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# SOUTH NOTTINGHAMSHIRE HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2022-2027

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# South Nottinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027

## Introduction

Housing is fundamental to the wellbeing of our residents, their families and our communities. Homelessness can affect anyone, whilst many people affected or who are threatened with homelessness will have family or social networks that are able to provide support, some do not and the statutory services provided by their local Council need to assist.

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a legal requirement on local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness within their area, and develop and publish a strategy to prevent homelessness, based on the findings of the review.

People can be defined as homeless if they have nowhere to stay and are living on the streets, they can also be considered homeless even if they have a roof over their head. People experiencing homelessness include those;

- sleeping rough or sofa surfing
- living in hostels or night shelters or other unsuitable temporary accommodation
- squatting
- at risk of violence or abuse
- living in poor housing conditions that affects their health
- living apart from family because they don't have a place to live together
- who cannot continue to occupy their current accommodation and have no other accommodation available to them

The new South Nottinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 builds on the progress and outcomes from the previous Strategy 2017-2021. It recognises the changing national and local context which has brought and is likely to bring increased demand for services alongside unprecedented health and economic challenges. Within the appendices, the Review of Rough Sleeping across South Nottinghamshire shows the emerging challenges and trends that we are facing.

Since the previous strategy was launched, the Government launched a national 'Rough Sleeping Strategy' that set out the Government's intention to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. We share this vision and priority and tackling rough sleeping is a key strategic objective of this strategy.

The previous Strategy (2017-21) focussed on effective service delivery to increase prevention opportunities to reduce the risk of crisis presentations that could make access to appropriate accommodation options difficult. Over the last 5 years the three Borough's, in partnership with others within Nottinghamshire, have responded positively to the challenges and additional duties posed by the Homelessness

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Reduction Act 2017. This has been achieved by expanding and creating new pathways to services for the most vulnerable applicants, through the provision of specialist support and settled accommodation for vulnerable groups. This is an acknowledgement of the increase in complexity of cases and the number of individuals and families who present with multiple or complex needs. Improvements have also been made to services at the point of first contact so that early opportunities to prevent homelessness are maximised.

This strategy will continue to focus on early intervention, homeless prevention and strengthening pathways and partnerships. However, the additional challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic will require an increased and proactive focus to be placed on health and housing and providing mechanisms of support to those at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping within our communities and providing suitable and sustainable housing options to all those affected.

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has also provided and continues to provide increasing funding streams, either allocated or through bid submission, to invest in accommodation, prevention and support for those who are homeless, at risk of homelessness and/or rough sleepers or those at risk of rough sleeping. The South Nottinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy commits to using this funding in the most effective ways to ensure the best outcomes for clients and bring rough sleeping to an end.

### **Key Achievements**

The three Councils have worked effectively to improve homelessness services over recent years, examples of these achievements are outlined below;

- Successful implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act across all Boroughs
- Establishment of a South Nottinghamshire Winter Night Shelter at Elizabeth House in 2019-20. Commitment to continuation of a winter provision during COVID-19 pandemic and further 13 individuals assisted in 2020-21.
- Increasing units of supported accommodation within South Nottinghamshire with the expansion of Elizabeth House and through successful RSAP Funding bids in partnership with Framework with funding from the DLUHC. This alone will deliver 16 units of additional supported accommodation targeted at rough sleepers.
- Successful implementation of the Government's 'Everyone In Scheme' during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to 55 rough sleepers being assisted off the streets in South Nottinghamshire.
- Improved offers to Private Sector Landlords within South Nottinghamshire, including assistance with deposits, rent in advance and landlord incentives.
- Successful continued partnership working and implementation of new initiatives through the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) funding, providing access to improved pathways for clients such as Homelessness Navigators and Call Before You Serve.
- In partnership with Framework, the provision of a comprehensive Street Outreach Service to assist rough sleepers off the street.

## Context and Challenges

The Homelessness landscape has seen a number of significant changes at both a national and local level.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced a number of new duties and a revised Code of Guidance. This included the extension of a period a household is 'threatened with homelessness' from 28 to 56 days, new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for eligible applicants, a Personal Housing Plan (PHP) to be agreed with applicants, and a new 'duty to refer' for public services to notify a local authority if an individual may be homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The National Rough Sleeping Strategy (2018), sets out the aim to end rough sleeping by 2027. This strategy is structured around '3 Pillars', which are commitments and actions surrounding;

- Prevention – integrated working with partner agencies to identify those at risk of rough sleeping before crisis
- Intervention – a responsive outreach service to support rough sleepers to move off the streets and towards recovery and to identify new rough sleepers as quickly as possible
- Recovery – support for individuals to find and sustain stable accommodation and to meet wider support needs.

Unintended consequences and effects brought about by the Welfare Reform Act 2012, which introduced changes in many established benefits and introduced Universal Credit. This has created difficulties in vulnerable groups accessing the benefits system and gaining assistance with their housing costs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a key role in shaping the national and local context of homelessness since 2020 and has as well brought to the fore the needs and vulnerabilities of rough sleepers.

There are two relevant national policies and approaches introduced in response to the pandemic to target individuals rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping. These are the 'Everyone In' initiative and the 'Next Steps' Accommodation Proposal (NSAP), now renamed Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) 2021-24.

The 'Everyone In' initiative announced in March 2020 aimed to provide safe and self-contained accommodation for those sleeping rough. This was in response to the national COVID-19 lockdown and in recognition that rough sleepers were more vulnerable due to longer term and complex health issues. In response, each Council was required to provide emergency accommodation and a move on plan detailing how the rough sleepers accommodated were going to be accommodated permanently.

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The NSAP scheme was launched in July 2020. Funding has been available to Council's to submit bids for from the DLUHC with the aim of continuing to provide accommodation for vulnerable people, including rough sleepers and to help those groups to obtain suitable long term accommodation options. Funding was available for both Capital and Revenue projects, based on local need, to provide accommodation and support to this client group. The three Councils have been successful in securing £311,000 funding as part of the NSAP initiative in year 2020-21 to secure 7 units of accommodation with support across South Nottinghamshire and secured another £450,000 funding as part of the subsequent RSAP initiative in year 2021-22 to secure a further 6 units of accommodation with support. This much needed resources will make a significant difference to those individuals that are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping in South Nottinghamshire.

Another COVID 19 emergency policy response that will have an emerging effect on housing advice and homelessness services in the short to medium term will be the moratorium on evictions. The moratorium has run for in excess of 12 months during 2020 and 2021. This has meant that primarily rental evictions (and some other evictions), from social and private landlords have not been able to proceed during this period. The moratorium was lifted in May 2021 and is likely to have led to increasing household debts and created further uncertainty and insecurity of tenure.

Other consequences of COVID-19 that could have an emerging impact on homelessness include the 'furlough' scheme and the potential increase in unemployment which is likely to lead to an increase in demand for our services.

An analysis of the data surrounding the current homelessness situation and challenges are summarised.

The COVID-19 legacy issues are likely to compound the existing challenges faced by individuals already in precarious housing situations as well as statutory and third sector organisations managing finite resources. Following a review of the previous Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2017-21 and a the current homelessness issues, the key challenges faced in South Nottinghamshire are summarised below;

### Increasing numbers of households seeking assistance

We expect to see increasing demand for housing advice, homelessness assistance and requests for support over the coming years, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated challenges. We aim to ensure services are accessible and our strong relationship with partners will enable us to develop joined up pathways as well as maximise resources and avoid duplication of effort.

### Increasing numbers of individuals with complex needs and who are at risk of rough sleeping

Mirroring the national picture, South Nottinghamshire's rough sleeping figures have seen a small increase. The successful DLUHC funded initiatives have been key in reducing rough sleeping and sustaining accommodation. The three partner Councils

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jointly access the (RSI) commissioned services, which incorporates Framework Street Outreach, providing comprehensive outreach services to rough sleepers to access accommodation and/or support services.

In addition, the RSI commission Change, Grow, Live (CGL) to provide specialist addiction services, physical health, mental health and social work services and also has a range of specialist “Navigator” posts based in hospitals, prisons and within the community to support those at risk of homelessness.

Despite the services provided, rough sleeping remains on our streets and we acknowledge that there will be an additional ‘hidden’ (i.e. sofa surfing) homeless population that are at risk of rough sleeping.

The three Boroughs remain committed to ending rough sleeping across South Nottinghamshire.

The RSI services are detailed and summarised at the end of this document.

### Meeting the needs of individuals with complex and/or multiple support needs

Homelessness is not just a housing issue and many homeless people have complex needs which require a varied and tolerant approach. We aim to continue to work with partners to forge strong working relationships to deliver a bespoke and effective package of support, advice and accommodation to clients to ensure they get the help and support that they need.

We will look to build upon the health and social care partnerships strengthened during the COVID-19 response to ensure a holistic response to tackling common challenges. We will also aim to continue to build partnerships with other key partners such as CGL, the probation and criminal justice agencies, domestic abuse services, asylum and refugee support services, as well as services assisting in access to housing, via local Registered Providers.

### Lack of affordable, suitable and quality settled accommodation

There is an ever increasing demand for social housing and supply outstrips demand. People are waiting longer for accommodation without the certainty of being allocated a property to meet their needs. The lack of settled affordable accommodation can mean households put their lives on hold or in some instances, are placed in temporary accommodation whilst waiting for suitable accommodation to be found. This accommodation can often be in the form of hotel accommodation.

Previously the three Boroughs had been able to access accommodation within the private rented sector, but as competition of rental properties increases, landlords routinely increase their rents. This means that many areas of Nottinghamshire are seeing rents far in excess of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA). This makes it increasingly a less viable solution.

## **Delivering the Strategy**

The South Nottinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy went out for public consultation between October and December 2021. The consultation methodology, responses and outcomes can be found in Appendix 2.

### **Strategic aims**

Based on the key challenges, the strategy has been summarised into 6 strategic aims.

1. Early intervention through effective partnership working
2. The provision of an accessible, agile and responsive homelessness service.
3. Access to affordable and quality accommodation across all sectors
4. Tackle rough sleeping by developing and improving pathways
5. Linking health, well-being and housing together to improve the life chances and aspirations of those affected
6. Delivering long term support solutions to sustain tenancies for the most vulnerable

### **Making sure we deliver**

The South Nottinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been developed in consultation with the South Nottinghamshire Inter Agency Homelessness Forum, consisting of a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies involved in providing homelessness services.

The RSI commissioned services have recently been subject to an external evaluation by the University of Lincoln. This has identified a number of key action points which will be incorporated as action plan targets in the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

The action plan will be progressed, reviewed and updated in consultation with the forum annually to measure progress. The action plan will also take account of any legislative changes that may arise.

The South Nottinghamshire Inter Agency Forum will be responsible for the monitoring and review of the action plan having regard to legislative and good practice changes that may arise during the lifetime of the strategy. An annual report will also be provided to each of the partner Councils and the DLUHC.

