

Stevenage Borough Council

Working with Adults with Complex Needs

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Business Unit and Team	Community Advice and Support
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1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of the procedure is to demonstrate that as far as reasonably practical, vulnerable individuals with Complex Needs and or rough sleeping are supported by the Community Advice and Support Team at Stevenage Borough Council.

People with complex needs often experience difficulties in their everyday lives and in their relationships with other people and social institutions. These complex needs can also cause or contribute to rough sleeping which compound and severely worsen the difficulties these vulnerable individuals face. These complex needs along with rough sleeping can be described as co-occurring and mutually reinforcing, meaning they compound one another creating a cycle of exacerbation and relapse. Support Officers, in partnership with adults who have complex needs and or who are rough sleeping and their families, carers and advocates- help people to identify, agree and meet their goals towards independence. They do this by using approaches such as relationship building- working within a strengths-based practice. Personalised communication and using professional values, including empathy, empowerment and understanding, enable people to be heard and have more control, choice and autonomy. Support work includes long-term support and short-term support to reduce the need for ongoing support. These are intended to improve health and wellbeing outcomes and prevent homelessness and rough sleeping, as defined by The Care Act 2014 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

1.2 What does it aim to achieve?

This procedure aims to produce a uniform, practical and sympathetic approach to those difficult problems and to promote awareness and health issues surrounding alcohol, drugs and other substances. Its purpose is to ensure that:

- Individuals are identified and assessed appropriately at the earliest possible stage.
- Support and assistance are offered to those having a drug or alcohol dependency problem.
- Offenders who meet the criteria are heard through the Adult Offenders Protocol (AOP).
- Accommodation for Ex-Offenders Scheme (AFEO) aims to reduce reoffending and homelessness by supporting ex-offenders who might otherwise become homeless to access the private rented sector. The funding allows individuals who meet the criteria to access rental deposits and /or dedicated support staff including landlord liaison and tenancy support/sustainment.
- Rough Sleepers are identified and supported.
- To be effective in delivering prevention outcomes to adults experiencing complex needs.
- Bridge the overlap between homelessness and other support needs such as substance misuse, physical and mental ill health, cycles of physical and emotional abuse and involvement with the criminal justice system.

This procedure applies to all employees of the council and contractors who provide services on behalf of the council.

Those directly impacted will be vulnerable individuals within Stevenage experiencing complex needs such as drug and alcohol issues, mental health issues, rough sleeping and repeat offending.

On a wider scale and indirectly this procedure will impact the residents of Stevenage, local health services, local retail, and the criminal justice system, due to the fact that as a result of implementing this procedure there will be a reduction in drug, alcohol or rough sleeping related anti-social behaviour and less need for emergency health interventions. Not only is homelessness and rough sleeping traumatic for those experiencing it, with a government backed review in 2012 which identified the financial costs to the economy and socially to the community. These included provision of benefits and employment programmes, health and care services, costs to the criminal justice system and local policing as well as expenditure by local authorities.

Our objectives and priorities are set within the council's broader strategic objectives, and in the context of other national and local strategies and plans. National examples include the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the National Rough Sleeping Strategy, and proposed private rented sector reforms.

2. Legal & Regulatory Framework

2.1 Stevenage Borough Council's Community Advice and Support Team adopts the following Government legislations to support vulnerable individuals:

- Care Act 2014
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Housing Act 1996
- Equality and Diversity Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998

The priorities of the strategy are as follows:

- Priority one: **Specialist support**
- Priority two: **Working together**
- Priority three: **Community response**
- Priority four: **Reducing harm**

3. Equalities

3.1 Under the Equality Act (2010) the Council has a legal duty to fulfil the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Through this duty and in the application of this procedure, the council will carry out its functions in a way that:

- a. Removes discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is unlawful under the Equality Act (2010)
- b. Promotes equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who don't
- c. Encourages good relations between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who don't

Further information on the Council's fulfilment of the Equality Act (2010) is set out in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy (2022) and Reasonable Adjustment Policy (2024).

4. Data Protection

- 4.1 The Council regards respect for the privacy of individuals and the lawful and careful treatment of personal information as very important to delivery of services.
- 4.2 The Council will ensure that it treats personal information lawfully and proportionately as set out in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act (2018). For further information on the Councils approach to handling information please see [Data Protection Act \(stevenage.gov.uk\)](https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/data-protection-act)

5. Responsibilities

5.1

Job title	Team	Contact information
Complex Needs & Community Safety Ops Manager	No More Service	01438242666 Catherine.davies@stevenage.gov.uk
Rough Sleeper Team & Housing Futures Manager	Rough Sleeper Team	01438242666 William.Peters@stevenage.gov.uk
Complex Needs Advocate	No More Service	01438242666 John.Myall@stevenage.gov.uk
X4 Rough Sleeper Co-ordinators	Rough Sleeper Team	01438242666 Roughsleeperteam@stevenage.gov.uk

The Role of the Interim Complex Needs & Community Safety Operational Manager is to manage the No More Service.

The Role of the Complex Needs Advocate is to provide intensive support to address any individual within Stevenage with their complex needs, including mental health issues, learning difficulties substance misuse and offending. The role includes developing a support programme tailored to the individual client.

The Role of the Rough Sleeper Team & Housing Futures Manager is to manage the Rough Sleeper Team.

The Role of the Rough Sleeper Co-ordinators is to support anyone who is street homeless within Stevenage and assist with advice and support surrounding their homelessness and rough sleeping, including referrals to other services regarding mental health issues, substance misuse and accommodation and providing emergency food packages and clothing.

6. Procedure

6.1 Individuals with complex needs may come to the attention of Stevenage Borough Council staff in a variety of ways. This could be via referral either from a professional (internal or external) or self-referral, they may be spotted/reported by a member of the public to be rough sleeping. Stevenage has historically had a consistent and visible rough sleeper population, which has been both highlighted and compounded by wider social and economic pressures, including the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

The Council is committed to ending rough sleeping in the Borough and works in line with current government policy to make any periods of rough sleeping rare, brief, and non-recurring whilst also providing a safe environment for service users to discuss any additional complex needs without judgement.

The Council's Rough Sleepers team and No More Service (NMS) will provide a trauma informed person centric support approach, in company with partner agencies, to ensure individuals experiencing rough sleeping and complex needs are supported in a holistic and compassionate way.

Partnership work is at the forefront of our approach and is already being completed across different sectors. However, we are determined to continue to improve engagement with a range of local partners, such as statutory services, local support organisations, the voluntary sector and private sector landlord. This evidences Stevenage Borough Council's commitment to working together to reducing rough sleeping and complex needs for our residents.

For many of those affected, rough sleeping is tied up with a combination of other issues, such as poor mental and/or physical health, drug and alcohol support needs and financial hardship, which can either be a precursor and cause of rough sleeping or be triggered by rough sleeping. We are committed to providing a joined-up approach across a whole range of services, including mental & physical health services, social care and other housing providers. One example of this involves our commitment to a Complex Needs Housing Multi-Disciplinary Project with Change Grow Live, a local drug and alcohol treatment service, and Mind in Herts who provide mental health support.

This multi-agency partnership approach provides a holistic, trauma informed, person centred, support network for individuals rough sleeping and/or experiencing complex needs within Stevenage and ensures that individuals have the best chance of recovery and achieving independence.

6.2 MAPPA - Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements

Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements involves meeting to manage risks posed by high-risk sexual and violent offenders. Information is shared between agencies to minimise risk to the public, professionals, and the offender themselves. NMS leads on Stevenage Borough Council's Adult Offender Protocol (AOP). This is a panel where referrals for support around finding suitable accommodation can be heard. Customers will be asked to sign Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (ABAs) that state what behaviours are prohibited – for example, no visitors under 18 in the property. NMS staff complete visits and meet with the customer regularly to help sustain their accommodation ensuring that the client is managing their tenancy.

6.3 IOM – Integrated Offender Management

Police Integrated Offender Management offers a multi-agency approach to crime and re-offending, sharing information to provide offenders with a circle of support. NMS will contact offenders identified as suitable for IOM whilst they are still in prison or just after release, to offer support with housing, benefits, referrals, mobile phones, food parcels, hygiene parcels and referrals to agencies such as mental health and CGL.

6.4 MARAC- Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference that shares information on high-risk Domestic Abuse (DA) cases between local agencies. NMS offers Evolve healthy relationship training to DA perpetrators and any clients with substance misuse issues will be referred to NMS for support. We work alongside Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA), ensuring that both victims and offenders receive appropriate support to reduce repeat offending and minimise the impact of DA on the local community.

6.5 Housing Futures

This model offers accommodation to people who are vulnerable and have high support needs such as mental health problems and drug/alcohol issues. The accommodation has security and support on site from NMS staff and SBC's rough sleeper team. The client receives support to manage their tenancy and engage with local services to improve their chaotic lives. Housing Futures has seen people move on into their own privately rented accommodation after managing their tenancy with the Housing Futures programme. NMS offer weekly support to these clients, making referrals to CGL, mental health, Herts Help, Food Shed and many more. Clients are empowered to contact agencies themselves, but staff continue to liaise with residents and estates services, income team etc.

- To provide a safe environment for service users to discuss their complex needs without judgement.
- To provide flexible personalised support, treating each person with care, empathy, and compassion.
- A focus on stability, building life skills and challenging negative patterns of behaviour.

- Supporting individuals to access appropriate move on accommodation and ongoing tenancy sustainment.
- Breaking the cycle of chronic and repeat homelessness and rough sleeping.
- AFEO – Accommodation for Ex-Offenders at risk of rough sleeping into Private Sector accommodation
- SBC is committed to providing the right support at the right time for those rough sleeping.
- The team will work with individuals that are still street homeless as well as those who are at imminent risk of rough sleeping and those within our Housing Futures provision to build of life skills, independence, and long-term tenancy sustainment. We will provide consistent support and fostering a two-way working practise, building on individuals responsibility and sense of belief in their own futures.
- Partnership working to minimise harm, support recovery and break offending patterns.

7. Governance

7.1 This policy will be reviewed every two years, unless legislation, business, sector developments, or wider council strategies and policies require an earlier review. This is to ensure that the policy continues to meet its objectives and takes account of good practice development.

The next scheduled review will be in April 2026.

8. Health and Safety

8.1 When officers' complete appointments/visits they are required to wear a personal safety alarm and check in with management team to update them as to their movements.

Where possible, the appointment/visit is to be listed in the officer's calendar along with the full details of the visit. For any individuals that have previously raised concerns, these appointments/ visits will be treated as a two to attend.

Staff have also been trained to use the trigger sentence over the phone when required to obtain support when in a dangerous situation; "I have forgotten the green folder".

9. Definitions and Abbreviations

9.1 Definition:

For the purpose of this procedure, Adults with Complex Needs are defined as: An individual over the age of 18 needing high levels of support with many aspects of their everyday life. This could include, but is not limited to; Mental health issues, substance misuse, domestic abuse, homelessness, rough sleeping, physical ill health, learning or physical disability, offending – broader life circumstances or a combination of these.

9.2 Abbreviations:

SBC: Stevenage Borough Council

NMS: No More Service

AOP: Adult Offender Protocol

MAPPa: Multi Agency Public Protection Assessment

IOM: Integrated Offender Management

ABA: Acceptable Behaviour Agreement

CGL: Change Grow Live

MARAC: Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference

DA: Domestic Abuse

SADA: Survivors Against Domestic Abuse

10. Version History

10.1

Date	Outlined Amendments	Author
April 2024	First draft.	Melissa Cucos
September 2026	Review and small amendments made.	Catherine Davies