



Northumberland County Council

CABINET

DATE: 14TH MARCH 2023

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY FOR NORTHUMBERLAND 2022 – 2026

Report of Cabinet Member: Councillor Colin Horncastle, Portfolio Holder for Community Services

Executive Director: Gill O'Neill, Executive Director of Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities

Purpose of report

The following report presents members with the new **Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy for Northumberland 2022 - 2026**. The strategy provides updated details of the strategic objectives for the Council's Homelessness & Housing Options Service for the following five years.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet approve the refreshed Homelessness Strategy, which supports the delivery of the Council's statutory obligations for our residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the priorities included in the Northumberland County Council Corporate Plan 2021-2024 which states:

***Enjoying, Connecting** - We will maintain, protect and enhance the environment, prioritising our commitments on Climate Change*

***Living, Learning** - We will care for our residents, support the most vulnerable in our society and help people to live healthy lives.*

Key issues

1. The Homelessness Act 2002 placed a duty on local authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in their area and formulate and publish a Homelessness Strategy

based on the findings from the review. The original strategy, adopted in 2016, was written in accordance with this legislation and statutory guidance.

2. The Housing Act 1996, Part 7 has most recently been amended by the **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA)**. This new Act represents fundamental amendments to the existing homelessness legislation. It introduces new requirements to prevent and relieve homelessness and, in that context, sets out a range of new duties. These amendments came into force in April 2018.
3. The Northumberland Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 was refreshed in 2019 to include measures set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 as well as responding to respond to the Government's vision set out in their **Rough Sleeping Strategy (2018)** '*to support every person who sleeps rough off the streets and into a home*'.
4. In November 2021 consultation was carried out with partners and stakeholders to establish whether our current objectives were still relevant and that they would enable the council to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in the County and meet the requirements of the HRA.
5. The new **Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy 2022 – 2026** reflects the consultation input and the needs and demands for homelessness service and housing options advice and support across the county.

Background

1. The Council's Homelessness Strategy for Northumberland 2016- 2021 detailed 5 key strategic priorities for the delivery of homelessness and housing options support for Northumberland residents. Since that strategy was published in 2016 changes in national policy impacted upon the services we needed to provide.
2. **The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017** was the most notable change to legislation relating to homelessness in over 40 years. It transformed the way homelessness services are expected to be delivered and introduced new duties. The Act made changes to the current homelessness legislation contained in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, with a renewed focus on preventing homelessness.
3. It placed duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. It required local authorities to provide new homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who are protected under existing legislation. There was also a new duty on public services including NHS Trusts, prisons and Jobcentre Plus to notify the local authority if they meet someone that they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, called the Duty to Refer.

4. **The Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018 (CoG 2018)** was published in February 2018 in readiness for the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The CoG 2018 must be considered alongside the legislation when assessing and dealing with applications for assistance under either the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 or Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.
5. The Government's **Rough Sleeping Strategy (August 2018)** set out the 2027 vision to support every person who sleeps rough off the streets and into a home. This was the beginning of Government plans to meet their 2027 ambition, when the ambition is that no one must sleep rough again.
6. The Northumberland Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 was refreshed in 2019 to include measures set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 as well as responding to respond to the Government's vision set out in their Rough Sleeping Strategy (2018) 'to support every person who sleeps rough off the streets and into a home'. This led to the publication of the council's **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for Northumberland 2019 – 2021**
7. This strategy supported the Council's priorities for the delivery of our statutory obligations to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness whilst also supporting the delivery of the Council's Corporate Priorities and the delivery of the principle within the Housing Strategy for Northumberland that having a decent home is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of everyone living in Northumberland.

The priorities identified within that updated strategy were;

- I. Prevent homelessness by improving support to vulnerable client groups
 - II. Increase options for, and ensure access to, suitable temporary accommodation
 - III. Support people through Welfare Reform, particularly Universal Credit
 - IV. Remove barriers to permanent accommodation
 - V. Prevent youth homelessness
 - VI. Develop Services for Rough Sleepers
8. As this strategy ended in 2021 a new strategy has been drafted, reflecting the consultation that took place earlier this year and the needs and demands for homelessness services and housing options advice and support across the county.
 9. The proposed new Homelessness Strategy, **Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy for Northumberland 2022–2026**, sets out the priorities and future actions for tackling homelessness over the next five years A detailed action plan will be produced to further explore how the priorities can be implemented and monitored to ensure delivery of the identified priorities.
 10. The priorities within this strategy have been identified as follows;

Priority 1 - Improve services and accommodation options for rough sleepers and single homeless people

Priority 2 - Provide early intervention, prevention, and relief of homelessness through effective partnership working

Priority 3 - Improve access to suitable, affordable, and quality permanent, temporary, and emergency accommodation across all sectors

Priority 4 - Link health, well-being, and housing together to improve the life chances and aspirations of those affected by homelessness

Priority 5 - Develop homelessness pathways for specific groups including victims of domestic abuse, young people, prison leavers and armed forces veterans

11. The Council will ensure services are delivered with a renewed strategic focus on preventing homelessness and rough sleeping, through the development of this refreshed strategy and associated action plan which will identify the resources, prevention and relief activity and the supply of settled and temporary accommodation required to meet local needs.

Implications

Policy	Supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan and the priorities within the Housing Strategy for Northumberland 2019-2022 and the Private Sector Housing Strategy 2021-2023
Finance and value for money	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Sustaining tenancies and reducing homelessness has a positive impact on the budget.
Legal	The Homelessness service is a Statutory Service and is delivered in line with requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 confirm that the matters within this report are not functions reserved to Full Council
Procurement	none
Human Resources	none
Property	Details the council's ambitions for homelessness & housing options services This is likely to lead to an increase in council-owned stock being used as temporary accommodation.

Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	An EIS will be completed to ensure that fair access to housing for all residents is considered.
Risk Assessment	none
Crime & Disorder	Rough sleepers are far more likely to be victims of crime, including violent assault, abuse and intimidation, compared to the general public. Homelessness is a major factor which influences criminal activity amongst, particularly young people facing housing insecurity and the inability to access suitable and stable housing can force them toward a cycle of homelessness and offending behaviours.
Customer Consideration	Enables provision of suitable accommodation for all residents
Carbon reduction	none
Health & Wellbeing	Sustaining tenancies and reducing homelessness & rough sleeping will have a positive impact upon the health & wellbeing of residents.
Wards	All

Background papers:

Draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy for Northumberland 2022-2026

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer / Legal	Neil Masson
Executive Director of Finance and S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Elizabeth Morgan
Chief Executive	Rick O'Farrell
Portfolio Holder(s)	Colin Horncastle

Author and Contact Details

Julie Stewart

Strategic Housing Manager
07771 974 112
Julie.stewart@northumberland.gov.uk