

BACKGROUND TO HOMELESSNESS/ROUGH SLEEPING (WHY PEOPLE MIGHT BECOME HOMELESS/SLEEP ROUGH, AND THE CURRENT POWERS THAT THE COUNCIL HAS TO HELP THEM)

For the purposes of reporting statistics to the Government, the following categories have been put together to give the grounds why any household may become homeless;

Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate.
 Other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate.
 Non-violent breakdown in relationship with partner.
 Violent breakdown in relationship with partner.
 Violent breakdown of relationship involving associated persons.
 Racially motivated violence.
 Other forms of violence.
 Racially motivated harassment.
 Other forms of harassment.
 Mortgage arrears (repossession or other loss of home).
 Rent arrears on local authority or other public sector dwelling.
 Rent arrears on social landlord or other RSL dwelling.
 Rent arrears on private sector dwelling.
 Loss of rent or tied accommodation due to termination of AST.
 Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to other reasons.
 Required to leave NASS accommodation.
 Left prison or on remand.
 Left hospital.
 Left other institution or LA care.
 Left HM forces.
 Fire/flood/other disaster.
 Other reason.

Homelessness does not necessarily lead to rough sleeping. There are various organisations and agencies around Scarborough which provide advice and assistance to homeless households. The Local Authority, as with all local housing authorities across the country, has legal duties and responsibilities towards homeless households and those threatened with homelessness, which are covered by the Housing Act 1996 Part VII (Homelessness), (As amended by the Homelessness Act 2002). This legislation will be amended again from April 2018 by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

In order to provide a homelessness service, the Council offers a drop-in service in Customer First every day of the working week, from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. In Whitby an appointment-based service is provided from the Jobcentre+ office on Mondays and Fridays. An out-of-hours service is also provided by the Council's CCTV monitoring centre for all times when the Council is closed, and they can provide homeless households with temporary accommodation when required, until the Council is open again and a full assessment undertaken.

Should a person approach SBC in the given scenario of arriving in Customer First at 4:00 pm on a Friday, stating they are homeless, there are various checks that would need to be undertaken before determining what duties the Council can exercise towards the client in question. In the first instance the Council must by law make sure that there is 'reason to believe' that the client is actually homeless. Assuming that they are, if they are aged 25 or below, they should be able to gain assistance from the Young Persons Pathway – this is provided locally by Foundation Housing. Emergency accommodation could be arranged via SASH (Safe and Sound Homes) who have recruited

host families who will take in single young people for a short-term stay in order to allow them to access the Young Persons Pathway services, where family mediation, reconciliation and supported housing services are offered.

If they are over this age, then SBC would look to see if a housing solution could be found for them (depending on the reason for them becoming homeless, could they return home for example, or could a viewing and offer of a private rented property be found) – however, because of the lateness of the hour, it is possible that nothing like this could be sorted straight away. Therefore SBC would assess the client to establish, as well as having ‘reason to believe’ that they were homeless, was there ‘reason to believe’ that they were eligible for assistance (most people who approach SBC are, but some clients may be from the EU or further afield and there are additional requirements on them before they can access public funds/services), and following this is there ‘reason to believe’ that the client falls within a priority need category.

The Government has specified what priority need categories need to be considered when dealing with homeless clients, these are:

A pregnant woman or a person with whom she resides or might reasonably be expected to reside.

A person with whom dependent children reside or might reasonably be expected to reside.

A child age 16 or 17, subject to exceptions (actually we would expect NYCC Children’s Services to pick a young person like this up under their duties.)

A young person under 21, who has been looked after, accommodated or fostered, but who is not a student in full time education.

A person over 21 who is vulnerable as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered.

A person who is vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or mental handicap or physical disability or other special reason, or with whom such a person resides or might reasonably be expected to reside.

A person who is vulnerable as a result of having served in the armed forces.

A person who is vulnerable as a result of having been imprisoned.

A person who is vulnerable as a result of ceasing to occupy accommodation because of actual or threatened violence.

A person who is homeless as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or other disaster.

Regarding the above, the definition of vulnerability as set out by case law is someone who would be significantly more vulnerable than ordinarily vulnerable and therefore if they would be more at risk of harm from being without accommodation than an ordinary person would be.

If SBC has reason to believe that someone is priority need, then it can provide them with temporary accommodation pending the outcome of a homelessness application. If the Council could not for some reason, then the homeless person who turned up at 4:00pm on a Friday afternoon may then end up as rough sleeping. (during the colder months the Council would refer them to Winterwatch, provided by Horton Housing, but this of course is not available all year round and is only for a night or a few nights at most.)

Whenever a client comes to the Council, officers try to work with them to prevent their homelessness, (most clients turn up when they are threatened with homelessness rather than actually homeless), and we have access to schemes such as the homelessness prevention fund to help pay a bond or rent in advance. Sometimes though, this can take a few days or longer to find a solution however, so as covered above, if a client turns up at 4:00pm on a Friday, then there is a risk that they may end up rough sleeping.