

SOUTH NORFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

South Norfolk District Council is made up of 119 civil parishes with a population of around 124,000 and approximately 47,000 households. Whilst senior officers quite openly appreciate it may not have the same number of people to deal with as a large urban local authority, it firmly believes that each and every person that approaches the council for help should be given the best possible advice to prevent homelessness. The council believes the earlier it intervenes the better the outcome for any of its residents. Its philosophy is not only to prevent homelessness but also identify other areas that could impact detrimentally on its community – and has set about doing this in a rather unique way.

Over the past few years the council has shifted its whole dynamic in terms of supporting those in housing need by becoming totally prevention focused. In essence, it has moved to a more generic focused approach thus reducing the handovers between prevention work and homelessness work and totally concentrating on the customer's needs. This approach has enabled customers to take ownership of their temporary accommodation journey. This has been done through the 'Support and Move On Contract' providing clear written, and more importantly mutually agreed, actions and timescales ensuring the best possible outcomes. This includes procuring specialist property for singles and families with support needs and therefore reducing the need of B&Bs for singles and ending the use of shared facilities for families.

The council has also implemented a new approach (since 2016) that gets at the very heart of some of the issues that can cause homelessness in the first place. The financial independence, resilience, skills and training (FIRST) approach provides residents with skills and resources to maintain their independence, avoid debt and achieve their potential. It is a holistic support package which seeks to improve the resilience of residents by providing the earliest one to one help. It is part of the council's unique 'Help Hub' (see below) approach which draws together the expertise of a number of partners. Areas that FIRST officers provide support on include:

Money first – achieving independent living and preventing debt or continued financial difficulty. Through early identification of needs, the council's support staff work with residents to improve their budgeting and money management skills, allowing them to achieve financial independence. Long term this will reduce homelessness cases for the council and rent arrears for housing providers.

Home first – provides support to residents from entry into temporary accommodation to ensure they are able to successfully move on into stable and suitable accommodation and have the skills to maintain it. When leaving temporary accommodation support staff will continue to support tenants or link them in to suitable provision, to overcome issues and understand the importance of their tenancies thus avoiding arrears and any breach of their tenancy agreement. This is preventing repeat homelessness cases and ensuring successful relationships between the tenants, private landlords and the council.



Jobs first – FIRST officers work with existing jobs services to support residents to gain skills and access opportunities they need to compete in the job market. This is leading to greater education, skills and training attainment levels and gaining suitable and sustainable employment.

Customers can access FIRST through external services such as advice services or housing providers or directly through the unique 'Help Hub' which is located in the council itself.

The Help Hub

The Help Hub is a collaborative model that focuses on ensuring families and vulnerable people remain on a universal pathway, preventing escalation of need, reducing duplication and inefficiency across sectors, freeing up resource to focus intensely on reducing the number of families and communities in greater need.

To give it its full name 'The Early Help Collaborative Hub' it is located in the former redundant postal room on the ground floor of the council building. It embeds a cross-team working culture where partners disseminate vital information and pull together to provide support for those that need it. The multi-disciplinary team consists of 27 partners which include public health, DWP, Norfolk Constabulary, South Norfolk Youth Advisory Board, Norfolk Youth Offending Team, Homestart, children's services, Norfolk Adult Social Care, drug and alcohol support teams and all local registered providers besides the council's housing team.

The hub ensures that this multi-agency approach provides tailored support to meet the needs of the people at the earliest moment possible. It has a commitment to:

- provide swift access to support for all residents who are experiencing difficulties
- work collaboratively, with a one-culture approach to sharing information and intelligence so residents only have to tell their story once but receive all the support they require
- work with children, families and individuals in their localities as one single team to offer a holistic and tailored support package
- deliver a no wrong door culture, so residents have simpler access to support services
- align resources and remove duplication to maximise the utilisation of resources.

The council believes that this approach has ensured that delivery has not been stifled by any drawn out process and protocols that individual services may impose enabling a culture that provides seamless support there and then for those that need it. Anyone approaching the hub merely signs a consent form which allows the services to work together and share the person's personal information so they work up the most appropriate package of support.

The council consider that this type of approach slows the initial increasing trajectory of problems by tackling issues at the earliest opportunity and identifying the root cause, preventing escalation and reoccurrence. The council have evidence to show this approach in particular has helped vulnerable families and children into a safe

and secure environment and away from the high need and costly levels provided at crisis stage.

Resourcing the hub

The hub is ultimately about using current resources but more effectively and efficiently. All partners who signed up to the hub were initially not asked to contribute funding but to commit to transferring existing resources, in essence different staff and cultures, to work together.

The ultimate rationale for adopting the hub and developing a series of other localised hubs is all about improving outcomes for families and vulnerable people. However, the long-term savings and resource efficiency realised through this approach can't be overlooked.

By rolling out this approach over 10 years, it is anticipated that a saving of £1.2 billion will be made Norfolk wide.

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Supporting information available at

<https://www.local.gov.uk/housing-our-homeless-household-case-study-resources-south-norfolk>

TEIGNBRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Teignbridge is a semi-rural district council in Devon of around 57,000 households. The council area includes the towns of Newton Abbot, Ashburton, Dawlish and Teignmouth. Although not an area with a huge homelessness problem, historically a high proportion of households who were accepted as homeless were placed in B&Bs, due to lack of other provision.

Teignbridge has developed a number of strategies to tackle homelessness better, including:

1. Conversion of a former GP's surgery into a well-managed hostel

Albany House is a new purpose converted GP's surgery in the centre of Newton Abbot which houses both homeless families and single people in a calm and well managed environment. The hostel can accommodate up to 10 placements at any one time. It is significantly higher quality than B&B, provides tailored support to the households living there, and is financially advantageous to the council. The success of the project is now leading to consideration of further accommodation developments.

Homeless households typically stay in Albany House for less than three months, where their needs are assessed and help provided. They might for example then move to fully self-contained private sector leased (PSL) accommodation for six to nine months before securing social housing or private rented sector (PRS) accommodation.

The conversion cost a total of around £670,000 (including £311 purchase costs), of