

# **South Nottinghamshire**

## **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027**

### **Foreword**

As the portfolio holders for Broxtowe Borough Council, Gedling Borough Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council with responsibility for homelessness, we are pleased to be introducing the new South Nottinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Over recent years, the Homelessness landscape has seen a number of significant changes and challenges, including new duties on Council's and other public sector organisations to prevent and relieve homelessness. The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the Domestic Abuse Act have been positive steps in helping vulnerable groups, this has been set against a backdrop of other challenges, notably, Welfare Reform, Universal Credit and the COVID-19 pandemic.

More recently and particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increased emphasis on assisting rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping with opportunities to provide specialist support and accommodation. Successful Rough Sleeper Initiatives and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme Services will continue to play a key role in ending rough sleeping.

We recognise the importance and benefits of effective partnerships in improving the wider health and wellbeing outcomes for homeless and vulnerable individuals. A key focus of this strategy will be the ongoing collaboration between stakeholders across South Nottinghamshire and Nottinghamshire as a whole. Successful partnership working between the Borough Councils, Nottinghamshire County Council, Registered Housing Providers, Public Health and Commissioned Service Providers, Voluntary, Charitable Agencies and Community Interest Companies will ensure a system wide approach to reducing homelessness and rough sleeping.

The strategy sets out 6 key strategic aims and contains an action plan that outlines how these will be delivered. Progress on the action plan will be reported to the Broxtowe Interagency Forum and reviewed on a quarterly basis. It will also be monitored through the respective governance arrangements.

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of this Strategy and in particular the vital role of Partners, who continue to play an important role in delivering the strategic priorities within the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

## 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 Homelessness 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 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 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) 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 Borough's
- Establishment of a South Nottinghamshire Winter Night Shelter at Elizabeth House in 19-20. 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 MHCLG. 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 funding, providing access to improved pathways for clients such as through the 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 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, have 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 2021-24 (RSAP).

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.

The 'Next Steps' accommodation programme was launched in July 2020. Funding has been available to Council's to submit bids for from the MHCLG 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, that has run for in excess of 12 months in 2020 and 2021. This has meant that primarily rental evictions, but some other evictions as well, 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 in Appendix 1.

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 the previous Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2017-21 and a review of the current situation the local context, 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 MHCLG funded initiatives have been key in reducing rough sleeping and sustaining accommodation. The Council's all access

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

In addition, the RSI also commission Change, Grow, Live (CGL) to provide specialist addiction services, commissions physical health, mental health and social work services and 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 homeless population that are at risk of rough sleeping.

The three Borough’s remain committed to ending rough sleeping across South Nottinghamshire.

RSI services are detailed and summarised in Appendix 2.

#### 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 Borough’s had been able to access accommodation within the Private Rented Sector, but as competition of rental properties increases, landlords routinely increase their rents, which means that many areas of Nottinghamshire are seeing rents far in excess of the Local Housing Allowance. This makes it increasingly a less viable solution.

## **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, which 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 and legislative or good practice changes that may arise during the lifetime of the strategy. An annual report will also be provided to each of the partner Council's and the MHCLG.

## Action Plan

<b>Early intervention through effective partnership working</b>				
<b>Strategy Action</b>	<b>How it will be implemented</b>	<b>Type of Objective</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
Continuing to develop the partnership working around homelessness with Nottinghamshire County Council	The three Councils will continue to engage positively with partnership meetings such as the Housing Sub Group to improve and coordinate agency responses across South Nottinghamshire and Nottinghamshire as a whole	Prevention	BBC, GBC, RBC, Nottinghamshire County Council	22-23 ongoing
Work in partnership across the three Councils and with partner agencies to help to educate young people around the risks and implications of homelessness	Continue work with partners like Broxtowe Youth Homelessness to develop and provide support in local schools and in the communities to young people	Prevention	BBC, GBC, RBC, Broxtowe Youth Homelessness	22-23 ongoing
Strengthening links with key partner agencies to improve help and assistance to vulnerable households	Involve and work with agencies such as the Police, Community Safety Partnerships and other community and outreach services to ensure appropriate advice and support is given and appropriate referral pathways are used	Prevention	BBC, GBC, RBC, statutory partners	22-23 ongoing
	Ensure that the three Councils are using their forums to share knowledge	Intervention	BBC, GBC, RBC	22-23 ongoing



Ensuring that we are maximising all potential accommodation options	and referral pathways to all providers who are working with vulnerable groups and communities within South Nottinghamshire			
Ensure that links with Registered Social Landlords are strengthened	Improve links with Registered Social Landlords operating within South Nottinghamshire surrounding potentially homeless clients that they are looking to evict, to improve early intervention	Prevention	BBC, GBC, RBC, RSL's in S.Notts	23-24
Maximise the funding available to assist homeless clients	Ensure that MHCLG funding is applied for through bids to ensure that there is a supply of accommodation that meets the needs of clients in South Nottinghamshire.  Particularly the continuation to year 5 of the RSI funding and its associated service	Prevention, Intervention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC, RSI services	22-23 ongoing

## The provision of an accessible, agile and responsive homelessness service

Strategy Action	How it will be implemented	Type of Objective	Responsible	Target Date
All three Councils continue to develop and improve prevention options	The three Councils will continue to review data and trends within their Borough and clients and explore with partners new approaches to homelessness prevention	Prevention, Intervention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC	22-23 ongoing
Ensuring that homelessness data is analysed to inform quality and targeted service delivery	Analyse and review data collected to identify trends and discuss between Borough's to inform future service delivery	Prevention, Intervention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC	23-24
Ensuring that those accessing the service receive a quality service that provides clients with the best options and advice	Annual review of staff training and knowledge undertaken to ensure staff are well equipped to undertake their roles  Development of robust quality assurance frameworks within Housing Options team, seeking the views of service users, to ensure quality service delivery and shape the future service	Prevention, Intervention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC	23-24
Ensuring that homeless clients are able to access housing options and advice services	Review the service access and customer journeys within the Borough's to ensure that clients are able to access services and are able to access them in a variety of ways,	Prevention, Intervention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC	23-24

	including the perspective of the service user			
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### Access to affordable and quality accommodation across all sectors

Strategy Action	How it will be implemented	Type of Objective	Responsible	Target Date
Ensure homeless applicants are being appropriately prioritised using the social housing allocations schemes	Review allocations policies within the three Council areas to ensure that the prioritisation of applicants is fair and appropriate	Prevention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC	23-24
Ensure that homeless clients are assisted and are enabled to access suitable accommodation in the private sector	Review private rented sector incentives and monitor effectiveness, looking for new incentives or opportunities	Prevention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC	23-24
Improving availability of suitable supported accommodation with South Nottinghamshire	Consider establishing a "Housing First" scheme is appropriate within South Nottinghamshire	Intervention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC	23-24
Enable access to suitable social housing for homeless clients	<p>Improve the links that Housing Options Teams in South Nottinghamshire have with their Choice Based Lettings service and look to establish social landlord forums, to discuss maximisation of social housing being made available for the Borough's to allocate to</p> <p>Building on the strength of the first 2 rounds of RSAP funding which will</p>	Prevention, Intervention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC, RSL's in S.Notts	23-24

	deliver and additional 13 units, continue to seek and successfully bid for additional funding for supported accommodation.			
Ensure that the temporary accommodation offered in South Nottinghamshire is of a high standard	Improving the quality of temporary accommodation offered to homeless clients, minimising the use of bed and breakfast accommodation where possible	Intervention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC	23-24

## Tackle rough sleeping by developing and improving pathways

Strategy Action	How it will be implemented	Type of Objective	Responsible	Target Date
Improving accommodation options for rough sleepers	<p>Increase amount of accommodation with support available within South Nottinghamshire that is targeted at rough sleepers through RSAP and other funding mechanisms.</p> <p>13 units so far via this initiative, in addition to winter provision</p>	Intervention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC	22-23 ongoing
Ensure effective partnerships are built and maintained to tackle rough sleeping and known rough sleepers	Establish and maintain Rough Sleeper Action Groups within South Nottinghamshire to share information and develop strategies towards rough sleeping.	Intervention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC, rough sleeper navigator	22-23 ongoing
Ensure a rapid response to rough sleeping reports across South Nottinghamshire	To work closely with Framework Street Outreach to identify rough sleepers, to offer support to them and try to engage with them positively around accessing support	Intervention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC, frameworks street outreach	22-23 ongoing
Ensure that support is offered or provided to rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping	Working with the services provided by through the Rough Sleeping Initiative, gain a greater understanding of what barriers there are for engagement with rough sleepers and understand what can be done to navigate them, particularly for entrenched rough sleepers	Intervention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC, all RSI services	23-24

	<p>Look to create action plans for known rough sleepers using Rough Sleeper Action Groups</p> <p>Seek out good practice and involve specialist officers where appropriate to tackle entrenched rough sleepers</p>			
Groups that are known to be at greater risk of rough sleeping are given improved pathways to access support	Working to improve protocols regarding those clients that are at greater risk of rough sleeping or for whose homelessness is difficult to prevent. Particularly those being released from prison, leaving care or discharged from hospital	Intervention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC, RSI services, statutory partner agencies	23-24
In times of severe weather, all efforts are made to ensure nobody is sleeping rough in South Nottinghamshire	An agreed South Nottinghamshire protocol is maintained regarding Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEPE) and a commitment to ensuring those sleeping rough are accommodated for the severe weather period	Intervention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC	22-23 ongoing

**Linking health, well-being and housing together to improve the life chances and aspirations of those affected**

<b>Strategy Action</b>	<b>How it will be implemented</b>	<b>Type of Objective</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
Ensure that the Domestic Abuse Act is fully implemented across South Nottinghamshire	<p>Ensure that policies and procedures are amended to ensure that the new act is being implemented correctly</p> <p>Work with Nottinghamshire County Council to ensure the improvement of domestic abuse services across Nottinghamshire through the Local Partnership Board and contributing to the new County wide commissioning proposal</p>	Prevention, Intervention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC, Nottinghamshire County Council	22-23 ongoing
Ensure the health implications of homelessness within South Nottinghamshire are understood and are part of our strategic and operational approach	Improve and enhance the work undertaken with partner agencies to acknowledge and improve the health and wellbeing of homeless clients in South Nottinghamshire	Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC	22-23 ongoing
Ensure effective links are built and maintained between Housing Options Teams and health and social care teams	Build on partnerships built through the Housing sub-group of the Local Authority cell to give South Nottinghamshire direct access to services and commissioners or services to help shape services to local people	Prevention, Intervention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC	22-23 ongoing

Ensure that support needs are identified in all homeless households	Review risk assessment and application processes to ensure that these are being picked up and suitable onward referrals are being made	Prevention, Intervention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC	23-24
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### Delivering long term support solutions to sustain tenancies for the most vulnerable

Strategy Action	How it will be implemented	Type of Objective	Responsible	Target Date
Ensuring that clients that are moving on from supported accommodation are not at a disproportionately high risk of tenancy failure	Work with supported accommodation providers on processes surrounding move on assessments to ensure that providers of accommodation are aware of any potential tenancy sustainment risks	Prevention, Intervention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC	23-24
Ensure that clients are supported to overcome housing related difficulties that threaten homelessness and can lead to rough sleeping	Work closely with Framework to maximise and ensure effective usage of the Prevention and Resettlement service	Prevention	BBC, GBC, RBC, Framework	22-23 ongoing
Develop new and innovative approaches to sustaining tenancies and preventing homelessness	Continue usage of support mechanisms such as prevention funds to ensure that clients are able to access or sustain their accommodation	Prevention, Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC	22-23 ongoing



	Consider usage of mediation services to work with families or landlords to prevent homelessness and sustain accommodation			
Ensuring the effective support to is provided to clients in the procured RSAP units	Review support mechanisms provided during the initial phase, identifying and providing improvements where necessary	Recovery	BBC, GBC, RBC, Framework	23-25

\*Abbreviation guidance

BBC- Broxtowe Borough Council

GBC- Gedling Borough Council

RBC- Rushcliffe Borough Council

RSL – Registered Social Landlord. A Registered Social Landlord is an organisation that provides social and affordable housing. Generally comprised of housing associations that are non-profit making but are independent from state ownership of local authority control.

RSI – Rough Sleeper Initiative – Services provided to assist in prevention, intervention and recovery of homelessness through Government funding following successful bids.

MHCLG – Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government