

# **The South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council Rough Sleeper Strategy**

## **The purpose of the strategy**

This Rough Sleeper Strategy will be delivered and monitored alongside the Homelessness Strategy.

South Hams and West Devon will build on the current work that has minimised the incidences of rough sleeping within the area. We will adopt a robust approach to all forms of rough sleeping in the two Local Authority areas and aim to reduce the number of people sleeping rough by 50% by the end of 2022 and ensure that no one has to sleep rough by 2027.

It is common for the council to be perceived by people sleeping rough as enforcers and historically the level of engagement that we are able to achieve with rough sleepers has been low. There has always been an open offer of accommodation for rough sleepers through our No Second Night Out principles and the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol. In recent years these schemes have been increasingly successful at providing longer term accommodation for rough sleepers. However, for some rough sleepers with complex support needs it has proved difficult for them to maintain this accommodation and ultimately some of these accommodations fail.

South Hams and West Devon are committed to providing a service to rough sleepers that responds quickly to their changing needs, promotes independence and self-worth and is delivered in a client centred way.

To achieve more sustainable positive outcomes for people sleeping rough we will focus on the key targets of the South Hams and West Devon Homelessness Strategy:

### **Understanding the true cost of Homelessness**

To fully understand the true cost of homelessness we need to ensure that we working from a solid evidence base.

To meet this priority we will:

- Increase our knowledge of the number of people sleeping rough by building on the annually required rough sleepers estimate by introducing a quarterly rough sleeper estimate. This will ensure that the service delivery can respond more quickly to need.
- Continue to work with partnership agencies to ensure that we are taking account of information from a wide sphere of organisations who have contact with or knowledge of rough sleepers to maximise our knowledge base. We will monitor these working arrangements to ensure that they continue to offer good value for money.

### **Access to services**

The very nature of homelessness means a large proportion of the people requiring housing advice and homeless services will be vulnerable and may need additional support to enable them to access services.

To meet this priority we will:

- Introduce an intensive outreach service to enable the council to talk to rough sleepers in their own environment, build rapport and a working relationship to enable them to navigate the services that are available. This service will reflect an holistic approach focusing on addressing barriers to accessing and maintaining accommodation including; access to health care, benefits, support and meaningful occupation.
- Link this provision in with our continued work with partners to identify true rough sleepers, and those at risk of rough sleepers. Enabling us to provide appropriate support to assist them to become ready to access accommodation, increasing our focus on early intervention where possible.
- Work with the Prison Navigator to ensure that we work to prevent homelessness for people being released from prison and intervene early to identify any support needs and help them access the support they need.
- Continue to work with StreetLink to ensure that a clear reporting mechanism remains in place for members of the public to let us know about people sleeping rough.
- Remain committed to the Shared Young Persons Protocol that was developed in partnership with Devon County Council to ensure early intervention and a homeless prevention approach to engaging with young people.
- Continue to provide a Housing Options service that offers tailored advice to everyone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness. The focus of the team's work will continue to be on early intervention and homelessness prevention wherever possible.

## **Access to Housing**

Housing options for those with a history of rough sleeping need to be innovative and reflect the needs of the individual. The Local Authority seeks to achieve this through the provision of multiple housing options which will be tailored to meet the needs of the individual.

To meet this priority we will:

- Ensure that the focus of the outreach support is to encourage rough sleepers to access accommodation and to ensure that they are equipped with the support and resources to maximise their chances of success.
- Introduce a supported housing scheme rooted in the Housing First Principles specifically targeted at entrenched rough sleepers.
- Continue to work with our partners to refer into supported accommodation and rehabilitation accommodation to as part of the recovery process where appropriate.
- Continue to provide accommodation to people sleeping rough under the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol wherever possible and to build on this contact with people sleeping rough to encourage them to consider longer term housing options.
- Continue to adhere to the principles of No Second Night out by offering emergency accommodation to people who are verified as rough sleeping.

- Remain committed to working with rough sleepers to access the most suitable accommodation for their needs including assisting rough sleepers to access private rented and social housing where appropriate.

## **Health and Wellbeing**

Tackling homelessness takes more than just the provision of a house, if we are to maximise the opportunities for our most vulnerable people. Often, poor health, addictions and unhealthy lifestyles mean that people are unable to secure, and maintain, accommodation for themselves or their families.

To meet this priority we will:

- Introduce a Tenancy Ready training scheme which will help prepare people sleeping rough for the significant changes and responsibilities involved in sustaining accommodation and maintaining good standards of health.
- Utilise the services engaged with the Multi Agency Hub to support delivery of an holistic service offer to those rough sleeping focused on recovery to enable the individual to thrive. To include; Mental Health Services, Drug and Alcohol Support Services and Adult Social Care
- Promote the long term benefits and cost avoidance of developing a high quality outreach program with partner agencies and statutory services including Mental Health Team, Drug and Alcohol Support agencies and GP's to enable rough sleepers the opportunity to access the health care they need.

## **Monitoring Our Progress**

The strategy actions will be monitored in conjunction with the Homelessness strategy, reviewed on an annual basis and the strategy will undergo a full evaluation in the 2022 at the end of the life of the Homelessness Strategy.

In addition to this we will increase the annual estimate to a quarterly estimate to ensure that we have up to date information available to assess the success of the strategic aims.

We will record detailed information regarding the rough sleepers that we interact with including detailed information about their support needs and their journey to enable to better shape the services that we offer.