

## Homelessness and Housing Solutions Team

### Homelessness

The Council's Homelessness and Housing Solutions Team's main focus is around the prevention of homelessness. We work with the household/individual 56 days prior to homelessness to achieve a positive outcome. We have a number of 'toolkits' which we use to do this including for example funds, support and negotiation with landlords. In the first instance our aim is to keep the household where they are, if safe to do so. For those that cannot remain in their current accommodation and need rehousing we do this via Tees Valley HomeFinder, funds, advice on private rent and local housing allowance rates, floating support to help the individual/family sustain their tenancy.

Profile of those who approach the service: Over 70% of duties accepted by our service from April 2020 to March 2021 was from single people

### Commissioned Supported Housing

We are currently in the process of moving over to a new Short Term Housing Related Support Contracts, where we have an identified need of 100 singles, 20 families, 10 low needs single couples. These services will provide both accommodation for homeless households and support services which will include ensuring residents attend appointments with service providers such as drug services or probation, ensure residents gain the skills necessary to live independently and such.

The Councils commissioned providers are as detailed below. Single households will receive 7 hours of support each week, and families will receive 5 hours.

- Bridge House
- Newalk
- Turnaround Homes
- Community Campus
- Sanctuary.

When a household needs emergency or supported accommodation the Councils Homelessness and Housing Team consider all support and risk factors prior to placement, then moves the household on

in a relevant and timely manner so as not to create long term cohorts of complex households in particular areas.

Most of the single person accommodation is in the town centre area this is due to the provider/landlords property that are manageable from a financial business perspective and property type. The recent Supported Housing Tender for homeless households brought no new providers to the area.

### **Un-commissioned Housing**

There are a number of providers in the Borough that offer accommodation on a license for those who are experiencing homelessness or potential homelessness. In such instances accommodation is not directly commissioned by the Council and as such the Council do not may any payments other than the payment of eligible housing benefit costs.

We try to work in partnership work with the providers with referrals, to discourage any referrals from out of the Borough being placed due to often the complex needs of the customer and subsequent potential additional resource on other services in the Borough, however as they are private companies this can prove difficult at times.

### **Rough Sleeping**

There are a relatively low number of Rough Sleepers in the Borough, the last official reported count (November 2020) reported 8 confirmed rough sleepers, this was the same number as reported in 2019 but an increase over the previous 5 years. Many rough sleepers are working with service but on a crisis basis and few if any actually participate in begging (most of the individuals who are active beggars have accommodation).

We have a team that works proactively to engage Rough Sleepers to get them in off the street, and to prevent anyone spending a first night out by working with accommodation providers to prevent eviction which is one of the main reasons people sleep rough in the first place.

The team consists of:

- Rough Sleeper Team Leader – Duties include management of the Team to meet the objectives of the Rough Sleeper Strategy

- Rough Sleeper Navigator – Outreach working in hot spots identified for rough sleeping, conducts 2 weekly early morning sweeps in hot spot areas and works in partnership with community safety team and Moses Project (VCSE organisation).
- Tenancy Sustainment Officer – Additional resources of support for any resident on verge of eviction from supported housing or a complex customer on the verge of eviction from a tenancy
- Specialist Outreach Recovery working – delivered through a contract with Change Grow and Live contract, which supports those at risk of rough sleeping with addictions
- Homelessness Prison Officer – A dedicated Officer undertaking Homeless Reduction Act assessments within Holme House prison on behalf of the Tees Valley

In addition to the 'standard' homelessness prevention toolkit they also have the following available to them:

- Personalization funds – To address individual needs
- We provide a wide range of accommodation options for rough sleepers including;
  - four Rough Sleeper flats, due to the complexities of the individuals that are likely to occupy each flat all residents receive 10 hours support per week
  - 12 move on properties to enable move on from hostel based accommodation
  - 6 properties with North Star to move households on from hostel based accommodation

#### Multi-agency working

Across the authority we work to ensure no one sleeps rough on any night, we do this in collaboration with a wide network of agencies including;

- A Rough Sleeper Action Group that consists of a range of agencies working to assist those who sleep rough or those at risk of sleeping rough
- The housing providers identified above, with support agencies, including the Moses Project - to support those who have rough slept or at risk of rough sleeping in their own tenancies
- Active participants with the Team Around The Individual (TATI) group lead by adult safeguarding