

## Factsheet 4 Homelessness

When asked you might think of a homeless person being someone that lives on the street, but you don't have to be sleeping on the streets to be classed as homeless. Homelessness affects a wide variety of people. Some groups of people are more vulnerable to homelessness because they have fewer rights, particular needs or are less able to cope by themselves. These include:

- young people leaving home for the first time
- old people
- people with children
- people with physical or mental health problems
- people with learning disabilities
- people on benefits or low incomes
- people leaving care
- ex-prisoners
- asylum seekers and refugees.

Homelessness may come about for many different reasons and forms:

- temporarily staying with friends or family
- staying in a hostel or bed and breakfast
- living in very overcrowded conditions
- at risk of violence or abuse in the home
- living in poor conditions that affect health
- living somewhere where a person has no legal right to stay in (e.g. a squat)
- living somewhere that a person can't afford to pay for without depriving themselves of basic essentials
- forced to live apart from family or someone a person would normally live with because their accommodation isn't suitable
- being evicted by a landlord
- losing a job
- health problems
- relationship problems
- a disaster such as fire or flooding.

When a person presents as homeless to the authority the council has a legal obligation under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to assess if the Council has a legal duty to secure accommodation for them and will need to establish the following:

- if they are eligible for assistance, and
- if they are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and
- if they are in priority need, and
- if they are intentionally homeless, and
- if they have a local connection to the North Norfolk area

**Eligibility** – The Council needs to be satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance.

**Homeless or threatened with homelessness** – The Council will carry out investigations to establish if the applicant is “threatened with homelessness” and if they are likely to be homeless within 28 days

**Priority need** – The Council will investigate to ensure that the applicant has a priority need, the following categories of applicants will have a priority need:

- i) a pregnant woman
- ii) a person with whom dependent children reside or might reasonably reside
- iii) a person who is vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap or physical disability or other special reason
- iv) a person aged 16 or 17 who is not a relevant child or a child in need to whom a local authority owes a duty under section 20 – please refer to the ‘Joint Protocol to address the needs of homeless young people in Norfolk’
- v) a person aged under 21 who was (but is no longer) looked after accommodated or fostered between the ages 16 & 18
- vi) a person aged 21 or more who is vulnerable as a result of having been looked after accommodated or fostered
- vii) a person who is vulnerable as a result of having been a member of Her Majesty’s regular naval, military or air forces
- viii) a person who is vulnerable as a result of:
  - a) having served a custodial sentence
  - b) having committed for contempt of court or any other kindred offence, or
  - c) having been remanded in custody;
- ix) a person who is vulnerable as a result of ceasing to occupy accommodation because of violence from another person or threats of violence from another person which are likely to be carried out.
- x) for any other special reason, or with whom such a person resides or might reasonably be expected to reside
- xi) A person who is homeless, or threatened with homelessness, as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or other disaster

**Intentional Homelessness** – investigations will be carried out to ensure that the applicant hasn’t done something that would result in the applicant being determined as becoming homeless intentionally; a) he/she deliberately does or fails to do anything in consequence of which he or she cease to occupy accommodation, b) the accommodation is available for his/her to continue to occupy the accommodation, c) it would have been reasonable for him/her to continue to occupy the accommodation.

**Local Connection** – the council will establish that the person has a local connection with the district these will include one of the following a) 6 out of the last 12 months or 3 years out of the past 5, b) permanent employment, c) family residence of the last 5 years or d) because of any special circumstance

Not all customers when presenting will pass the criteria above, and in cases like these the authority has a duty to offer advice and assistances in securing alternative accommodation. The authority will always in the first instance try to prevent an applicant from becoming homeless and will work hard in looking for solutions, the team will work closely with other agencies including social services, Julian Support, private sector landlords. (see Factsheet 6)

Should the Council have a duty to accommodate in temporary accommodation, the officers will in the first instances negotiate with family/friends/landlord to extend their time to enable the applicant to be housed through Your Choice Your Home or into private rented accommodation. If the team are unable to extend the applicants stay then the Council will have a duty to accommodate into temporary accommodation or in some cases bed and breakfast.

**Contact:** Housing Options, 01263 516375