

**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**Scrutiny Panel 1 – Food Poverty**

Your attendance is requested at a meeting to be held at The Jeffrey Room,  
The Guildhall, St. Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE on  
2 March 2020 at 6pm

**George Candler**  
**Chief Executive**

If you need any advice or information regarding this agenda please phone who will be able to assist with your enquiry. For further information regarding **Scrutiny Panel 1 - Food Poverty** please visit the website [www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny)

**Members of the Panel**

Chair	Councillor Dennis Meredith
Panel Members	Councillor Alan L Bottwood Councillor Emma Roberts Councillor Cathrine Russell Councillor Zoe Smith
Co-opted Members	Paul Foster, Emmanuel Church Clive Ireson, Northamptonshire Food Poverty Network

**Calendar of meetings**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Room</b>
31 March 2020 6:00 pm	All meetings to be held in the Jeffery Room at the Guildhall unless otherwise stated

# Northampton Borough Scrutiny Panel 1 - Food Poverty

## Agenda

Item No and Time	Title	Pages	Action required
1. 6pm	Apologies		The Chair to note apologies for absence.
2.	Deputations and Public Addresses		<p>The Chair to note public address requests.</p> <p>The public can speak on any agenda item for a maximum of three minutes per speaker per item. You are not required to register your intention to speak in advance but should arrive at the meeting a few minutes early, complete a <a href="#">Public Address Protocol</a> and notify the Scrutiny Officer of your intention to speak.</p>
3.	Minutes	1 - 6	The Scrutiny Panel to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2020.
4. 6:05pm	Witness Evidence	7 - 9	The Scrutiny Panel to receive a written response to its core questions and supplementary queries from the Partnership Manager, Department of Work and Pensions
5. 6:25pm	statutory and social overcrowding	11 - 16	The Committee to consider a briefing on statutory and social overcrowding
6. 6:50pm	Published Reports	17 - 18	<p>The Scrutiny Panel to receive a briefing note detailing a number of relevant published reports to this Scrutiny Review:</p> <p>Children's Future Food Inquiry</p>

## NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - FOOD POVERTY

Tuesday, 14 January 2020

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:** Councillor Meredith (Chair) (until 7:45pm) Councillor Russell (Deputy Chair, in the Chair from 7:45pm), Councillors Roberts and Smith

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS:** Paul Foster Emmanuel Church  
Clive Ireson Northamptonshire Food Poverty Network

**Witnesses** Sarah Holton and Julie Pritchard, Department of Work and Pensions  
Robin Burgess, CEO, Hope Centre  
Rachel McGrath, Deputy CEO, , Northamptonshire Community Foundation and facilitator of Northamptonshire Food Poverty Network  
Phil Harris, Director of Housing and Wellbeing, NBC

Councillor Danielle Stone

**Officers** Geraldine Mahney, Customer Services Manager  
Tracy Tiff, Democratic and Member Services Manager

**Press** James Averill, Democracy Reporter

#### 1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Bottwood.

The Chair left the meeting at 19:45 hours and the Deputy Chair took the chair for this meeting from 19:45 hours.

#### 2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 and 25 November 2019 were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

### **3. DEPUTATIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES**

Councillor Danielle Stone circulated her written response and addressed the Scrutiny Panel and commented that Food poverty sits within wider poverty. Councillor Stone added that poverty within Northampton has increased from 16,000 to 18,000 children. There is a lot of concern and misery for the families throughout the area. Schools and health visitors know about this issue. There is a need to ensure that no children throughout Northampton are seen to be hungry. Holiday hunger is also an issue and something needs to be done about this. Councillor Stone explained how living in poverty is worked out she then went on the state the next stage of the Living Wage Foundation needs implementing. Often children in poverty come from a working family. Often people living in poverty have no electricity, saucepans or a cooker and obtain food from a food bank but do not have the facilities to cook it. There is a need for both NCC and NBC to have Anti- Poverty Strategies.

Councillor Stone was thanked for her address.

The Scrutiny Panel asked questions, made comment and heard:

- People living in poverty often give up hope. Poverty does people damage, sucks the time and energy out of people.

### **4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

### **5. WITNESS EVIDENCE**

#### **(A) PARTNERSHIP MANAGER, DEPARTMENT OF WORK AND PENSIONS**

The Scrutiny Panel received evidence from a variety of expert advisors:

#### **Sarah Holton and Julie Pritchard, Department of Work and Pensions**

In response to a request, Sarah Holton confirmed that she would provide a written response to the core questions and would attend the next meeting of the Panel.

Sarah Holton then gave the Panel an overview of her work:

- Unemployment rate is 3.7% and is the lowest since the 1970s. More people have moved into work. Sarah Holton advised that she was not aware that poverty had increased across Northampton.
- The Department of Work and Pensions works closely with many organisations to support deprived areas and has outreach workers.

- “Entitled to calculation” can be undertaken and Officers can then look at the individual’s circumstances. Individuals would never be asked to move from a Legacy Benefit to Universal Credit unless this was financially better for them. Officers help individuals make best use of the income that they have.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- The Chair reminded the Panel of the expected outcomes of this Review and commented that previous evidence had provided details of the impact Universal Credit had on people’s lives and the difficulties people have accessing help from Benefits’ Officers.
- In response to a query regarding 3.7% unemployment and the types of work people are currently in, Sarah Holton advised Universal Credit pays more the less an individual earns. It is based on earnings. If an individual is on a zero hours contract and does not work at all this then remains consistent; a taper for Universal Credit is detailed on the website of the Department of Work and Pensions.
- The employer must notify HMRC of the earnings of each employee.
- In response to a query regarding sanctions, Sarah Holton confirmed that there is huge process that takes place before sanctions are implemented. Sanctions are the last thing that HMRC wants to introduce. The aim is to get the individual’s money right and ready from the first assessment.
- In response to a query regarding the potential causes of individuals having to use food banks, Sarah Holton commented that she had read a previous response from Citizens Advice (CA) and would agree with the comment that often this can be mismanagement of money. HMRC can do entitlement assessments.
- HMRC works collaboratively with partner organisations to help people. It has a claim commitment but it needs individuals to tell officers about their circumstances. Individuals can contact HMRC for assistance.
- In response to a comment that individuals often don’t have anything left for food after housing and other bills have been paid; they often go into food banks at the weekend, unable to feed their children; Sarah Holton responded that she goes to Corby and Towcester food banks and works with them to see what their income is and assist them. Sarah Holton confirmed that she was very happy to attend a food bank in Northampton and work with new and/or repeat users.
- Housing is always going to be an issue as rents can often be very high; HMRC cannot influence the rents. Costs of housing is often higher than housing benefit of the housing element of Universal Credit.
- The Chair commented that zero hours contracts can often contribute to poverty. A lot of vulnerable people cannot read and write. Sarah Holton confirmed that HMRC has partner organisations that can assist people with claims.
- DWP has a visiting team.
- The Universal Credit app is easy to use. The Scrutiny Panel suggested it could be a potential recommendation of its final report that this app is widely promoted.
- In response to a question about zero hours contracts, the Panel was advised that under a Legacy contract, should individuals work more than 16 hours a week their benefit would be reduced and their claim closed. With Universal Credit, if an individual’s earnings fluctuated – e.g. more earnings, less credit the account would

only close if they earned more than Universal Credit. If the job comes to an end they can notify change of circumstances and a re-assessment is done.

- The Panel commented that there are a number of people in work, receiving benefits and still not having enough to live on and it was further commented that sanctions are quickly and abruptly implemented.
- Sarah Holton advised that money mismanagement was a key factor and was asked to provide anonymised case studies to the effect.
- Sarah Holton confirmed that she works closely with Corby and Towcester and should she be invited to any groups, organisations or Food Banks in Northampton she would attend.
- In response to a question, Sarah Holton confirmed that there is a programme of training in place that comprises 39 vulnerabilities. Mental health training includes suicide and ex-offenders. She highlighted that her Office is not a trainer to give support regarding mental health but they can and do signpost.
- It was realised that some individuals are fearful to go to the Job Centre. There are lots of posters in the Job Centre regarding partner agencies.
- Sarah Holton confirmed that a lot of outreach takes place through schools and advice can be given.
- The Customer Services Manager advised that Sarah Holton regularly visits NBC and is part of the Welfare Reform meetings; that comprise a number of partners. Improvements come from these meetings.

The Panel requested that Sarah Holton submits a written response to the core questions and a written brief on all the comments raised at this meeting. The Democratic and Member Services Manager undertook to contact Sarah Holton. Timescales and criteria regarding sanctions would also be useful.

Sarah Holton was thanked for her informative address, the contents of which were noted.

**AGREED;** That Sarah Holton is asked to submit a written response to the core questions and a written brief on all the comments raised at this meeting. The Democratic and Member Services Manager would make contact with Sarah Holton. Timescales and criteria regarding sanctions would also be useful.

## **(B) CHIEF EXECUTIVE, HOPE CENTRE**

Robin Burgess, Chief Executive, Hope Centre, provided a comprehensive written response to the core questions and elaborated on the salient points. He highlighted that the cause of poverty, in his opinion, is low or no income.

The Scrutiny Panel asked questions, made comment and heard:

- In response to a query regarding what the answer was to combat poverty, Robin Burgess suggested proper wages – a living wage which would be a positive step forward. Work is often temporary and zero hours. He was also concerned regarding the level of benefits and the way it is processed; he felt that until benefits and wages increased poverty would increase.

- The Panel commended Robin Burgess's comprehensive responses.
- There is a need to do more to co-ordinate between food providers. Hope has worked with Northamptonshire Poverty Network but more needs to be done and co-ordinated.
- Robin Burgess suggested a summer festival to "unlock" food.
- A potential recommendation of the final report was suggested that NBC look to working with partners in generating more events such as a summer festival.
- A further potential recommendation was suggested that promotion of food poverty is highlighted to allotment holders and shops regarding giving away excess produce.
- It was highlighted that warehouse space is vital and needed.
- It was expected that the food banking system would continue to grow.
- NPH has to identify areas where they can build houses and is attempting to deliver a higher number of social housing. Concern was raised regarding the planning process whereby often a developer will reduce social housing percentage by the time it is presented as an application.
- In response to a question whether students access food at the Hope Centre, Robin Burgess confirmed that he was not aware of any. People aged 18-80 do access the Hope Centre facilities.

Robin Burgess was thanked for his informative address.

AGREED: The information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

### **(C) COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR**

Rachel McGrath, Deputy CEO, Northamptonshire Community Foundation and facilitator of Northamptonshire Food Poverty Network provided a verbal update to the core questions; following the meeting she provided a comprehensive written response which was then added to the agenda.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- In noted that free meals are provided in nurseries in Scotland, the Scrutiny Panel suggested a potential recommendation of its final report that the Health Start Voucher Scheme is promoted.
- There is a need to stop marketing junk food.
- A lot of working families, live in poverty.
- Concerns were raised regarding individuals being unable to plan for the future if they are living in poverty.
- The absence of Sure Start Centres has become obvious as has the reduced library services.
- It was highlighted that the Voluntary Sector is not a safety net and should not be relied on.
- Individuals often go to services for help as a last resort.
- Poverty is about the lack of cash, food banks are not a lifestyle choice.
- The Panel heard of the recent campaign win is the commitment of the measurement of food insecurity by the Government. The first statistics are due for release in April 2020: <https://www.endhungeruk.org/2019/02/27/campaign-win-uk-governmentagrees-to-measure-household-food-insecurity/>

It was suggested that the report that the Food Poverty Network [Children's Future Food Inquiry](#), is sent to the Democratic and Member Services Manager for the next meeting. Rachel McGrath was also asked to submit testimonies for the Panel's information. A further potential recommendation was suggested - that it is recommended to the new Unitary Authority that Northampton is promoted and becomes a living wage and sustainable food town.

A further potential recommendation was also suggested – that the new Unitary Authority is asked to lobby for national campaigns and challenge national Policy on food poverty. It was further suggested that a copy of the final report of this Scrutiny Panel is provided to the MPs

Rachel McGrath was thanked for her informative address.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

## **6. STATUTORY AND SOCIAL OVERCROWDING**

Phil Harris, Director of Housing and Wellbeing, circulated a written report detailing Statutory and Social Overcrowding and the definition of Statutory Overcrowding (as set out in Part 10 of the Housing Act 1985) and an understanding of what is meant by 'Social Overcrowding'. He ran over the briefing note in detail, highlighting the key points.

The Scrutiny Panel suggested that it would ask the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee if it could undertake pre decision Scrutiny of the new Policy regarding overcrowding.

Councillor Roberts advised that Shelter has produced a report on Space Standards and it was suggested this is considered by the Scrutiny Panel at its next meeting.

It was suggested that this report is considered by the Scrutiny Panel at its March 2020 meeting.

Phil Harris was thanked for his informative address.

AGREED: 1) That the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked if it could undertake pre decision Scrutiny of the new Policy regarding overcrowding.

2) That the report produced by Shelter on overcrowding is considered by the Scrutiny Panel at its March 2020 meeting.

3) That the briefing note on Statutory and Social Overcrowding is considered at the March 2020 meeting of this Scrutiny Panel.

The meeting concluded at 8:03 pm

## CORE QUESTIONS -RESPONSE FROM THE EMPLOYER AND PARTNERSHIP MANAGER, DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS

**1. Do you feel that poverty is growing within the town? Please can you supply some trend data in support of your response, such as who are the most affected, where it is concentrated and the main causes of poverty.**

- With over half a million fewer children living in a long term workless household since 2010 and a record rate of single parents in work, we have improved the futures of thousands of UK families - giving them better opportunities and more financial security.
- Childcare should never be a barrier to getting a good job. That's why through Universal Credit parents can receive personalised Work Coach support at over 600 local jobcentres and can claim back up to 85% of their childcare costs, making sure work always pays

**2. What do you feel are the causes of poverty locally?**

Poverty rarely has a single cause. A range of factors including rising living costs, and accommodation costs taking a bigger chunk out of household finances. We support people into work who can take more control over their working lives and income.

**3. What can public services do in this time of austerity?**

By providing money management support to families who find themselves struggling with overwhelming debt.

**4. What can other groups/individuals do to help?**

Turn2us is a national charity providing practical help to people who are struggling financially.

The helpline supports people by completing benefits calculator and grants search over the phone. They also offer web chat during opening hours to give support on calculator or grant search results.

Benefits are money or credits given by the government to help people on low incomes or with specific needs. Grants are money given by charities to people in financial need. You don't have to pay them back.

We want people to improve their financial situation by gaining access to welfare benefits, charitable grants and support services.

Should anyone need help with managing their money they can speak to their work coach and be signposting to the most appropriate support available.

DWP is working with local councils and organisations, like the Money Advice Service and Citizens Advice.

## **5. What is being done by your organisation to identify and mitigate household poverty?**

- The Government wants to develop its understanding of household food needs so that it can ensure that support is targeted on those who are most vulnerable. We welcome this 3-year research programme which will help build our evidence base; and look forward to working with the Trussell Trust and others to understand how this evidence can help inform and shape future support.
- This report shows that food bank use cannot be linked to a single reason and that many food bank users are already experiencing a range of very challenging personal circumstances and ill-health which can limit their ability to engage effectively with the benefits system or to sustain employment.
- It also shows that there is more to do to ensure that vulnerable people are able to access the support they are entitled to including discretionary support and help with a range of issues including budgeting and debt advice.
- The Government is committed to a strong safety-net for those who need it and continues to spend over £95 billion a year on welfare benefits. This includes a well-established system of hardship payments, benefit advances and budgeting loans as an additional safeguard for those who need them.
- Jobcentre managers already have discretion to work with food banks; and we are exploring whether, building on existing good practice, working more closely with food banks can help us to identify and better support any customers who may, for a variety of reasons, not be receiving the full formal support that they are entitled to.

## **6. Are you aware of an impact that poverty has had on the economy, crime, health and education? Please supply further details, together with any supporting statistics.**

The DWP does not keep data relating to this and I am unable to comment.

## **7. How can partnership working be maximised?**

Attending countywide forums and sharing of information on services, products and how to access them.

## **8. What has already been done to tackle poverty and what assistance is currently available?**

Universal Credit Payment timeliness – July 2019 (provisional)

Proportion of paid UC claims that were paid on time (all claims)

- Full payment on time: 95.49%
- Some payment on time: 98.29%

Proportion of paid UC claims that were paid on time (new claims)

- Full payment on time: 88.43%
- Some payment on time: 92.89%

**9. What awareness exists of the different types of assistance that is available and how can this awareness be improved?**

We work in collaboration with numerous partners who often deliver their services from Jobcentres. All staff are aware of who is on site each day and will actively promote what help there is. We also have online access to a directory of local services and search for the most appropriate help support to signpost to.

**10. Are all households in poverty being reached?**

We will offer support to all those in receipt of a benefit

**11. What support and advice is available to individuals who find themselves in arrears, for example, arrears on mortgage payments?**

If a claimant declares they are financially struggling to pay their rent, they may be able to get further support and financial help from their local authority and should be signposted to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP). The AD/TA/DM signposts the claimant to their local authority and if appropriate sends them an SMS text using the template - UC LA Financial Assistance (DHP).

If the claimant would like help and support with their Council Tax payments, the AD signposts them to their local authority and if appropriate sends an SMS text using the template - UC Council Tax Reduction Support.

**12. Do you have further information regarding poverty issues which you would like to inform the Scrutiny Panel?**

You can have some of your bills (including rent, services charges, fuel or water bills) paid directly out of your benefits payments if you're having difficulties. This is called 'third party deductions' and sometimes Fuel Direct.

This page is intentionally left blank



## OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Statutory and Social Overcrowding</b>
---------------------	--

<b>Meeting Date:</b>	14 January 2020
<b>Accountable Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Stephen Hibbert

### 1. Purpose of this Briefing

---

- 1.1 During the Overview & Scrutiny Review of Food Poverty, members of the Scrutiny Panel requested information about Statutory and Social Overcrowding and how overcrowded households are assessed under the Housing Allocations Scheme.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Briefing is to provide the Overview & Scrutiny Panel with the definition of Statutory Overcrowding (as set out in Part 10 of the Housing Act 1985) and an understanding of what is meant by 'Social Overcrowding'.
- 1.3 This Briefing also explains how overcrowded households are currently assessed under Northampton's Housing Allocations Scheme and describes the changes that will be recommended during the development of West Northamptonshire's Scheme.

### 2. Definition of Statutory Overcrowding

---

- 2.1 Two standards – the '**room standard**' and the '**space standard**' – are used to assess whether a home is 'statutorily overcrowded' under Part 10 of the Housing Act 1985.
- 2.2 If either or both of these standards are breached, the home will be deemed to be statutorily overcrowded.

#### The Room Standard

- 2.3 Section 325 of the Housing Act 1985 specifies that there is overcrowding wherever there are so many people in a house that any two or more of those persons, being ten or more years old and of opposite sexes (and who are not living together as a couple) have to sleep in the same room.

- 2.4 For these purposes, children under the age of ten may be disregarded and a room means any room normally used as either a bedroom or a living room. A kitchen can be considered to be a living room provided it is big enough to accommodate a bed.
- 2.5 When interpreting this definition, a local authority looks at how the sleeping arrangements within the premises could be organised, rather than how they are actually organised.
- 2.6 This means, for example, that a man and a woman living as a couple with two children of opposite sexes and aged ten years or more who have two living rooms (for example, bedrooms) may not be statutorily overcrowded because each member of the couple could occupy a separate room with one of the children (of the appropriate sex).
- 2.7 Under Section 325 of the Housing Act 1985, there is no limit on the number of people of the same sex who can live in the same room. However, there may be a contravention of the space standard (see below).

### The Space Standard

- 2.8 The space standard involves the calculation (undertaken in two ways) of the number of people permitted for the dwelling. The lower number (of the two calculations) is the permitted number for the dwelling.
- 2.9 The **first test** is based on the number of living rooms in the dwelling (disregarding rooms of less than 50 square feet) and the following levels of occupancy:
- One room = two persons
  - Two rooms = three persons
  - Three rooms = five persons
  - Four rooms = seven and a half persons
  - Five rooms or more = ten persons plus two persons for each room in excess of five rooms
- 2.10 For the purpose of this test, a child below the age of one does not count and a child between one and ten counts as a half person.
- 2.11 The **second test** is based on floor areas of each room:
- Less than 50 square feet = no-one
  - 50 square feet to less than 70 square feet = half a person
  - 70 square feet to less than 90 square feet = one person
  - 90 square feet to less than 110 square feet = one and a half persons
  - 110 square feet or larger = two persons.
- 2.12 Northampton Partnership Homes' website contains advice on how housing applicants can establish whether or not they are statutorily overcrowded (see **Appendix 1**).

### **3. Meaning of Social Overcrowding**

---

- 3.1 Although the term 'social overcrowding' is often used in Northampton, it is not a term that has any legal basis or definition.

- 3.2 It is understood that the term was first used many years ago to distinguish between statutory overcrowding and situations in which a household has fewer bedrooms than specified in the Housing Allocations Scheme Lettings Criteria (see **Appendix 2**).
- 3.3 'Social overcrowding' is not a term that is used by other local authorities. Many use the term 'overcrowding' to describe a situation in which a household has one bedroom less than they need, and 'severe overcrowding' to describe a situation in which a household has at least two bedrooms less than they need.

#### **4. Assessment of Overcrowded Households on Northampton's Housing Register**

---

- 4.1 At present, households that are overcrowded but not statutorily overcrowded will only be able to join Northampton's Housing Register if they have other housing needs or their accommodation is having a serious impact on their health or wellbeing.
- 4.2 Housing applicants who are statutorily overcrowded and eligible to join the Housing Register and will be placed in the Emergency Band of the Housing Register.

#### **5. Development of West Northamptonshire's Housing Allocations Scheme**

---

- 5.1 Work is underway to develop a new Housing Allocations Scheme for West Northamptonshire. This needs to be in place by 1 April 2021.
- 5.2 Officers from Northampton Borough Council and Northampton Partnership Homes have agreed that the new Housing Allocations Scheme should enable all overcrowded households to join the Housing Register if they are eligible.
- 5.3 Although consideration will need to be given to the merits of these and other changes, Officers are recommending that:
- Tenants of West Northamptonshire Council or partner Registered Providers who are living in West Northamptonshire, are severely overcrowded and have at least two bedrooms less than the number of bedrooms to which they would be entitled to under the Housing Allocations Scheme will be placed in **Band A** of the Register. This will take into account all rooms that can reasonably be used as bedrooms;
  - Tenants of non-partner Registered Providers who are living in West Northamptonshire, are severely overcrowded and have at least two bedrooms less than the number of bedrooms to which they would be entitled to under the Housing Allocations Scheme will be placed in **Band B** of the Register. This will take into account all rooms that can reasonably be used as bedrooms; and
  - Tenants of West Northamptonshire Council or partner Registered Providers who are living in West Northamptonshire, are overcrowded and have one bedroom less than the number of bedrooms to which they would be entitled to under the Housing Allocations Scheme will be placed in **Band B** of the Register. This will take into account all rooms that can reasonably be used as bedrooms; and

**Phil Harris**  
**Director of Housing and Wellbeing**  
**01604 837871**

### Information taken from Northampton Partnership Homes website [www.nph.org.uk/overcrowding](http://www.nph.org.uk/overcrowding)

## Overcrowding

It can be very stressful living in accommodation which is overcrowded.

There are many households across the town which have a lot of people living in them. Unless the overcrowding exceeds the government's standards, or you have other housing needs, you are unlikely to be accepted on to the Housing Register.

To check if your accommodation is overcrowded, NPH follows the same room standards and space standards defined by the Government's 1985 Housing Act.

If your household exceeds either the room standard or the space standard then you are likely to be overcrowded by law (statutory overcrowded).

## How to check for overcrowding

If you think you are overcrowded:

### 1. Calculate the number of rooms

All bedrooms and living rooms are counted as rooms you can sleep in. It does not matter which rooms you actually sleep in.

Your home should have a separate room to sleep in for each:

- couple
- single adult 21 or older
- two people of the opposite sex aged 10 or over

The government's room standard says your home is legally overcrowded if it does not have this.

Children under 10 years are not counted.

Under the room standard, a couple with a boy and a girl aged under the age of 10 in a one bedroom flat are not overcrowded.

### 2. Calculate the amount of space

This calculation gives the number of rooms that are enough for you and your family.

There are two ways you can work this calculation out:

- look at the number of rooms you have
- look at the floor area in your home.

The answer to each calculation will give you the number of rooms that are sufficient for you and your family.

If the answer is different for each, the lower number is used.

To count the number of people:

- don't include children under 1 year old
- children aged 1 to 9 years count as a half
- anyone aged 10 or over counts as one person

Count the number of rooms:

- include bedrooms and living rooms but don't include any rooms under 50 square feet.

Number of rooms

The number of rooms considered enough for your family is:

- 1 room for 2 people
- 2 rooms for 3 people
- 3 rooms for 5 people
- 4 rooms for 7.5 people
- 5 or more rooms for 2 people per room

Floor area

The minimum floor area considered enough for your family is:

- 50 - 69 square feet (4.6 - 6.4 square metres) for 0.5 people
- 70 - 89 square feet (6.5 - 8.3 square metres) for 1 person
- 90 - 109 square feet (8.4 - 10.1 square metres) for 1.5 people
- 110 square feet (10.2 square metres) for 2 people

**PROPERTY LETTINGS CRITERIA**

Accommodation will be let in accordance with the following criteria

<b>Household Makeup</b>	<b>Bedroom Assessment</b>
A single person	Bedsit/studio flat or 1 bedroom flat
A couple or an applicant who is pregnant	1 bedroom flat
A single pensioner or applicant who requires ground floor accommodation	1 bedroom flat or bungalow
Pensioners above the Pension Credit age who require ground floor accommodation due to support and proven medical reasons	1-2 bedroom flat or bungalow
A one child family	2 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
A two child family of the same sex or opposite sex if the child is under 10 years of age	2 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
A two child family of the same sex under 16	2 Bedroom flat, maisonette or house
A two child family with children of opposite sex and over the age of 10	3 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
A three child family	3 bedroom flat, maisonette or house
A four child family depending on the family make up	3 bedroom flat, maisonette or house 4 bedroom house
A five child family	4, 5 or 6 bedroom house
A six plus child family	4, 5 or 6 bedroom house

For the purpose of this lettings criteria, a child is someone who is under the age of 16 and therefore will be considered eligible for family accommodation.

Applicants with children aged 16 or over will only be considered for flats or maisonettes.

Applicants with children under the age of 16 can place bids for flats on any floor.



## NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

### SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - FOOD POVERTY

2 March 2020

#### BRIEFING NOTE: CHILDREN'S FUTURE FOOD INQUIRY

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its inaugural meeting, the Scrutiny Panel agreed that it would receive details of relevant published reports in respect of this Scrutiny Review. .

#### 2 INFORMATION

- 2.1 Detailed below is the executive summary of the Children's Future Food Inquiry.

##### **"The scale of the challenge**

In a society that believes in compassion and justice, it is unacceptable that children's development is being restricted by the effects of poverty. The number of children experiencing symptoms of food insecurity, or whose family income is evidently insufficient to afford a healthy diet amounts to between 2.5 and 4 million; between 20% and 30% of all children in the UK. We cannot allow this to continue.

One in three children (4.1million) are living in poverty in the UK. For their families to be able to afford the Government's recommended diet, they would have to spend an estimated 35% of their income on food, once their housing costs have been taken care of. This is not a realistic option, given the restrictive effects of the rising cost of living, prevalence of low-paid, insecure jobs, and the freeze on benefits. On average, after housing costs, households with children spend around 18% of their income on food. A proportion of children living in poverty experience food insecurity. UNICEF estimates on the basis of a small but nationally representative survey that 2.5 million (19%) British children live in food insecure households. This means that there are times when their household does not have enough money to acquire enough food, or they cannot buy the full variety of foods needed for a healthy diet.

##### **The devastating consequences**

Hunger is an extremely debilitating experience. It damages physical health. It is a cause of great personal stress. It is a social harm. Food insecurity brings

profound anxiety and stress into family life which can trigger depression, aggressive behaviour in children, a sense of hopelessness, and overwhelming stress for parents struggling to give their children the best start. It affects children's school attendance, achievement and attainment: children who are hungry in class cannot concentrate or may be disruptive. In addition, the long summer holidays are estimated to result in weeks of learning loss for some children through a combination of social isolation, low levels of stimulation and activity, and poor diets. Food insecurity also affects the quality of children's diets, which brings increased risks of obesity and poor child growth. The magnitude and importance of childhood food insecurity requires systemic change, rather than short term, ad hoc projects.

### **Our findings**

We focus on three food settings that characterise children's lives: pre-school settings, school and home, and examine the policies and programmes in place that are intended to support children to eat well. We look at these settings in all four UK nations. We document the evidence on whether these policies are reaching children living in poverty, and we present the views of children and those who work with them on how these policies work in practice.”

2.2 A copy of the full report can be accessed [here](#)

## **3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 That the findings of the desktop research exercise informs the evidence base of the Scrutiny Review – Food Poverty.

Author: Tracy Tiff, Democratic and Member Services Manager, on behalf of Councillor Dennis Meredith, Chair, Scrutiny Panel 1 – Food Poverty

19 February 2020