

Ashfield Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2019-24

12 month Update



Introduction

Last April, together with Mansfield District Council and Newark & Sherwood District Council, we launched the Ashfield Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2019-24.

This document provides an update on the progress that has been made in the first 12 months of this strategy.

As a reminder, the aims of the strategy are to:

- Prevent as many residents as possible from becoming homeless
- Ensure options are available to ensure no one has to sleep rough other than through personal choice
- Help as many residents as possible to move seamlessly from one home to another without the need for emergency or temporary accommodation
- Provide a high quality service that customers are satisfied with

The objectives of the strategy are:

1. To improve the financial resilience amongst the population at risk of homelessness through a proactive and integrated local welfare benefits system
2. To increase the amount of social housing available to households at risk of, or experiencing homelessness and increase the sustainability of social housing tenancies by these households
3. To deliver the additional required supported housing and housing related support
4. To increase the amount of Private Rented Sector (PRS) housing available to households at risk of, or experiencing homelessness and increase the sustainability of PRS tenancies by these households

5. To ensure the support needs of households at risk of, or experiencing homelessness are appropriately met in order to reduce their risk of homelessness and the risk of homelessness increasing their support needs
6. To minimise rough sleeping and street activity and encourage the community to do their bit to end homelessness
7. To achieve high customer satisfaction with the outcome and experience of the support provided by Ashfield District Council (ADC) Housing Options
8. To ensure services are designed based on robust evidence and effectively monitored and evaluated

Our progress in meeting these objectives in the first year of the strategy are:

Theme 1	Some progress
Theme 2	Some progress
Theme 3	Good progress
Theme 4	Good progress
Theme 5	Some progress
Theme 6	Excellent progress
Theme 7	Some progress
Theme 8	Some progress

Theme One

We have commissioned a researcher to complete a project to identify the underlying causes of homelessness in Ashfield and opportunities to prevent homelessness at the earliest possible stage, this includes the role of the local welfare benefits system. This literature review and fieldwork elements of this project were completed prior to the Coronavirus outbreak and the final elements of the project will focus on what prevention options will be available in the next stages of the outbreak.

In 2019/20 Ashfield District Council's Housing Benefit Team approved 465 applications for Discretionary Housing Payment.

The ADC Housing Options team work closely with local Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) advisors who attend multi agency case conferences regarding individuals and families with complex needs or those who are rough sleeping. For example, in one case, a DWP advisor was able to provide a statement of benefit payments for an individual to use as their ID, after their wallet had been stolen.

At the time of writing, a number of changes have been made to the national welfare benefits system in response to the Coronavirus outbreak.

Theme Two

In 2019/20, ADC acquired nine properties on the open market that were let via Homefinder. In addition, 15 new housing association properties were let via Homefinder.

ADC also secured planning permission for 22 affordable rent homes on a site in Sutton in Ashfield.

In 2019/20, 13 households supported by our Housing Options Team were homeless from a social housing tenancy.

In 2019/20, there were a total of 480 social housing lettings completed through Homefinder, 418 of these were lettings by

ADC and 62 by housing association partners. Of these lettings, 68 were made to those in Band One due to being owed a statutory homelessness duty, and 56 were made to those in Band Two due to being threatened with homelessness within three months. As such, around a quarter of all Homefinder lettings are to someone in a homelessness related band. The table below provides a breakdown of these lettings:

	Band One	Band Two
ADC Total 418	57 (84% of band one lets, 12% of ADC lets)	45 (80% of band two lets, 11% of ADC lets)
Housing Association Total 62	11 (16% of band one lets, 18% of lets)	11 (20% of band two lets, 18% of lets)
	Total 68	Total 56

The research project mentioned above also considers access to social housing and prevention of eviction from these tenancies.

At the time of writing, as a result of the Coronavirus outbreak, only essential lettings are being made, some of which are outside of the usual allocations policy and process.

Theme Three

External funding has been secured from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Rough Sleeping funding programme to provide an additional 20 supported housing spaces in Ashfield for individuals with medium to high complex needs. These spaces became available in February 2020.

Funding was also secured from this programme to provide a number of additional support workers in Nottinghamshire, that Ashfield residents benefit from:

- A prison navigator
- A hospital navigator
- A mental health navigator
- Three Landlord Liaison Officers
- Two Community Psychiatric Nurses

Match funding from Nottinghamshire County Council was also secured to fund four substance misuse outreach workers.

ADC officers attend the Nottinghamshire Youth Homelessness Forum which focuses on meeting the housing needs of young people. ADC is committed to the Nottinghamshire Care Leaver offer and works with the Leaving Care Team to secure housing for care leavers.

External funding was secured from the MHCLG domestic abuse funding programme to maintain the Serenity Service in Ashfield which provides accommodation and specialist support for up to 37 Women and children fleeing domestic abuse. In 2019/20, 55 women and children were supported this service.

A survey of support needs of residents of temporary accommodation and supported housing was scheduled in August 2020, however, this has been put on hold due to the Coronavirus outbreak

48% of households supported by the ADC Housing Options Team in 2019/20 had one or more support needs, the most prevalent support needs were related to: mental health, physical health, domestic abuse, offending history and alcohol dependency.

Theme Four

116 households were supported by the ADC Housing Options team who were homeless due to the loss of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy.

62 households were supported by the team to move into the private rented sector to either prevent or relieve their homelessness; 18 households were supported financially through the ADC Homelessness Prevention Fund.

Funding was secured from the MHCLG Rough Sleeping funding programme to introduce the Call Before You Serve scheme in Ashfield, this started in August 2019. Since then, the scheme has worked with eight landlords in Ashfield and has prevented homelessness in six cases. Funding has been secured to continue this service until March 2021.

Funding was also secured from this programme to introduce a social lettings agency in Nottinghamshire, which started in August 2019 and has created 30 tenancies in total.

The research project mentioned above also considers access to the PRS and prevention of eviction from these tenancies.

The Landlord Liaison Officers mentioned above work alongside Housing Options Teams across Nottinghamshire to secure PRS tenancies, this started in Autumn 2019 and since then has received 73 referrals and secured accommodation for 25 households.

At the time of writing, a number of temporary changes are in place affecting evictions from the PRS and it is not known when the previously announced end of s.21 notices will be implemented by Government.

Theme Five

A number of activities have been highlighted elsewhere in this document that support individuals and families with matter such as:

- Prison release
- Hospital discharge
- Mental health
- Domestic abuse
- Leaving care
- Substance misuse
- Tenancy sustainment
- Complex needs

A total of 146 Duty to Refer referrals were received in 2019/20, from the following organisations:

- Prison - 76
- DWP - 22
- National Probation Service - 28
- Another Local Authority - 1
- Social Care - 4
- NHS - 5
- Framework Housing Association - 7
- Bail Hostel - 2
- Domestic abuse refuge - 1

Work has begun to enhance the mediation work that is done in cases where an individual or family is asked to leave by a family or friend (as long as there is no violence in the relationship). Ideally this is carried out in person, however telephone mediation will be offered where this is not possible, including whilst physically distancing is required due to Coronavirus.

Work has also begun to arrange engagement sessions in Ashfield schools and colleges in partnership with Broxtowe Youth Homelessness, this is currently on hold due to the Coronavirus outbreak.

Theme Six

Significant funding was secured from MHCLG in 2019/20 to provide services to rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping in Nottinghamshire, including:

- Street Outreach service, including a social worker and nurse

- A prison navigator
- A hospital navigator
- A mental health navigator
- Three Landlord Liaison Officers
- Two Community Psychiatric Nurses
- Employment Support Worker
- Call Before You Serve
- Social lettings agency

Match funding from Nottinghamshire County Council was also secured to fund four substance misuse outreach workers.

During 2019/20¹, 204 individuals in Ashfield were supported by these services:

- Street Outreach Team - 33
- Mental health navigator - 3
- Landlord Liaison Officer - 70
- Community Psychiatric Nurse - 5
- Call Before You Serve - 8
- Social Lettings Agency - 4
- CGL Assertive Outreach - 70
- Prison navigator - 11

In Ashfield, it is estimated that there are five individuals rough sleeping on any given night.

During the Coronavirus outbreak, following a Government request, all rough sleepers have been offered accommodation in order to protect them from the virus.

¹ Note some individuals may be supported by more than one service and duplicates have not been removed from these figures

Theme Seven

The research project mentioned above also considers customer satisfaction with the advice and assistance they receive and will make recommendations on how to enhance this

A countywide review of the Duty to Refer was completed and key agencies were contacted to refresh their knowledge on this. Officers continue to liaise with agencies on a case by case basis to improve the quality and timeliness of referrals. This work is supported by the navigators mentioned above who are working to improve the pathways from their respective specialist settings.

The Housing Options Service has been audited both internally and externally and the recommendations are being worked through, which include reviewing the policies and procedures in place for the key prevention tools available to the team.

Theme Eight

A Mid-Notts Strategic Steering Group has been established that meets three times a year alongside a number of sub groups who lead on the different theme area.

The Mid-Notts Joint Inter Agency Forum also continues to meet three times a year, which provides an opportunity for information sharing and networking for a wide range of partners.