within current resources	Ongoing	
Ensure we continue to monitor and identify our local needs, and be able to feed these into future strategic plans.	Housing Strategy	Within current resources	Ongoing	
Work with those who deliver drug and alcohol services to ensure joined up support is in place	Housing Strategy Drug and Alcohol Services	Within current resources	2020	

Work with those who deliver mental health services to ensure joined up support is in place	Housing Strategy Mental Health Services	Within current resources	2020	
Ensure our homelessness services are accessible to all our customers and partners	Housing Strategy NHA	Within current resources	Ongoing	
<b>Priority 4</b>	<b>Tackling Rough Sleeping</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Via our outreach service continue to respond to reports of rough sleeping and ensure this response adequately engages with rough sleepers	Outreach Service Manager	Commissioning funds	Ongoing – quarterly monitoring via contract	
Raise awareness to the public on the extent of homelessness and rough sleeping and street begging and what the council and partners are doing about it	Rough Sleeping Coordinator Partnerships	RSI Funding	2020	
Develop the local make it count scheme	Rough Sleeping Coordinator Partnerships	RSI Funding	2020	
Look at options which would support the accommodation of people rough sleeping including (the severe weather emergency protocol (SWEP)) to ensure a multi-agency approach can be	Rough Sleeping Coordinator	RSI Funding	2020	

called upon to end their street homelessness				
Develop closer links with voluntary and community agencies, such as foodbanks and faith based organisations to promote effective local responses and consistency in tackling homelessness across the Borough	Rough Sleeping Coordinator	RSI Funding	2020	
Ensure those considered not in 'priority need' receive the same level of advice and assistance as those who trigger the statutory definition	Housing Strategy NHA	Housing Advice Service Contract Funding	Ongoing	Quarterly monitoring contract
Explore the viability of launching a Housing First model of support to the most complex and vulnerable to sustain tenancies	Housing Strategy Rough Sleeping Coordinator	Within current resources	2020	
Deliver, monitor and review existing rough sleeping services to ensure value for money and the objectives are met	Rough Sleeping Coordinator	Within current resources	Ongoing	Current outreach contract expires in 2020
Work closely with the MHCLG rough sleeper advisor on existing and new grant opportunities a to shape services for 20/21 and beyond	Rough Sleeping Coordinator	RSI Funding	Ongoing	

Gather data on the rough sleeping population to inform future bids for funding and feed into future service provision	Rough Sleeping Coordinator	RSI Funding	2020	
Work with other statutory partners on identifying gaps in services for the most complex individuals	Housing Strategy Rough Sleeping Coordinator	Within current resources	2020	

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