

## **ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL - HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2019-2024**

### **FOREWORD**

I am pleased to introduce Ashfield's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-24. This is the first strategy developed since the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017, which has seen a fundamental change to the way we work with residents experiencing homelessness.

Ashfield has been committed to the prevention of homelessness for many years and has invested in a range of services to provide the assistance our residents need to access a secure, warm and affordable home.

However, the demand for our services continues to rise as our residents feel the impact of a weak economy, changes to the welfare system, an undersupply of affordable housing and funding cuts for public services and the voluntary sector.

Despite this, we remain committed to preventing as many residents as possible from experiencing homelessness, which is often hugely disruptive to their health and wellbeing. For those residents who need to find a new home, our priority is to ensure this is done without the need for emergency or temporary housing.

To achieve the aims of this strategy partnership working is essential and I hope that all our partners and our residents will do whatever they can, however big or small, to ensure that homelessness affects the smallest possible number of residents and where it does, it is resolved quickly and it does not happen again.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 2018, Ashfield District Council decided to carry out a Homelessness Review and develop a local Homelessness Strategy, under the terms of the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The review and strategy follow on from the Council's existing strategy document, that covered the period 2013-2018.

Since the last round of homelessness reviews and strategies were written, the national policy context has changed once again. The environment in which local authorities need to deliver homelessness prevention continues to be very challenging and the impact of the economic down turn of 2008 continues to be felt. The long term economic situation continues to place increased pressure on household budgets, leading to a tightening of the housing market and a slow rate of new house starts. Increases in rent levels continue to put pressure on low income families, placing much private sector housing beyond the reach of those on welfare benefits, levels of which have not kept pace.

In terms of specific national policy initiatives, the following are the most noteworthy:

- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- The Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy (August 2018)
- Welfare Reform - Universal Credit
- Funding Supported Housing
- The Social Housing Green Paper
- Reforming the Private Rented Sector
- Care Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017

In terms of sub regional policy, the following are relevant:

- The NHS Nottinghamshire Integrated Care System (formerly Sustainability and Transformation Plan – STP) 2016-21
- Nottinghamshire County Council Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)
- Nottinghamshire County Council Youth Homelessness Action Plan 2017
- A Framework for Tackling Domestic and Sexual Abuse in Nottinghamshire
- Nottinghamshire Memorandum of Understanding - supporting joint action on improving health through the home

The ramifications of these national and sub-regional policies are explored in more depth in the Homelessness Review document ([link](#)) which was commissioned from Homeless Link, in partnership with Mansfield and Newark & Sherwood District Councils. This strategy sets out Ashfield District Council's response to this joint homelessness review.

## **VISION AND AIMS**

It is Ashfield District Council's vision that the population of Ashfield should be living in, or can access, homes that are affordable, warm and within a safe community that promotes the health and wellbeing of residents.

Central to achieving this vision is ensuring that homelessness affects the smallest possible number of residents and where it does, there is help available to quickly resolve their situation so that it does not happen again.

This Strategy identifies a number of priority areas and actions that need to be taken to ensure this vision is achieved.

The aims of this Strategy are to:

- Prevent as many residents as possible from becoming homeless
- Ensure options are available to ensure no one has to sleep rough other than through personal choice
- Help as many residents as possible to move seamlessly from one home to another without the need for emergency or temporary accommodation
- Provide a high quality service that customers indicate satisfaction with.

The objectives of this Strategy are:

- To improve the financial resilience amongst the population at risk of homelessness through a proactive and integrated local welfare benefits system
- To increase the amount of social housing available to households at risk of, or experiencing homelessness and increase the sustainability of social housing tenancies by these households
- To deliver the additional required supported housing and housing related support
- To increase the amount of PRS housing available to households at risk of, or experiencing homelessness and increase the sustainability of PRS tenancies by these households
- To ensure the support needs of households at risk of, or experiencing homelessness are appropriately met in order to reduce their risk of homelessness and the risk of

homelessness increasing their support needs

- To minimise rough sleeping and street activity and encourage the community to do their bit to end homelessness
- To achieve high customer satisfaction with the outcome and experience of the support provided by ADC Housing Options
- To ensure services are designed based on robust evidence and effectively monitored and evaluated.

The Council recognises that it cannot achieve this vision on its own and a central theme to this Strategy is partnership working.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Ashfield District Council would like to thank all the service users, providers and practitioners from across all sectors, who contributed to the Homelessness Review and the development of this strategy.

## **THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW**

The Homelessness Review that underpins this strategy followed the methodology set out below:

- A call for evidence, aimed at harnessing the intelligence of local providers, local authority officers and commissioners, across the housing, welfare benefits, social care, criminal justice, health and community safety sectors, through semi-structured interviews
- Quantitative analysis, using an existing modelling tool which provides a coherent methodology for estimating future levels of need - and for modelling of the housing and support solutions required by people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Mapping of the current supply of commissioned and non-commissioned services, to enable comparison against the estimations of need produced by the quantitative analysis
- A survey of support needs, completed by providers, covering an extensive sample of accommodation based services, in order to gain a deeper understanding of service users' characteristics, pathways, support needs, engagement with services and move-on requirements
- Service user engagement through interview, focus groups and surveys
- A particular focus on the Private Rented Sector, by embedding the topic in all of the above and engaging with an industry body for lettings and management agents with members in the area.

A Project Steering Board comprising representatives from the three councils involved oversaw the review. Regular presentations were made to (and discussions held with) the Joint Homelessness Interagency Forum during the course of the project.

## **THE LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT**

The Homelessness Review also included a desk top study, looking at current national, regional and local policy. The national and regional policy context is set out in the review document. The local Ashfield policy context is set out below.

### **Ashfield District Council Corporate Plan 2016-2019**

Preventing and reducing homelessness is of the utmost importance to Ashfield, Current priorities set out how the Council intends to:

- Increase overall supply of affordable and appropriate homes in the district
- Reduce levels of fuel poverty
- Increase financial capacity and tenancy sustainment
- Minimise homelessness through increased prevention

### **Housing Strategy 2016-2020 and Action Plan 2018-20**

The Housing Strategy and related Action Plan identify six key priorities

- Ensuring supply of suitable and available accommodation
- Energy and sustainability
- Regeneration
- Tackling disrepair
- Reducing and preventing homelessness due to violence
- Environment and planning

Publication of this five year Homelessness Strategy (with regular monitoring of the outcomes achieved) is also part of the action plan.

## **HOMELESSNESS IN ASHFIELD**

Since the last Strategy, the Council has:

- Secured additional funding to sustain the Serenity Scheme until 2020, which provides 6 homes for emergency use by those fleeing domestic abuse
- Successfully implemented the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 requirements, including doubling the size of the team available to assist residents
- Increased the temporary accommodation available in the district from 15 homes to 30
- Secured funding to increase the opening hours of the winter night shelter to 7 nights a week
- Completed an increased number of Sanctuary Scheme installations to enable residents experiencing domestic abuse to remain safely in their home

- Enhanced partnership working between a range of agencies, including police, probation, DWP, social care, health, substance misuse, community, voluntary and faith groups.
- Launched the Complex Case Team to provide much needed support to residents with issues such as substance misuse, mental health, domestic abuse
- Secured funding for a countywide Street Outreach Service for rough sleepers, delivered by Framework
- Developed the tenancy sustainment service which provides support to homeless households moving into a council home
- Introduced a Homeless Prevention Fund to provide financial assistance to households to help them stay in their home or move into a new home

### **Key Findings from the Homelessness Review**

The number of statutorily homeless people per 1,000 population in Ashfield (2.28) is below the average for England (2.41) However, it is only very slightly under the East Midlands average of 2.29. This figure is much lower than Mansfield's (4.04) but higher than Newark and Sherwood's 1.70.

However, Ashfield has seen a significant increase in the number of homeless acceptances over the last 10 years from 30 in 2008/09 to 123 in 2017/18. This increase in homelessness is reflected in the fact that Ashfield has had the most significant increase in the number of homelessness acceptances per 1,000 households over the last 10 years in Mid Nottinghamshire, from 0.61 to 2.28 in 2017/18.

The Review identified that there are around 700 households at risk of homelessness each year in Ashfield. It identified an increasing trend in the number of households accepted as statutorily homeless, from a low of 16 in 2011-12, to a high of 123 in 2017-18. Despite this, in 2017-18, Ashfield was below the average for England for households statutorily homeless per 1,000 population, 2.28 compared to 2.41 respectively.

Alongside the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017, a new data collection requirement was also introduced, known as H-CLIC. Analysis of the H-CLIC data for April 2018 – September 2018 shows that in Ashfield, almost half of households seek assistance from the Council whilst they are threatened with homelessness, compared to around a third who do so when they are already experiencing homelessness. It is the objective of the Homeless Reduction Act that councils assist households at the earliest possible point in order to increase the opportunities to prevent their homelessness. Ashfield is currently performing well in this area, however, there is further work required to assist more households before they become homeless.

### **Reasons for Homelessness and Risk of Homelessness**

The H-CLIC data shows that the leading causes of homelessness in Ashfield (Apr 18 – Sep 18) are:

- Loss of tenancy or mortgage repossession (41%)
- Family or friends no longer able to accommodate (17%)
- Other (16%)

It is important to note that for those who are already experiencing homelessness, the second leading cause is domestic abuse. Whilst it is not usually appropriate to prevent homelessness in these cases, there is a role for the Council to play in preventing domestic abuse, this is a key priority of the Housing Strategy 2016-20.

112 young people aged under 26 sought help from the Council in the first six months 2018/2019. This represented 33% of all reported cases. 31% of all households seeking assistance when they are already experiencing homelessness were in this age group, suggesting there is more to be done to prevent young people from becoming homeless.

### **Assessment of need**

A quantitative analysis that formed part of the review. The analysis used an existing modelling tool, which provides a coherent methodology for estimating future levels of need - and for assessing the balance of housing and support solutions required. The analysis suggested that the following approximate levels of service provision would be required going forward in Ashfield.

<b>Type of Service Required 2019-20</b>	<b>Demand</b>	<b>Current supply</b>
Prevention of homelessness through advice, assistance and mediation etc.	59	<i>See below</i>
Tenancy sustainment / resettlement support	76	<i>See below</i>
Access to alternative affordable accommodation	306	<i>See below</i>
Housing First level support	14	0
Crisis Accommodation	30	30
Supported Housing	54	0
Refuge Accommodation	3	6

#### *Access to Advice, Assistance and Mediation*

Between April and October 2018, the Housing Options team advised 335 households, suggesting an annual capacity to advise around 650 households. During this same period, 8 households were assisted to remain in their existing accommodation by the Housing Options team. Around 30 others were assisted to move to alternative accommodation (though it is important to note that outcomes may not be achieved until the following quarter so this figure mainly reflects outcomes for the households advised in the first quarter of 2018/19). In addition to this, the Council's Tenancy Sustainment Officers assisted 78 households to secure existing or alternative accommodation and avoid homelessness.

The ability to prevent a household's homelessness is dependent on many external factors that are not within the control of the Housing Options Team and as such improvement in this area will require all partners adopting a preventative approach.

#### *Tenancy Sustainment, Resettlement and Floating Support*

Some social housing providers have Tenancy Sustainment Teams to provide support to new and existing tenants, including Ashfield District Council who successfully supported 159 households between Apr 18 – Dec 18.

Currently, there is no other floating support provision to meet this need.

## *Access to alternative Affordable Housing*

The Review has calculated that the housing need for people who have been homeless in Ashfield is 306. This includes private and social housing sector affordable housing. The Ashfield Affordable Housing Delivery Strategy has identified that there is a supply shortfall of 223 new affordable homes each year and has identified a number of actions to address this shortfall.

## **THEMES AND PRIORITIES**

### **Theme 1 - Reducing the Impact of Poverty on Homelessness**

***Objective – To improve the financial resilience amongst the population at risk of homelessness through a proactive and integrated local welfare benefits system***

What we will do:

- Research how households at risk of homelessness can be proactively supported by ADC and partners to improve their financial resilience to mitigate against adverse events that may cause homelessness (relationship breakdown, bereavement, redundancy, large unexpected costs, etc). Make recommendations to the appropriate strategy governance group
- Review the accessibility and take up of advice on money, debts and benefits provided by ADC and partners by households at risk of homelessness. Make recommendations to improve access and take up to the appropriate strategy governance group
- Identify opportunities to integrate local welfare benefits services (such as ADC Housing Benefit, DWP, Citizens Advice) with the ADC Housing Options team to proactively support households at risk of homelessness. Make recommendations to the appropriate strategy governance group
- Work with partners to develop sustainable pathways out of homelessness that minimise the levels of poverty experienced. Provide regular updates to the appropriate strategy governance group

How we will measure success:

- Monitor the prevention of homelessness by local welfare benefits services
- Monitor the amount of DHP spent on the prevention of homelessness
- Monitor the referrals made to Housing Options by DWP and other local welfare benefit partners
- Review case studies of the customer experience of the local welfare benefits services

### **Theme 2 - Responding to the Shortage of Social Housing**

***Objective – To increase the amount of social housing available to households at risk of, or experiencing homelessness and increase the sustainability of social housing tenancies by these households***

What we will do:

- Deliver the ADC Affordable Housing Delivery Strategy 2019 - 2021
- Work with social housing partners to deliver the required additional tenancy sustainment support, using external funding where available
- Research the underlying causes of tenancy failure in social housing. Make recommendations to tackle these causes to the appropriate strategy governance group
- Identify the barriers to homeless households accessing social housing. Make recommendations to tackle these barriers to the appropriate strategy governance group
- Work with partners to reduce the number of evictions from social housing

How we will measure success:

- Number of additional social homes delivered
- Additional tenancy sustainment support delivered
- External funding secured
- Number of social housing evictions
- Number of households rehoused in social housing

### **Theme 3 - Supported Housing and Housing Related Support**

***Objective – To deliver the additional required supported housing and housing related support***

What we will do:

- Work with partners to deliver the required additional supported housing, using external funding where available
- Work with partners to deliver the additional required housing related support, using external funding where available
- Identify the barriers to sustainable move on from supported housing. Make recommendations to tackle these barriers to the appropriate strategy governance group
- Identify barriers to accessing supported housing by those households who need it. Make recommendations to tackle these barriers to the appropriate strategy governance group
- Conduct an annual review of support needs of supported housing residents and evaluate if these needs are appropriately met
- Create a governance structure that includes oversight of all supported housing and housing related support

How we will measure success:

- Number of additional supported housing schemes delivered
- Additional housing related support delivered
- External funding secured

- Average length of stay in supported housing
- Tenancy sustainment rates in move on accommodation
- Number of households refused supported housing
- Monitor trends in support needs

#### **Theme 4 - Working with the Private Rented Sector (PRS)**

***Objective – To increase the amount of PRS housing available to homeless households and increase the sustainability of PRS tenancies by homeless households/at risk households***

What we will do:

- Work with partners and PRS landlords to remove the barriers to homeless households accessing the PRS establishing any required products and services (subject to resource availability), using external funding where available
- Secure funding to introduce the Call Before You Serve scheme in the district
- Research the underlying causes of loss of a PRS tenancy. Make recommendations to address these causes to the appropriate strategy governance group

How we will measure success:

- Monitor the number of homeless households accessing the PRS
- Monitor the number of households prevented from becoming homeless from the PRS

#### **Theme 5 - Addressing the Causes and Consequences of Homelessness**

***Objective – To ensure the support needs of households at risk of, or experiencing homelessness are appropriately met in order to reduce their risk of homelessness and the risk of homelessness increasing their support needs***

What we will do:

- deliver the additional required supported housing and housing related support – see Theme 3
- Work with partners to ensure robust pathways to prevent homelessness upon discharge from an institution. Provide regular updates to the appropriate strategy governance group
- Identify the barriers to homeless households accessing specialist support and treatment. Make recommendations to tackle these barriers to the appropriate strategy governance group
- Work with partners to identify options to prevent the underlying causes of homelessness in the next generation (schools programme, family mediation/support, peer support, education/employment/training, perpetrator programmes, etc) Provide regular updates to the appropriate strategy governance group
- Work with partners to identify how households at risk of homelessness as a result of their support needs can be identified and proactively assisted as early as possible. Make recommendations to the appropriate strategy governance group

- Work with partners to provide joined up support to households with multiple and complex needs at risk of homelessness. Provide regular updates to the appropriate strategy governance group
- Contribute to the development of Nottinghamshire County Council Youth Homelessness Strategy in 2020

How we will measure success:

- Monitor the number of households prevented from becoming homeless from institutions
- Monitor the number of households seeking housing advice and assistance following institutional discharge
- Monitor the support needs of homeless households and the services they are accessing
- Monitor the preventative programmes delivered and outcomes realised
- Monitor the prevention of homelessness for those with support needs

## **Theme 6 - Reducing the Impact of Homelessness on the Community**

***Objective – To end rough sleeping and street activity and encourage the community to do their bit to end homelessness***

What we will do:

- Ensure options are available to ensure no one has to sleep rough other than through personal choice
- Minimise and manage the negative impacts of street activity by rough sleepers, supported housing residents and others
- Work with partners to ensure the welfare needs of rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping are met (winter shelter, breakfast club, soup kitchen, outreach nurse, day centres, public support, community safety, etc) Provide regular updates to the appropriate strategy governance group
- Establish the Homeless Reduction Board as required by the MHCLG Rough Sleeping Strategy and Delivery Plan
- Create a community homeless prevention charter and encourage partners, public, businesses, etc to pledge to do their bit to end homelessness

How we will measure success:

- Monitor the number of rough sleepers
- Monitor street activity
- Monitor the welfare needs of rough sleepers and the services they are accessing
- Monitor the prevention charter pledges and outcomes

## **Theme 7 - Improving Customer Services for People who are Homeless or at Risk of Homelessness**

***Objective – High customer satisfaction with the outcome and experience of the support provided by ADC Housing Options (and partners?)***

What we will do:

- Regularly gather customer feedback and utilise this to continuously improve the service and its integration with our services. Provide regular updates to the appropriate strategy governance group
- Research customer journeys into homelessness to identify early opportunities to prevent their homelessness and any barriers to doing so. Make recommendations to the appropriate strategy governance group
- Conduct a 12 month review of the Duty to Refer operation and identify opportunities to enhance its contribution to preventing homelessness. Make recommendations to the appropriate strategy governance group
- Conduct an annual review of ADC staff and partner training needs, arrange required training. Provide regular updates to the appropriate strategy governance group
- Work with partners to ensure there are clear pathways to resolving a household's homelessness for the key causes of homelessness, integrating services wherever possible (end of AST, fleeing violence, friends/family exclusion, etc) Provide regular updates to the appropriate strategy governance group
- Work with partners to identify how those with lived experience of homelessness can be included in the design and delivery of services. Make recommendations to the appropriate strategy governance group

How we will measure success:

- Customer satisfaction rates
- Homeless prevention rates
- Duty to Refer numbers and outcomes
- Monitor the number of pathways developed and the outcomes
- Training courses delivered
- Monitor the number of people with lived experience involved in the design and delivery of homelessness

## **Theme 8 – Improving the data available to relevant agencies**

### ***Objective – Services are designed based on robust evidence and effectively monitored and evaluated***

What we will do:

- Work with partners to develop a governance structure to oversee the delivery of this strategy
- The governance structure will agree the monitoring and outcomes data to be reported to them
- The governance structure will be responsible for identifying good performance and areas for improvement, ensuring any required remedial action is taken as appropriate
- The governance structure will regularly share the monitoring and outcomes data with all relevant partners

How we will measure success:

- Good practice examples identified
- Remedial action taken against poor performance
- Use of data in service design and decision making
- High/improving performance

## **FUTURE REVIEW**

Ashfield District Council (in partnership with Mansfield and Newark & Sherwood District Councils) have asked Homeless Link to carry out a progress review later in 2019, in order to more fully assess the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. This legislation came into force on 1 April 2018 and was in the process of being implemented when the Homelessness Review was carried out. The findings of this further review will be made available in due course.