

### **Case study: How we are trying to help the homeless**

Although we strive to resolve individuals' situations when they approach our housing options team, there are inevitably some who require additional support and find themselves sleeping rough through no fault of their own. We understand that there are a range of issues that come with rough sleeping, such as drug and alcohol abuse and mental and physical health problems.

The councils have continued to assist those most vulnerable people and accommodate those in need. In 2017/18, we have worked with Havebury Housing Partnership to open a winter night shelter to provide a bed for people sleeping on our streets during the coldest months.

The night shelter opened in December 2017 in part of Northgate Lodge in Bury St Edmunds and can cater for up to 16 rough sleepers from across West Suffolk. People are accommodated at the centre by referral to the housing team, although the council continues to assist rough sleepers through referrals from the Bury Drop-In Centre and through our Prevention and Support Worker speaking to people sleeping rough on the streets. The centre offers additional facilities and the chance for people to engage with various support services.

We also opened a temporary winter night shelter in Bury St Edmunds prior to the opening of Northgate Lodge to provide a bed for rough sleepers when the temperature fell below freezing for a number of consecutive nights in December. The emergency night shelter was run by volunteers from West Suffolk councils, the Church and The Bury Drop-In.

The increase of street homelessness is a stark reality, and we are keen to work with our partners to address this challenge. Last year, we also appointed a rough sleeper prevention and support officer who works to encourage people across West Suffolk away from a life sleeping on the streets. Successes reported by our outreach worker include people who have been chronically homeless coming forward for help and engaging with services.

The councils continue to make use of over 100 units of temporary accommodation, including bed and breakfast, hotels and hostels, all the while trying to help people to find more settled homes. We also work with partners who are specialists in mental health and wellbeing, as well as substance misuse.

We are committed to working with our partners to provide accommodation and support for those most in need to help break the cycle of rough sleeping.

Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury councils



**West Suffolk**  
working together