

Ad Hoc Scrutiny Briefing on Homelessness: Middlesbrough Council Duties and Provision

Purpose

1. The purpose of this briefing paper is to provide background information to facilitate the Panel's investigation into the topic; the paper will briefly outline the Council's statutory duties on homelessness and will provide an overview of the services that are currently in place.

Homelessness Duties

2. Local Authorities have a range of statutory duties on homelessness as explained on the government's website. Source: www.gov.uk

3. The primary homelessness legislation – that is, [Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996](#) – provides the statutory under-pinning for action to prevent homelessness and provide assistance to people threatened with or actually homeless.

4. In 2002, the government amended the homelessness legislation through the [Homelessness Act 2002](#) and the [Homelessness \(Priority Need for Accommodation\) \(England\) Order 2002](#) to:

(a) ensure a more strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness, in particular by requiring a homelessness strategy for every housing authority district; and

(b) strengthen the assistance available to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness by extending the priority need categories to homeless 16 and 17 year olds; care leavers aged 18, 19 and 20; people who are vulnerable as a result of time spent in care, the armed forces, prison or custody, and people who are vulnerable because they have fled their home because of violence.

5. The [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#) significantly reformed England's homelessness legislation by placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. It also requires housing authorities to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have 'priority need'. These include:

(a) an enhanced prevention duty extending the period a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days, meaning that housing authorities are required to work with people to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage; and

(b) a new duty for those who are already homeless so that housing authorities will support households for 56 days to relieve their homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation.

6. The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) amends Part 7 of the 1996 Act to strengthen the support available to victims of domestic abuse. The Act extends priority need to all eligible victims of domestic abuse who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse. The 2021 Act brings in a new definition of domestic abuse which housing authorities must follow to assess whether an applicant is homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse.

7. Household with Children, if unable to rely on the above legislation will be able to rely on The Children Act 1989 respectively. Vulnerable adults if ineligible for assistance, or where the Homelessness Duty has been discharged may be able to rely on the provisions of the Care Act 2014.

Provision within Middlesbrough

8. In response to the statutory duties outlined above, Middlesbrough Council provides, or has commissioned, a range of services as follows:

9. Middlesbrough Council currently provides the following services in house:

- a) Housing Solutions Team
- b) Housing Related Support Team
- c) Rough Sleeper Support Team

10. The following services are commissioned from external providers:

- a) Out of Hours Service (Evening, weekend & Bank Holiday Cover to ensure a 24/7 service 365 days a year.
- b) Stages Academy - Supported Accommodation for single homeless people.
- c) Rainham House & Hestia – Female only supported accommodation.
- d) Single Key – Supported Accommodation for 16 -25 Year olds
- e) Erimus House & Dispersed Young People’s Accommodation - Supported Accommodation for 16 -25 Year olds
- f) Penrith Road – Supported Accommodation for families.
- g) Refuge accommodation
- h) Temporary Accommodation Framework.

Conclusion

11. Our commitment to supporting and improving the lives of the most vulnerable people in Middlesbrough is unwavering. As outlined above we have in-house teams and commissioned services who are able to assist those who require assistance and support and we continue to develop and improve that offer. Accessing Change Together (ACT) Middlesbrough has soft launched and it is the authority’s intention to integrate Housing & Domestic Abuse services, whilst working in close partnership and under the same ACT umbrella as our in-house and commissioned services for substance use. This joined up approach will allow services users to have easier access to the services they require and will eliminate the need for them to repeat their story to multiple professionals. A new proposed structure is currently in a second stage of consultation and feedback will be given once this has closed.