

HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2017-22

DECEMBER 2019 PROGRESS REPORT

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Summary of document

This document, together with the Council's Refreshed Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan 2017-22, provides an update on the Council's progress made on implementing the homelessness and rough sleeping aspects of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2017-22.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council's statutory housing strategy is the Housing and Homelessness 2017-22. This includes how the Council addresses rough sleeping and other forms of homelessness. In line with the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy published in 2009, the Council's strategy is now known as the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2017-22.
- 1.2 This document is a progress report on the Council's progress on homelessness and rough sleeping up to October 2019. It should be read with the Council's Refreshed Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan 2017-22. These provide information on the delivery of the Council's strategy, but are not part of the Council's homelessness and rough sleeping strategy.
- 1.3 The two main Aims in the Council's strategy are:
 - 1.3.1 Aim 1 – Preventing homelessness and promoting housing options: effective housing advice and assistance;
 - 1.3.2 Aim 2 – Provide targeted support for vulnerable households: working with partner organisations to see that people get the help or advice they need to remain safe and independent.
- 1.4 There are four cross-cutting themes that underpin how the Strategy's Aims are delivered:
 - 1.4.1 a good quality service which is within available resources;
 - 1.4.2 promoting independence, through where possible, prevention and early intervention;
 - 1.4.3 safeguarding adults at risk, children and young people in line with Council policy, including those of the Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Adults Board and the Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Board;
 - 1.4.4 partnership working.
- 1.5 The Council's strong progress is set out below.

2.0 AIM 1 – PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS

The Council's duties towards applicants

- 2.1 Timely advice and advocacy plays a major role in homelessness prevention. Citizens Advice Rutland recorded 2,201 housing

enquiries in 2017/18 (*source CAR Annual Report*).

- 2.2 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 augments the Council's previous efforts at addressing homelessness. We have to agree a personalised plan with many individual households threatened with homelessness, or who are homeless, to help them to retain or obtain accommodation. These are the 'prevention' and 'relief' duties. These duties do not oblige the Council to rehouse those not in a priority need group or intentionally homeless, but do set out the steps the applicant and the Council need to take to facilitate accommodation regardless of this.
- 2.3 In the nine month period of July 2018 to March 2019, the 'prevention' duty ended for 15 households and the 'relief' duty ended for 12 households (*source: MHCLG Live Tables*).
- 2.4 Under the Homelessness Reduction Act, the length of a typical housing interview has increased from around 45 minutes to around two hours, reflecting the additional information and work required. We have invested in new prevention software. The Housing Options team has been restructured to reflect and facilitate this change. A new manager post has been created to focus on developing new strategic partnerships and delivering the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 2.5 The Act increases our duties to some households (particularly those who are not in a priority need group), but there may be a reduced duty to some other households if they do not co-operate after receiving a warning notice.
- 2.6 The 'Prevention' and 'Relief' duties do not directly affect the Council's duty to carry out a homelessness investigation to see whether the Council has a duty to secure accommodation. The stages are set out in law and the Council also has regard to the Government's statutory Code of Guidance on Homelessness. Further information on this is in the Council's Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2017-22. Homelessness-related domestic abuse has also increased since the last Homelessness Strategy.
- 2.7 The Council will place the housing register on the same computer system (Jigsaw) as is used for homelessness prevention. This will replace the outdated system the Council currently uses for the housing register and will allow applications to be made electronically. It will also provide an opportunity to both review all the applicants on the register and to review the Council's Housing Allocation Policy in the light of the Homelessness Act.

The Private Rented Sector

- 2.8 Universal Credit rollout continues to replace Housing Benefit and a number of other benefits for working age people. Rent payments are

generally made direct to the tenants unless there is a good reason to pay the landlord directly.

- 2.9 With rent levels particularly high in Rutland, landlords are concerned about benefit cuts and the impact on potential tenants that may be on benefits. The table below shows private rental levels in Rutland. This contributes to many young people leaving the area because they cannot afford accommodation locally. It also contributes to single applicants having to access the private rented sector out of Rutland.
- 2.10 The number of housing cost claimants living in the private rented sector has fallen from around 430 in 2012 to about 200 currently (source: paragraph 6.23 of SHMA Update 2019, from DWP). This suggests that it has become harder for people in housing need to access the private rented sector, even though the number of private rented homes has also increased (para. 6.24).

Average (median) private sector rent (per month) 2012 and 2019 – Rutland				
	2012	2019	Change	% change
1-bedroom	£430	£450	£20	5%
2-bedrooms	£550	£625	£75	14%
3-bedrooms	£650	£725	£75	12%
4+-bedrooms	£1,195	£1,250	£55	5%
All dwellings	£595	£675	£80	13%

Source: Valuation Office Agency (Figure 6.12 of SHMA Update 2019).

- 2.11 Under national rules, the maximum levels for Housing Benefit/ Universal Credit were set in line with the lowest 30% of private sector rents and then increased below the rate of inflation. Single people, under the age of 35 who are entitled to benefits cannot normally receive more than the shared accommodation rate of the Local Housing Allowance rates. In October 2019 this was £63.22 per week. This makes it very hard for single people under 35 to access housing even if they have a need. The 'bedroom tax' reduces benefit payments for social housing for working age people where their number of bedroom is more than is required by a strict interpretation of need.

Resources

- 2.12 The Government has provided additional resources in order to support local authorities to deliver the Homelessness Reduction Act up to the financial year 2019/20.

Government Resources to tackle homelessness			
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Flexible Homeless Support Grant (FHSG) (ring fenced)	£40,000	£40,000+ £29K top up end of 18/19	£40,000
Burdens Fund (ring fenced)	£4,342	£3,977	£5,129
Homeless Prevention Fund (non ring fenced)	£13,544	Nil	Nil
ICT Fund (ring fenced)	£9,000	Nil	Nil
H – CLIC payment (ring fenced)	£268	Nil	Nil
Discretionary Housing Payments	£32,880	£37,787	£30,188

2.13 The Flexible Homelessness Support Grant is ring fenced to homelessness services and the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act. Some of this funding has been used for the restructuring of the team in light of the changes required. All the ICT/H-Clic statistics funding has been fully spent on new software (Jigsaw) to fully implement the new HRA approach, plans and monitoring needs.

3.0 **AIM 2 - PROVIDE TARGETED SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS**

Temporary accommodation

3.1 The change in temporary accommodation since the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was adopted is shown below. This shows the effectiveness of the Council's approach to tackling homelessness. However, the numbers accommodated can fluctuate because of Rutland's small size.

Type of accommodation	31/03/16	31/03/17	31/03/18	31/03/19
Self-contained accommodation	5	5	2	0
Bed and breakfast	0	2	2	1
TOTAL	5	7	4	1

Housing, health and wellbeing

- 3.2 In February 2019, the disability claims in payment in Rutland, relating mainly to people of working age, were as follows (source: DWP via stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk).

Benefit	Claims
Employment and Support Allowance (February 2019)	537
Incapacity Benefit / Severe Disability Allowance (February 2019)	8
Personal Independence Payment (July 2019)	770
TOTAL	1,315

- 3.3 One of the major changes in the local partnership arrangements in recent years is the establishment of the Rutland Foodbank. This is run by local volunteers under the auspices of the Trussell Trust, the largest provider of food banks in the UK. Food Bank Clients are referred to the Foodbank through a voucher scheme by a wide range of referral agencies. In 2018/19, three day emergency food supplies were applied to 1,113 local people in crisis. This presents a 31% increase on the previous year. (Source: Foodbank 2019 AGM presentation).

Prevention and support

- 3.4 The Housing Options team is now part of the Prevention and Safeguarding service in Adult Social Care. This helps to provide a joined up and holistic approach to cases, with many vulnerable clients being assessed at the point of interview by a member of the duty team. Community Safety is also part of the team, which helps with prevention.
- 3.5 Rutland's Community Wellbeing Service provides a range of information, advice and support for wellbeing issues including welfare, debt and benefits, and those at risk of homelessness and other vulnerable households. Other services include sensory impairment services, older people's services, volunteering and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. This helps to maximise the individual's independence, community participation, health and wellbeing through living in their own home sustainably and safely. The services are delivered by a number of agencies, led by Citizens Advice Rutland, The Bridge and Longhurst.
- 3.6 The Council operates a crisis fund for households experiencing severe financial hardship. The fund has been managed by Rutland Citizens Advice Bureau since April 2018. In 2018/19 CAB received 66 applications, of which 38 were awarded. The total value of awards was £2,679 with an average award of £70.50. All awards are in the form of vouchers, no cash is given. The Council leads a multi-agency Welfare Reform Group that meets quarterly to discuss welfare reform issues. The Council also contributes towards the cost of the Melton

Furniture Project which enables Rutland residents to access the scheme.

- 3.7 The duty to refer came into force on 1 October 2018 and is part of the Homelessness Reduction Act. For the first time, this places a duty on named public bodies such as Jobcentres, Prisons and social services to refer those at risk of homelessness to their local housing authority, provided the customer agrees to the referral. This enhances the close inter-agency working that was already taking place in Rutland.

Households including children, young people or expectant mothers

- 3.8 The Housing Options team work closely with children's social care to support families in crisis and to help safeguard children where necessary.
- 3.9 The Council has worked with partners in Leicestershire to welcome some Syrian refugees to Rutland, meeting its target. This is facilitated by Home Office funding and a Syrian Vulnerable Persons Re-settlement Co-ordinator employed by Charnwood Borough Council, who covers Rutland and participating councils in Leicestershire. A support agency has been commissioned to provide intensive support whilst the families integrate, supported by the multi-agency partnership.

Military of Defence personnel, civilian base workers and their families

- 3.10 There are nearly 1,500 serving Army personnel in Rutland, as well as 1,000 other family members and around 4,000 known veterans. The Council has adopted the Armed Forces Community Covenant and employs an Armed Forces Officer.

Homeless people who are single or childless couples

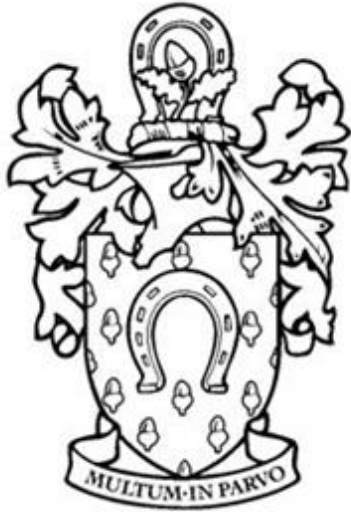
- 3.11 It is unusual for people to sleep rough in Rutland but it is not unknown. The Council works closely with partners, including support agencies, the Police and local churches to address this issue.
- 3.12 There are other people who have nowhere settled to live. Options include sharing with friends, trying to access the private sector through the rent deposit scheme or trying to access one of the few one-bedroomed rented affordable flats. We have prioritised this need. Since 2014, 32 new one-bedroomed general needs properties have been built by housing associations in Rutland. This has become more challenging due to the impact of welfare reform on Housing Benefit, such as under-35s being restricted to the equivalent of a single room rent, but new one-bedroomed flats remain a priority for the Council where appropriate.

People with learning disabilities or mental health needs

- 3.13 The Council promotes independent living for people with learning disabilities or who have experienced mental ill health. The Council works with partners to promote independent living for people with learning disabilities (including autism and Asperger's Syndrome) in a range of settings, including self-contained accommodation wherever possible.

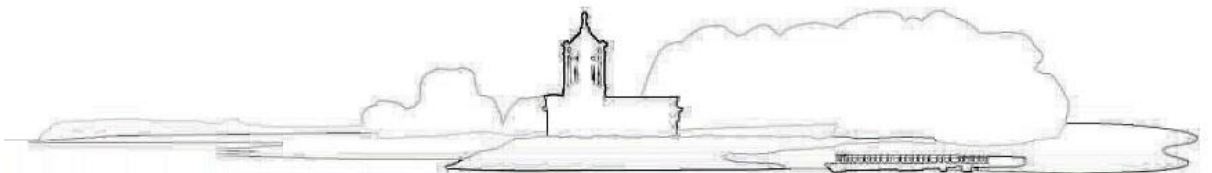
The housing needs of older people

- 3.14 A Market Position Statement for Older People has been published and is available at www.rutland.gov.uk/my-services/health-and-family/adult-social-care/market-position-statements/ It sets out the current and forecast future accommodation needs for Rutland.
- 3.15 The number of older people becoming homeless is very low as applicants can generally be rehoused through the housing register beforehand.



Rutland County Council

**A large print version of this document is
available on request**





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