

The Council has to publish a homelessness strategy at least every five years. In 2012, the Council decided, with the support of the respective portfolio holders, to produce a **joint strategy** with Gedling and Broxtowe borough councils, because

- the Council works closely with them in many aspects of housing;
- many statutory and voluntary sector agencies work across the area, so they only needed a single channel of engagement rather than three separate relationships;
- Nottinghamshire County Council treats the three boroughs as a single area for the purpose of commissioning housing-related support services.

A homelessness strategy has to **focus** on:

- preventing homelessness;
- providing help at the point of homelessness;
- supporting the move away from homelessness.

The main **challenge** for councils is clearly how they can sustain the excellent reductions in homelessness achieved in the last ten years, in a climate of reducing funding, an increasingly expensive housing market, and a reducing capacity of support services. All three councils are seeing more people approach for advice and assistance, and have been generally successful in preventing homelessness, rather than having to take statutory homeless applications.

The Government published a new **national homelessness strategy** in 2012. As well as setting out what support they would offer, they set 10 challenges for councils, to make sure that the best practice is rolled out nationwide. The new strategy shows how the Council is going to meet these challenges. Since the Council adopted the strategy, the Government has launched the Gold Standard programme, which encourages councils to review each other's services and support their improvement. The strategy and action plan provide an excellent basis for this process.

Probably the most important outcome of this work is the creation of a single **South Notts Interagency Homelessness Forum**. This brings together statutory services and voluntary sector providers working across the three boroughs, and means they only have to go to one meeting to keep in touch with everything that is happening. The forum meets four times a year, rotating between the boroughs. Each meeting attracts 30 or more people, and features guest speakers from a particular service. The relationships that are made and sustained through the forum are arguably more important than the paper strategy itself.

The strategy is based on a very thorough **review of homelessness**, including data provided by partners as well as the Council's own statistics. The Council also consulted widely with people working in the field at a face-to-face session and through a public consultation period. The main conclusions from the review are presented overleaf.

The conclusions are explicitly linked in to the homelessness strategy **action plan**, which includes actions for many different agencies to carry out, not just the councils. There is a shared responsibility for putting it into practice. Many of the actions do not require spending any new money – they are about sharing information and working together as well as possible to make the most of what is available. Progress on the action plan is reported to each forum meeting.

The strategy and action plan are **available online** at [www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/housing/housingdevelopment/housingstrategy](http://www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/housing/housingdevelopment/housingstrategy) and updates to the action plan will be published here regularly as well.

For **further information**, please contact Anne Tomanek ([atomanek@rushcliffe.gov.uk](mailto:atomanek@rushcliffe.gov.uk)) or Elira Mano ([emano@rushcliffe.gov.uk](mailto:emano@rushcliffe.gov.uk)), Housing Options Team Leaders, tel. 0115 914 8483.

## **Conclusions from South Notts homelessness review 2012**

### **How many people become homeless?**

1a: The long-term decline in statutory homelessness has levelled off in the past three years

1b: We prevent much more homelessness than we accept, and we need to ensure this continues

1c: Large numbers of people are seeking housing advice from agencies other than the councils

1d: Numbers of people in temporary accommodation in Gedling and Rushcliffe have been rising

1e: There are small numbers of rough sleepers, but the impact on health makes their situation urgent

### **Who becomes homeless?**

2a: Roughly equal numbers of single people and families become homeless

2b: Homelessness largely affects young people; fewer people over 45 become homeless

2c1: Ethnic minority households are more likely to become homeless, but no one ethnic group in particular

2c2: The needs of Eastern European migrants and Gypsies and Travellers need to be kept under careful review

2d: Other than children and pregnancy, the most common priority needs are being 16/17, mental illness and physical disability

### **Why do people become homeless?**

3a1: Parental eviction remains the most common cause of homelessness

3a2: Violence, rent/mortgage arrears and loss of rented housing are other significant causes

### **What changes are we likely to see in homelessness?**

5a1: housing costs are increasing faster than earnings, making housing less affordable

5a2: increased numbers of people claiming benefits may be at risk of homelessness

5b1: there will not be enough social housing for everyone who needs it, even in the long term

5b2: the housing register has roughly equal proportions of single people and families, similar to homeless applicants (see section 2a)

5c1: private rents are at a level difficult for many people to afford, but do not seem to be rising

5c2: finding a 1 or 2 bed private rented property is possible for some Housing Benefit claimants; finding anything larger is difficult for most

5d: work is needed to evaluate the wealth of health-related data and improve joint working with housing

5e: the increase in domestic abuse reports is likely to lead to increasing homeless presentations