

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Task and Finish Group was set up to further develop the multi Agency approach to rough sleepers and to reduce/eliminate rough sleeping in Northampton.

A significant amount of evidence was heard, details of which are contained in the report. After gathering evidence the Task and Finish Group established that: -

- The Task and Finish Group welcomes the Rough Sleepers Forum and the work that has been established but it would like to see membership of the Forum widened to include all Agencies. The Salvation Army is not a member of the Rough Sleepers Forum. There is a need to widen the membership of the Rough Sleepers to include all Agencies. It would be beneficial for all members to sign a confidentiality protocol to ensure there is no breach of confidentiality when individual clients are discussed.
- The Council needs to continue to be interactive and understanding of other Agencies and facilitate partnership working with all Agencies.
- The Salvation Army expressed an interest in joint working regarding a hostel for rough sleepers. This could be investigated in conjunction with a current funding bid to the Department of Communities and Local Government.
- It is clear that Agencies provide services for vulnerable people who are not rough sleepers. For example, some individuals, who are not rough sleepers, go to the Salvation Army's Drop In Session for a meal and a hot drink.
- The Task and Finish Group understands the problems that the local retailers had with rough sleepers and suggested that the Town Centre Partnership be asked if it is willing to donate funds to help alleviate the problem with rough sleepers in the town centre and the Grosvenor Centre. However, the Neighbourhood Warden for the Town Centre has confirmed that the concerns of retailers are somewhat out of date and that rough sleepers are not always/often present at night.
- Individuals who are seen during the day and are perceived to be rough sleepers are different people to those actually seen sleeping rough at night. Individuals actually bedded down during nighttime hours are counted as rough sleepers.
- Rough sleepers need to have a pathway to know where they can go to obtain help. There is a need for close working between the Council and CAN and there should be some investigation into out of hours support and the role of the Police with rough sleepers. The 'Green Book' 'A Pocket Guide for anyone Homeless or Threatened with Homelessness', is a useful booklet for both Agencies and rough sleepers in providing information on how services can be accessed. The booklet was produced eighteen months ago and requires updating. It would be useful for a flow chart to be

produced detailing the process for rough sleepers, which could be included in the development of the 'Green Book.'

- The Council does not currently have a Rough Sleepers Strategy.
- Currently the Council is unable to obtain ethnic origins and immigration status of rough sleepers but it is noted that this information will form part of the proposed rough sleeper database.
- There is a need to provide cold weather provision for any rough sleepers to ensure that they can be brought in from the street. Sufficient additional spaces should be identified to ensure that those most vulnerable, who are sleeping on the streets, are able to get some provision during severe weather conditions.
- The Task and Finish Group supports a Single Access Point for rough sleepers, such as TAP provided by Edinburgh City Council. Some external witnesses interviewed by the Task and Finish Group also made reference to the need for such a facility, for example DAAT expressed the need for a multi-Agency Partnership to have a nucleus sub treatment centre and non-drug specific wrap around care. The expiration of the lease of the building used to house CAN Drop In Sessions and the Hope Centre could provide an opportunity for the introduction of a Single Access Point for rough sleepers in Northampton.
- The Task and Finish Group welcomes the Neighbourhood Wardens sharing information regarding the locality of rough sleepers but the reporting of such information should be formalised.
- An extra 8-10 beds, for rough sleepers are required in Northampton. A bid is currently being formulated, through Supporting People, to extend the current provision. There is also the need for a 'half way house' for individuals who are not as yet ready to move into accommodation.
- The Task and Finish Group is concerned about the waiting time of as long as three months for triage provision at CAN. On average it is between two weeks to a month before the individual is receiving treatment. The Task and Finish Group is also concerned about the waiting time and need for further counselling facilities.
- The Task and Finish Group supports the suggestion made by the representative of Shelter (Nottingham) that Local Authorities consider accepting housing applications from people in prison before their release. This would help to stop the cycle of offending – drug use – homelessness – offending. The Council, in partnership with other District Councils in the county, has links with Woodhill prison. An officer visits the prison once a month.
- The Council received funding of £90,000 per year, from 2004 for a three year period, for rough sleeping initiatives, from the Department of Communities and Local Government and there is a need to ensure that this

is maximised. Early indications show that this funding will continue but the Council is awaiting confirmation from the DCLG.

- The Task and Finish Group is concerned that St Andrews Hospital does not have a Protocol in place for the discharge of its patients.
- From the interviews with rough sleepers, in particular those interviewed at the Salvation Army Drop In Centre, it is apparent that many rough sleepers have nothing to do during the day and are bored. There is the need for a training centre/day centre for rough sleepers. It is recognised that the Hope Centre offers day centre facilities but there is a need for these to be further developed.
- The Task and Finish Group realised the need for the development of awareness and ownership of rough sleeping with all relevant Agencies. A multi Agency networking event, facilitated by the Council, could be held to promote the way forward.
- There is a need for Partners of the Council, through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to be made aware of the work of this Task and Finish Group.

The above overall findings have formed the basis for the following recommendations. The Task and Finish Group asks Cabinet to consider implementing the following recommendations: -

- 5.1 Northampton Borough Council takes the lead with all Agencies working together on rough sleeper initiatives, through the Single Homeless Forum.
- 5.2 The membership of the Rough Sleepers Forum be re-visited to ensure that all relevant Agencies are included.
- 5.3 All members of the Rough Sleepers Forum to sign a confidentiality protocol to ensure there is no breach of confidentiality especially when individual clients are discussed.
- 5.4 The rough sleepers database is developed as a high priority.
- 5.5 The 'Green Book' 'A Pocket Guide for anyone Threatened with Homelessness' be updated and be used for all Agencies as a basis for information regarding available services for rough sleepers. A flow chart be produced detailing the process for rough sleepers and be included in the development of the 'Green Book.'
- 5.6 A Rough Sleepers Strategy be produced with an emphasis on prevention. The evidence contained in this report should form part of that Strategy.
- 5.7 The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services and the Corporate Manager for Housing Services meets with the Research and Development Department of the Salvation Army regarding the potential for the Salvation Army to develop its existing projects for rough sleepers. This should be investigated

in conjunction with a current funding bid to the Department of Communities and Local Government for a purpose built hostel in the town.

- 5.8 Research is undertaken regarding further funding opportunities and joint working for the provision of extra beds for rough sleepers and the provision of a 'halfway house'.
- 5.9 Improved communication between CAN and the Town Centre Partnership regarding rough sleepers is encouraged.
- 5.10 The Town Centre Partnership is requested to donate funds to help alleviate the problem with rough sleepers particularly in the town centre and the Grosvenor Centre.
- 5.11 Northampton Borough Council works jointly with Northamptonshire County Council regarding providing provision for rough sleepers during severe weather conditions.
- 5.12 The involvement of Neighbourhood Wardens in providing information of the location of rough sleepers is formalised.
- 5.13 Dialogue takes place with DAAT regarding the potential for joint working to provide more counselling facilities.
- 5.14 The Council looks at ways that it can support CAN to reduce its waiting time for triage provision.
- 5.15 The Council's links with the Prison Service and Probation Service is continued. There is a need for a representative from the Probation Service to attend the Rough Sleepers Forum.
- 5.16 Funding of £90,000 per year, for rough sleeping initiatives, from the Department of Communities and Local Government is maximised.
- 5.17 The Council works with local hospitals regarding the introduction of a Protocol for the discharge of its patients.
- 5.18 The Council works with the Hope Centre regarding the development of its day centre facility.
- 5.19 Consideration is given to a multi Agency networking event, hosted by the Council, to facilitate joint working and highlight awareness of rough sleepers.
- 5.20 A copy of this report is forwarded to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).