



People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held at the Jeffrey Room, The Guildhall, St Giles Street, Northampton NN1 1DE on Wednesday 3 May 2023 at 6.00 pm

Agenda

1.	Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members
2.	Declarations of Interest Members are asked to declare any interest and the nature of that interest which they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.
3.	Notification of requests from Members of the Public to address the Meeting To receive notification of requests from members of the public to address the meeting on an item on the public part of the agenda.
4.	Minutes (Pages 5 - 14) To confirm the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 February 2023.
5.	Chair's Announcements To receive any communications from the Chair.
6.	West Northamptonshire Council Housing Allocations Policy To consider a presentation giving an overview of planned development of a new Housing Allocations Policy for West Northamptonshire.

7.	<p>Fostering services in West Northamptonshire</p> <p>To consider a presentation giving an update on fostering services following the Ofsted inspection of the Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Fostering Agency reported in March 2023.</p>
8.	<p>West Northamptonshire Anti-Poverty Strategy (Pages 15 - 34)</p> <p>To consider a presentation on progress with the delivery of the Anti-Poverty Strategy after one year in operation.</p>
9.	<p>Review of Committee Work Programme (Pages 35 - 44)</p> <p>To review the Work Programme and consider any matters to be highlighted to the Committee’s successors in the revised West Northamptonshire Council Overview and Scrutiny committee structure for 2023/24.</p>
10.	<p>Urgent Business</p> <p>The Chair to advise whether they have agreed to any items of urgent business being admitted to the agenda.</p>
11.	<p>Exclusion of Press and Public</p> <p>In respect of the following items the Chair may move the resolution set out below, on the grounds that if the public were present it would be likely that exempt information (information regarded as private for the purposes of the Local Government Act 1972) would be disclosed to them: The Committee is requested to resolve: “That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that if the public were present it would be likely that exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act of the descriptions against each item would be disclosed to them.”</p>

Catherine Whitehead
Proper Officer
24 April 2023

People Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members:

Councillor Rosie Herring (Chair)	Councillor Karen Cooper (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Azizur Rahman	Councillor Harry Barrett
Councillor Imran Ahmed Chowdhury BEM	Councillor Raymond Connolly
Councillor Cheryl Hawes	Councillor Rufia Ashraf
Councillor Penelope Flavell	Councillor Greg Lunn
Councillor Emma Roberts	Councillor Janice Duffy
Councillor Sue Sharps	Councillor Nick Sturges-Alex
Councillor Mike Warren	

Information about this Agenda

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence and the appointment of substitute Members should be notified to democraticservices@westnorthants.gov.uk prior to the start of the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare interests at item 2 on the agenda or if arriving after the start of the meeting, at the start of the relevant agenda item

Local Government and Finance Act 1992 – Budget Setting, Contracts & Supplementary Estimates

Members are reminded that any member who is two months in arrears with Council Tax must declare that fact and may speak but not vote on any decision which involves budget setting, extending or agreeing contracts or incurring expenditure not provided for in the agreed budget for a given year and could affect calculations on the level of Council Tax.

Evacuation Procedure

If a continuous fire alarm sounds you must evacuate the building via the nearest available fire exit. Members and visitors should proceed to the assembly area as directed by Democratic Services staff and await further instructions.

Access to Meetings

If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named below, giving as much notice as possible before the meeting.

Mobile Phones

Please ensure that any device is switched to silent operation or switched off.

Queries Regarding this Agenda

If you have any queries about this agenda please contact James Edmunds, Democratic Services, via the following:

Email: democraticservices@westnorthants.gov.uk

Or by writing to:

West Northamptonshire Council
One Angel Square
Angel Street
Northampton
NN1 1ED



People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Council Chamber, The Forum, Moat Lane, Towcester NN12 6AD on Tuesday 21 February 2023 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Rosie Herring (Chair)
 Councillor Harry Barrett
 Councillor Raymond Connolly
 Councillor Rufia Ashraf
 Councillor Greg Lunn
 Councillor Emma Roberts
 Councillor Sue Sharps
 Councillor Nick Sturges-Alex
 Councillor Mike Warren

Substitute Members:

Councillor Wendy Randall (substituting for Councillor Janice Duffy)

Also Present:

Councillor Fiona Baker, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Karen Cooper
 Councillor Imran Ahmed Chowdhury BEM
 Councillor Janice Duffy

Officers:

Ashley Leduc, Assistant Director Commissioning and Performance
 Ben Pearson, Assistant Director Education
 James Edmunds, Democratic Services Assistant Manager
 Kathryn Holton, Committee Officer
 Rebecca Wilshire, Deputy Director of Children's Services
 Belinda Green, Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits
 Gill Spencer, Transformation Delivery Manager

90. Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members

Apologies were received from Councillors Chowdhury, Cooper and Duffy. Apologies were also received from the Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Wellbeing and Health Integration and from the Executive Director People Services.

91. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

92. **Notification of requests from Members of the Public to address the Meeting**

There were none.

93. **Minutes**

RESOLVED: That the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting on 8 December 2022 as an accurate record.

Matters arising on the minutes

Minute 87 Integrated Care Northamptonshire

The Chair advised that information requested by the Committee on the resources available to Local Area Partnerships had been circulated to Committee members. The Chair had written to the Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police regarding updating crime reporting areas to reflect West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) ward boundaries but had not yet received a response.

94. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair expressed disappointment that it had not been possible to secure the attendance of the Regional Director from the Department for Education (DfE) at the current meeting to discuss matters relating academy schools. The invitation had initially been accepted and the option of remote attendance had been offered if necessary, but had then been declined at a late stage. This situation had been continuing for many months. The Chair had discussed it with the Leader of the Council and proposed to write to local MPs to highlight the matter and see if they could assist in getting the engagement sought.

At the Chair's invitation, the Assistant Director Education commented that this seemed an appropriate response. The request from the Committee went back to January 2022 and had not changed during this time. This raised the question why the invitation had been declined at short notice ahead of the current meeting.

A Committee member suggested that it might be more productive to raise this matter directly with the DfE and the Committee considered the best approach to take.

The Chair subsequently advised that proposed changes to WNC's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements discussed with councillors in December 2022 had been presented to the Democracy and Standards Committee on 12 January 2023 as part of a wider report that had ultimately been deferred. The next meeting of the Committee was on 9 March 2023.

RESOLVED: That the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to write to the Department for Education and local MPs regarding the difficulties experienced in relation to its request to meet with the Regional Director.

95. **Debt and Money Advice Transformation Project**

The Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits introduced the report, which was intended to provide an update on the progress and direction of the transformation project to create a common Debt and Money Advice (DMA) service for all areas of West Northamptonshire that would provide effective support to members of the public.

The Transformation Programme Delivery Manager then presented an overview of the latest position of the DMA transformation project, highlighting the following points:

- Since the previous report to the Committee on 21 June 2022 the design phase of the project had been completed. This had involved taking information from councillors, service users, the existing in-house team, and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) partners; reviewing customer experiences of existing services; and other data analysis. This reflected the need to ensure that the future approach was evidence-based.
- The design phase had identified four possible options for future provision: continuing the existing approach; outsourcing the DMA service completely; moving the DMA service in-house; or using a hybrid approach involving both WNC and external providers.
- Continuing the existing approach was likely to represent a missed opportunity that would not reflect the overall direction being taken by WNC. The outsourced option would provide investment in the VCS, choice and capacity, whereas the in-house option would give greater central control that could assist with early intervention and reduce duplication. The hybrid option could provide some of the advantages of both but effective collaboration would be required to make it work.
- It was open to the Committee to comment on the potential options for future service delivery and other aspects of the project.

The Committee considered the report and members made the following points during the course of discussion:

- VCS groups such as the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and Volunteer Centre in South Northamptonshire provided good, cost-effective services.
- It was questioned how the proposed hybrid option would differ from continuing the existing mixed approach to delivering the DMA service.
- The hybrid model would be beneficial if it enabled members of the public to be directed to support whether they contacted WNC Customer Services or an external organisation such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.
- The future service model should link up with the Northamptonshire Children's Trust to bring in sources of support such as milk tokens that were not easy to advertise.
- The hybrid model took more account of the role of external housing providers. However, it would also be important to co-ordinate responses between the DMA service and Northamptonshire Partnership Homes so that cases closed by one did not need to be re-opened by the other.
- The fact that VCS groups were able to use volunteers to deliver services gave them a way of increasing capacity that would not be available to a wholly in-house service.

- WNC should do more to ensure that its approach to pursuing individual debt did not just add to the pressures on people already in difficult financial circumstances.
- The summary of the outsourced option in the report did not include the disadvantage that it would affect the wider capacity of VCS organisations such as Community Law if they lost their role in providing DMA services.
- The report invited the Committee to endorse the transformation plan for the DMA service but did not yet present a sufficiently detailed plan.
- Members of the public were generally more comfortable seeking advice from the CAB than from their local authority.
- It would be important to retain face-to-face services based in communities. Online services alone were not sufficient.
- It would be useful for the Committee to have further information about the breakdown of people seeking advice on debt in West Northamptonshire and about WNC's policy and expenditure on pursuing individual debt.
- The hybrid option would have the flexibility to involve different organisations that were known and trusted in different areas.
- WNC's future approach to the provision of DMA services should be able to reflect different levels of need in different parts of West Northamptonshire. It was a fact that there were several areas in Northampton that were ranked highly on the index of multiple deprivation.
- Future provision of DMA services should offer a reasonable level of access to them in all parts of the authority. Brackley did not currently have a CAB permanently located in the town.
- When members of the public were worried by debt they were often not in a position to think clearly about potential sources of advice and support that might be available to them and could go directly to their local councillor. WNC should take this into account in its approach to debt recovery.
- It could be beneficial for the transformation project to include a working group of councillors and other stakeholders to provide input on this issue. The impact of debt was a key issue for ward councillors.
- Engagement with councillors and other stakeholders in the DMA transformation project should avoid cutting across the existing anti-poverty working group.
- WNC had produced very good public information material on anti-poverty including cards with a QR code directing to sources of support.
- Information about DMA services could be sent out to residents who WNC contacted to recover individual debt.
- It would be beneficial for people to be offered alternatives to pre-paid electricity meters.
- Payment request letters that were set out in a harsh style could have a very negative effect on a person already in a difficult financial situation.
- Current economic pressures could lead more people to need to seek advice about debt who had not been in this position before and so did not know how to access services.

The Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits made the following additional points during the course of discussion:

- The proposed hybrid option gave the opportunity to review the existing DMA service offer, including how WNC worked with the VCS to deliver the best

outcomes and the size of the in-house DMA service team. The hybrid model would also give WNC Customer Services a greater role in dealing with low level cases with an escalation to the in-house team.

- Further information could be provided about relevant areas including WNC's expenditure on Council Tax recovery and people seeking advice from the CAB. WNC Finance also produced monthly reports on debt recovery and related case studies.
- The volume of system-generated letters relating to Council Tax recovery sent by WNC meant that there was a risk of a letter being sent out to someone who could have been dealt with in a different way. However, the process did include checks intended to prevent this scenario, for example, when it was known that benefit payments had been delayed.
- WNC did send out a reminder letter to residents who missed a Council Tax payment. WNC sought to work with residents in arrears on their Council Tax as far as possible. However, it also needed to protect the income that paid for public services.
- The DMA transformation project could include a one-off workshop with councillors to help to inform future work.
- Prevention and early intervention relating to debt in order to avoid individuals reaching a crisis point would be a key part of the new DMA service that the transformation project was intended to produce.

The Assistant Director Commissioning and Performance made the following points during the course of discussion:

- Work was currently being done on debt profiling for the new Local Area Partnerships. Adult social care debt represented quite a large percentage of overall debt being pursued by WNC, although this included legacy debt inherited from Northamptonshire County Council. This could be included in further information provided to the Committee.
- Debt advice was seen as an important part of the overall support available for health and wellbeing.
- Information about DMA services was sent out as part of the process for collecting adult social care debt, although there was scope to set it out in a more user-friendly way.
- More work could be done with councillors to raise awareness of the Breathing Space scheme, which was designed to give people time to get advice and address debt problems.

RESOLVED: That the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- a) Noted the progress made to date with the Transformation Project.
- b) Preferred the hybrid option of the four potential options identified for future service delivery.
- c) Requested that an overview of issues relating to individual debt in West Northamptonshire, and the Council's approach to debt recovery, be presented to the Committee at an appropriate future meeting.
- d) Recommended that consideration be given to holding a workshop session for councillors and other stakeholders as part of further work to develop plans for the future Debt and Money Advice service.
- e) Requested that more detailed plans for the future Debt and Money Advice service to be developed be presented to the Committee at an appropriate future meeting.

96. **Report of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health and the Risk of Self-Harm Task and Finish Panel**

The Chair introduced the draft report of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health and the Risk of Self-Harm Task and Finish Panel, highlighting the following points:

- The Task and Finish Panel had spent a significant amount of time on the scrutiny review, beyond the scope originally set, which reflected issues that had emerged as information-gathering progressed.
- The draft report had been shared in advance with the Executive Director People Services and the relevant Cabinet members.
- Recommendations resulting from the scrutiny review would be presented to the WNC Cabinet or to the Integrated Care Board as appropriate to reflect relevant responsibilities.
- Thanks were offered to the councillors who had contributed their time to the scrutiny review and who had heard some powerful testimony. The conclusions from the scrutiny review reinforced some points that might have been anticipated: that more needed to be done to support children and young people's mental health.

The Committee considered the draft report and members made the following points during the course of discussion:

- The scrutiny review appeared to be an excellent piece of work that could also be part of the background information for planned scrutiny work on support for children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities.
- WNC's scrutiny report template should set out recommendations together at the front of the report as clearly as possible.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education raised the need to amend a reference in the draft report to a young person who was a former Looked after Child who had given information to the Task and Finish Panel to make this more anonymous.

RESOLVED: That the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the report of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Risk of Self-Harm Task and Finish Panel subject to the removal of information which could potentially have identified a former child in care.

97. **Scope for scrutiny of support for children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)**

The Chair introduced the draft scope for the task and finish scrutiny review of support for children with SEND in West Northamptonshire proposed by the Committee, highlighting the following points:

- The draft scope had resulted from a productive preliminary meeting of task and finish panel members.
- It would be important that scrutiny of this topic added value to corporate work already underway and did not impede it.

At the Chair's invitation the Assistant Director Education commented on the proposed scrutiny review, making the following points:

- The draft scope was a good reflection of discussion at the preliminary meeting and the scrutiny work would add value.
- WNC could potentially be subject to an Ofsted inspection in the immediate future. If this occurred the scrutiny review would need to be put on-hold for approximately a month to reflect that service officers would have to focus on supporting the inspection.
- Frontline staff in the areas that would be considered by the scrutiny review were already under pressure: the Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan team were facing a massive volume of requests. The scrutiny review should recognise this by taking a forward-looking and constructive focus to the topic and not going back over old ground.
- The Assistant Director Education would act as the lead service officer for the scrutiny review.

The Committee considered the draft scope. Councillor Roberts expressed concern at the position of the EHCP Team indicated by the Assistant Director Education, which needed to be addressed by WNC and also reinforced the case for the scrutiny review. The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education responded that WNC was already taking action in this area. It was not being suggested that the proposed scrutiny review should be delayed: it could be very beneficial in showing the current situation and options for responding to it. The Assistant Director Education acting as the lead service officer for the scrutiny review would be able to facilitate relevant service officers contributing to the scrutiny review in the context of the overall demand on them.

The Assistant Director Education advised that WNC was not alone in dealing with a massive increase in the number of requests for EHC Plan assessments. It was acting to address this situation, for example, by recruiting education psychologists. However, this involved the challenge of competing with other authorities in the same position.

Councillor Roberts proposed various additions to the draft scope relating to key lines of enquiry and information required and also sought clarification as to whether the reference to seeking views from representatives of parents of children with SEND was intended to mean that this engagement would only involve certain groups. The Democratic Services Assistant Manager advised that the wording in the draft was only intended to reflect that it would not be practical to hear from every parent of a child with SEND in West Northamptonshire. Committee members commented on the importance of engaging parents in the scrutiny review and that they would be able to attend if task and finish panel meetings were held in public as standard. The Committee was advised that there were over 15,000 children with SEND in the authority. The Committee was also advised that the scope set the overall parameters for the scrutiny review and that the task and finish panel would be able to determine the best working methods to use to gather information from the different sources identified.

The Chair subsequently invited the Committee to agree the chair of the task and finish panel, noting that Councillor Barrett had previously expressed an interest in the role.

RESOLVED: That the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- a) Agreed the draft scope for the task and finish scrutiny review of support for children with SEND subject to the following amendments:
 - Key lines of enquiry, bullet point 3, add: 'giving specific consideration to the capacity in the EHCP team.'
 - Key lines of enquiry, add: 'Does the new SEND strategy meet key legal requirements?'
 - Information required, background data, add: 'Information on school attendance.'
 - Information required, background data, add: 'Information on current staffing and analysis of future needs'
 - Information required, views from external expert advisers, add: 'Schools/SENCOs'
 - Information required, views from external expert advisers, bullet point 1, remove: 'representatives of'.
- b) Appointed Councillor Harry Barrett to chair the panel.

98. **Review of Committee Work Programme**

The Chair introduced the report and invited the Committee to consider and confirm the items of business for its next meeting on 24 April 2023. The work programme included Housing Allocation Policy as a potential topic for this meeting. The provision of housing support for refugees was another area identified by the Committee that might be accommodated.

The Chair subsequently raised the potential for the Committee to add to its work programme the use of Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) notices in Northamptonshire. This was a subject that had featured in the national media during the COVID-19 pandemic. Another councillor had also raised concerns with the Chair arising from their family experience, including that a residential care home was not able to rescind a DNR notice that was set for a person in a hospital. The Committee could seek further information about local policy regarding the use of DNR notices and the Chair had made preliminary contact with Healthwatch Northamptonshire on this matter. A Committee member highlighted in response that the scenario mentioned could represent a safeguarding issue and should be reported appropriately.

The Committee considered the report and members made the following points during the course of discussion:

- Councillor Roberts advised that the last meeting of the iCAN Task and Finish Panel on 19 December 2022 had to be cancelled due to illness and other issues affecting participants' availability. A further meeting needed to be scheduled as did a related meeting between her and the Executive Director People Services to discuss the savings that iCAN was intended to deliver for WNC.
- It could be appropriate at this point for the Committee to review its work programme to ensure that it was focussed and deliverable.

The Chair noted that if the Committee looked at its future work programme beyond April it would need to take into account that the prospective changes to WNC's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements could alter the Committee's remit from May 2023.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education suggested that the Committee might consider having an item of business at its next meeting on the fostering service, which would have been inspected in the meantime.

RESOLVED: That the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

a) Agreed the following items of business for its meeting on 24 April 2023

- Housing Allocation Policy
- Fostering service

b) Noted the updated work programme.

99. **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.05 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____

This page is intentionally left blank



Anti-Poverty Strategy

2022-2025



“Our vision is for a fairer and more inclusive West Northamptonshire, where everyone is able to live their best life, prosperous and fulfilling, free from poverty and inequality.”

Foreword

Cllr Matt Golby

Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Public Health



West Northants is a great place to live, with a wonderful blend of rural towns and villages mixed with our larger urban centres.

It is a place of heritage, open spaces, leisure opportunities and many strong established businesses, a place that has many strengths, and attractions for investors, new business and visitors.

A place that has had past challenges, and like all areas now facing some uncertainty as we emerge from the recent pandemic, which has amplified many of the inequalities that existed across our communities in West Northamptonshire. It has led to an increased need for services from the Council and partners who have been working hard to find ways to maintain and increase support for those facing hardship.

We know that there will be an increase in people who will be experiencing poverty as we emerge from the pandemic and for those in poverty prior to the pandemic we recognise they are most likely to be struggling even more.

West Northamptonshire's Anti-Poverty Strategy provides a framework for how we intend to tackle poverty, which can impact upon many different people in many different circumstances, prevent people from reaching their potential and can have a negative effect on people's health and wellbeing.

It is important that we do what we can to respond to poverty among all sections of our community and prevent people falling into poverty in the first place.

Poverty prevention and lifting people out of poverty is at the heart of the strategy. The emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic in West Northants has been unprecedented and there has been an immense collective response from

partners, voluntary organisations, community groups and residents who have supported the most vulnerable individuals in our communities, at a time when they have needed it the most. The engagement and dedication from everyone involved has been truly inspiring. In addition to helping those who are already struggling, we must look to prevent people from falling into poverty in the first place and this sets the direction for our strategy.

We recognise that those experiencing poverty are best placed to understand what their needs are and how to respond to them. We also, as a collective, recognised from the outset that the development of the strategy transcends politics.

We have worked in a way that we haven't before, across our political parties towards a vision that we all aspire to. We have listened to our residents, voluntary organisations, community groups and partners who have made clear, that there is much we can do by sharing our resources, and promoting a range of support. Feedback has been clear about making sure we tailor our activities to suit both the rural and the urban pressures that low income households face.

Running alongside the strategy, we have commissioned a West Northants Poverty Truth Commission, engaging those with lived experience. These voices will shape our strategic direction and help deliver and drive our actions.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer our thanks to all those involved in the development of the strategy, including Salford City Council, who have shared their journey and the lessons they have learned along the way, allowing us insight to frame our strategy to deliver the best outcomes for our communities.

I look forward to working with you to ensure its effective implementation, to enable everyone in West Northamptonshire to live their best life.



I am proud to have been part of this process and I am pleased that we have, whilst considering all options, maintained our desire to achieve real change and implement a strategy that can deliver results. Work should be the route out of poverty. More than half of people in poverty now live in a working family.

We must recognise that. Delivery of this strategy won't happen by accident and will take leadership, vision and ambition with social values at the heart of the continued work we do.

I look forward to working with everyone on that delivery and demonstrating our commitment to inclusive growth for the people of West Northamptonshire. I would like to thank everyone who has got us this far.

Cllr Emma Roberts
Labour Group Deputy Leader
Delapre & Rushmere

Oversight Strategy Development Group



what do we mean when we talk about poverty?

The definition of poverty “the state of being extremely poor”, does not reflect the impact of poverty on all aspects of an individual’s and family’s life. West Northants has adopted the Joseph Rowntree Foundation definition of poverty, and the Child Poverty Action Group definition, as these address not only the lacking sufficient money aspect of poverty, but goes further by defining what being “extremely poor” actually means to people.

Living in poverty has been defined as when a family has a total net income of less than 60% of the median income for their family type, after housing costs.

Our agreed definitions of Poverty:

Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong.

Source: Child Poverty Action Group

Poverty means not being able to heat your home, pay your rent, or purchase the essentials for your children. It means waking up every day facing insecurity, uncertainty, and impossible decisions about money.

Source: The Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Poverty has wide ranging impacts. Being in poverty can mean that basic material resources are lacking and can lead to people living in poor quality housing, or not having a home. It can also lead to missed opportunities, exclusion and even stigma and discrimination. If people are prevented from accessing resources and experiences, it limits their ability to participate and feel valued and included in society.

Risk and vulnerability

The places where people live and the circumstances into which they are born have a fundamental effect on life chances. People may be considered to be living in poverty if they lack the financial resources to meet their needs, whereas people can be regarded as deprived if they lack any kind of resources, not just income. One in five (22%) people nationally are living in poverty.

Although this strategy is aimed at reducing poverty for people of all ages and personal circumstances, there are certain groups that face a much higher risk of living in poverty than others. This strategy will seek to reflect the needs of these vulnerable people and disadvantaged communities most at risk of poverty.

We recognise that some of the data sets are a number of years old, however the data that has been used is the most current information that is available.

As newer data becomes available, it will be utilised to further develop the strategy and action plans.



Childhood Poverty

Child poverty is increasing, in 2019 13.9% (10,231) of children were living in poverty in West Northants (this is lower than England, 17.%).

Childhood poverty has knock on effects for later life; Poverty can result in poor educational outcomes for children, bring shame and stigma, can lead to crime and disorder, health problems, drug and alcohol abuse, homelessness, child abuse and neglect and family breakdown. These risks can be passed down through the generations in a vicious cycle. Evidence suggests that childhood poverty increases the likelihood of being out of work as an adult.

In 2020/21 79% (4,961) of children in Northamptonshire achieved a good level of development at 2-2.5 years, which is lower than England (82.9%).²

In 2019, 81% of 5 year olds in Northamptonshire achieved 'expected level' on communication early learning goals, 72.9% of 5 year olds achieved 'expected level' in literacy early learning goals and 78% of 5 year olds achieved 'expected level' on maths early learning goals.³

In 2019/20, the percentage of young people achieving GCSEs (and equivalent qualifications) in English and Maths by age 19 was 65.6% in Daventry, 63.2% in Northampton and 76.5% in South Northants.⁴



Lone parents, large families, carers and care leavers

Lone parents, large families, carers and care leavers are more likely to experience poverty than people without children or caring responsibilities. Extra costs such as childcare or the loss of income from the need to reduce working hours are particularly significant drivers.

These groups are also more likely to be in low paid jobs and have high unemployment rates. Furthermore, they have been more affected by squeezes in housing costs. Lone parents are nearly twice as likely to be in poverty than any other group, and they are twice as likely to live in persistent poverty (being in poverty in the current year as well as at least two out of three of the previous years). Many young people leaving care also face particular challenges, as they often find it difficult to secure employment or work experience opportunities and often lack the confidence to access public services.

In 2021 17.5% of Northants residents responding to a GP patient survey had a caring responsibility.⁵

A Carers Joint Strategic Needs Assessment in 2020 estimated that there were approximately 40,000 carers in West Northants.⁶

Women

Women are more likely to experience persistent poverty. More than one fifth of women (22%) have a persistent low income, compared to approximately 14% of men. Living in persistent poverty denies women the opportunity to build up savings and assets to fall back on in times of hardship. This effect accumulates for older women which can result in extensive poverty.

Some of the contributing factors include lower pay, part-time work; higher rates of unemployment and economic inactivity; likelihood of being a single parent.

Nine out of ten lone parents are women. The median gross weekly pay for male single parents is £346, while for female single parents it is £194.40.⁸



People with a disability or suffering ill health

Families with at least one disabled person are more likely to live in poverty.

Adults with disabilities are also more likely to be in poverty than those who are not disabled, and this has increased in the past five years.

In 2021 53.1% of Northants residents responding to a GP survey had a long-term condition.⁹ Applied to the local adult population this would equate to 164,800 people.

In 2020/21 11% of GP patients responding to the GP patient survey had a long-term mental health problem, which equates to 34,203 people.

Older people

Low income in retirement is often linked to earlier low pay, or time out of employment. Many older people are also missing out on the entitlements they are due to lack of knowledge or assumptions that they are not entitled. While pensioner poverty rates have fallen in recent years, with an ageing population action is required to ensure that progress is maintained.

In 2019 10.8% (9,398) of older people in West Northants were living in deprivation.¹⁰

This is lower than England (14.2%). In 2011, 29.4% (16,407) of older people in West Northants were living alone.¹¹

(this data is from the last census and will be updated when the 2021 data becomes available in Summer 2022).

Some ethnic minority groups

Certain ethnic groups experience higher levels of poverty as a result of a number of factors such as higher levels of unemployment, poorer housing and low take up of and access to services.

According to the 2011 Census (data from 2021 is due to be released later this year) there were 375,101 residents and 89.8% of those classed themselves as White British. 5.1% of residents were born outside the British Isles, with 2.7% born outside the EU.

The most common non-British Isles countries for residents to have been born in are Poland and India.¹² 93.4% of people living in West Northamptonshire speak English. The other top languages spoken are 1.8% Polish, 0.5% Bengali, 0.3% Romanian, 0.3% Lithuanian, 0.3% Gujarati, 0.2% Russian, 0.2% Chinese.¹³

No recourse to public funds - As a condition of their visa, most categories of migrants in the UK have no recourse to public funds, meaning that they and their children are unable to claim benefits. Undocumented migrants and people whose immigration status is insecure are also unable to claim benefits. The Children's Society has estimated that more than 1.4 million people have NRPF, including nearly 175,000 children (UK).

National Citizens Advice research suggests:

People with NRPF are four times more likely to be behind on at least one essential bill (81% against 20% for the UK population) with rent, utilities and council tax the most common bills missed.

Almost half (48%) report living in overcrowded accommodation and 1 in 5 (18%) have experienced homelessness or housing insecurity.

Three-quarters (75%) have suffered from at least one negative consequence of having NRPF, including not being able to feed themselves or their family, or afford clothing and footwear appropriate for the weather.

1 in 4 (23%) already can't afford to heat their homes. With big price rises now kicking in for fuel bills, many more are likely to face impossible choices this winter.

In-work poverty

Whilst it is true that unemployment remains a key factor, poverty amongst working people in the UK has risen significantly. In-work poverty has risen to 56% of people in poverty. The increase of in-work poverty has ever been experienced by families where all adults work full time within the household.



Some people living in higher working households comprised 17% of people living in poverty in 2018/19, compared to 14% 10 years earlier and 9% in 1996/97.

People living in lower work intensity households comprised 47% of people living in poverty in 2018/19, compared to 42% 10 years earlier and 35% in 1996/97.¹⁷

Unemployed

The number of people unemployed in West Northamptonshire in 2020 was 10,000.¹⁴

In 2020/21 41,400 people were economically inactive¹⁵

In 2019/20 5,415 were claiming unemployment benefit¹⁶ and 779 were long-term unemployed.

Being in a working family (especially one where there is a full-time worker and all adults are in work) reduces the risk of being in poverty, and this will be supported by recent changes to the benefits system. It is by no means a guarantee, especially if that work is part-time or in self-employment, a low-paying sector or if there is a single earner in the household. Around a third of working-age adults in families where there is only part-time work are in poverty, as are almost a quarter of people working in the administrative and support service sector.

Poverty in West Northamptonshire

In 2019 9.6% (37,318) people in West Northants were living in income deprivation. This is lower than England (12.9%.) However, Citizen's Advice have suggested that deprivation data does not give the full picture.

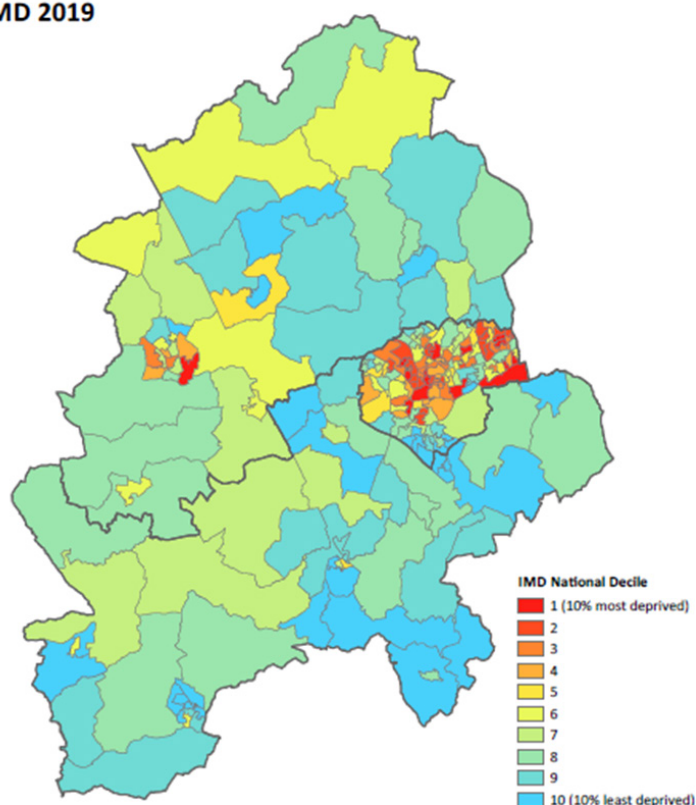
They have found that 30% of people accessing their services live in the most deprived areas, but 72% of people accessing their service are living below the poverty line. Over half of those living in poverty live in working households, where work does not provide enough income to meet basic needs or people fall into poverty due to circumstances beyond their control.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is the official measure of relative deprivation in England and is part of a suite of outputs that form the Indices of Deprivation (IoD).

It follows an established methodological framework in broadly defining deprivation to encompass a wide range of an individual's living conditions.

- The IMD shows that 16.9% of the population of West Northamptonshire live in the 20% most deprived areas (LSOA).
- The area with the highest proportion of residents living in the top 20% deprived areas is Northampton (28.2%).

West Northamptonshire
IMD 2019



© Crown copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey licence no. 100019331

Table 1: The LSOA areas in the most deprived decile on IMD

Local Authority District name (2019)	IMD Rank	Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Decile	LSOA Name
Northampton	185	1	Billing Aquadrome, Bellinge- Fieldmill Road
Northampton	1,139	1	Briar Hill- Ringway, Southwood Hill
Northampton	1,372	1	St James' End- St James Retail Park, Black Lion Hill, St Peter's Way, Drapery
Northampton	1,398	1	Kingsheath- Park Drive, West Oval
Northampton	1,520	1	Dallington Road, Merthyr Road
Northampton	1,803	1	Blackthorn Primary School
Northampton	2,238	1	Eastfield park, Grange Road
Daventry	2,375	1	Borough Hill, Trafalgar Way
Northampton	2,420	1	Marriot Street, St George's Street, Deal Street, Sheep Street
Northampton	2,765	1	St Andrews Hospital, Rushmere Road
Northampton	2,963	1	Auckland Close, Kingsland Avenue, Whilton Road
Northampton	3,065	1	Ecton Brook Road, Pennycress Place
Northampton	3,246	1	Goldings/ Overstone Lodge/ Blackthorn

Causes of Poverty

The anti-poverty strategy recognises that the core aim is to address both the causes of poverty and its effects. We know that the variations of inequalities of health including education, housing and employment drives variations in outcomes for physical and mental health. These impact on an individual's inability to prevent sickness, or to take action and access treatment when ill health occurs. Therefore, whilst the core purpose of the strategy is to reduce poverty within West Northamptonshire communities, we recognise the need to look at access to activities and services which will improve health and wellbeing, to increase resilience in communities and prevent people from falling into poverty in the first place as well as addressing the impacts of poverty. This will add value and complement any established activity towards actively reducing poverty.

The causes and consequences of poverty are often complex. Analysis of the available evidence suggests that there is no single cause, but a range of factors contribute to people's risk of experiencing poverty. Over half of those living in poverty live in working households, where work does not provide enough income to meet basic needs or people fall into poverty due to circumstances beyond their control. In the past twenty years poverty rates have fallen.

However, since 2013 previous reductions in poverty among families have gone into reverse. This is largely due to rises in housing, food and fuel prices increasing the cost of living.

In 2019 11.8% (15,192) people in West Northants were in fuel poverty¹⁹



Unemployment and low pay

There is still a strong association between unemployment and poverty, along with a significant rise of in-work poverty.

Young people are particularly impacted, with the number aged 16 to 18 not in employment, education or training increasing.

In 2019 3.5% of 16-17 year olds in Northamptonshire were not in education, employment or training (NEET)²⁰

Although getting more local people into good quality work will undoubtedly play a major role in tackling poverty, it must be acknowledged that even when people do work it is not always a guaranteed route out of poverty. Low pay and low wage growth continues to be a key cause of poverty, we have seen a significant rise in part-time contracts.

In 2021 gross median weekly pay in West Northants was £515.30 and in 2019 the gross value added per hour worked was £31.46.

Lack of skills and qualifications

Job opportunities for those with few qualifications are limited and austerity and the COVID pandemic has meant that there are fewer resources to tackle poverty, adversely affecting those worse off.

In 2020 11,900 people aged 16 - 64 (4.8%) had no qualifications, which is lower than the national average (6.4%).²¹

In 2019/20 the percentage of young people achieving GCSEs (and equivalent qualifications) in English and Maths by age 19 was 65.6% in Daventry, 63.2% in Northampton and 76.5% in South Northants.²²



We know there is a strong link between poverty and poor mental health

In Northamptonshire in 2018/19: 6% reported a low happiness score²⁶ and 18.1% reported a high anxiety score.²⁷

In 2020/21 14.3% (88,642) of GP registered patients had depression recorded in their record and 11% of those responding to the annual GP survey had a long-term mental health problem.²⁸

Household debt

National figures suggest that there are around 8.3 million people in the UK who are unable to pay their bills and around 22% of UK adults have less than £100 in savings.

Renters, young people, lone parents and those with three or more children are most likely to be affected, and this often compounded by the recovery charges associated with paying off those debts.

More and more families are having to borrow to support their day-to-day living standards.

Poor physical and mental health

The link between poverty and a higher risk of illness and premature death is well established.

Poverty leads to feelings of insecurity and uncertainty, and impacts on people's attitudes towards the future. It can result in unhealthy choices, such as smoking and using drugs or alcohol, which may be used to cope with daily stresses and prevents people from being able to invest in their future.

All of these factors can have a significant impact on mental and physical health, and lead to health inequalities.

In Northamptonshire in the period 2018–20 life expectancy at birth was 79.8 for males and 82.8 for females²³ and in 2017-19 healthy life expectancy was 63.4 for males and 63.6 for females.²⁴

In the period 2017-19 the gap in life expectancy between people living in the most and least deprived parts of Northamptonshire was 8.8 years for males and 7.1 years for females.²⁵

High housing and living costs

High housing and living costs constitute one of the most direct impacts on poverty and material deprivation. Rising house prices, rents in the private sector and interest rates are pushing more renters and homeowners below the poverty line and increasing demand for lower cost housing, for example, social housing. The [West Northamptonshire Council, Housing and Economic Needs Assessment, 2021](#) shows that 1,253 new affordable rented homes are needed in West Northants each year, between 2020-2050.

Since 2017, West Northamptonshire has seen the number of people presenting as homeless increase (from 983 to 2059). The high cost of housing is not the only problem. The rising cost for other basic necessities such as food, clothing and utilities, coupled with weak wage growth, means more and more families are reaching crisis point. In addition, many of those on low incomes are also forced to pay over the odds for some essential goods and services (known as the Poverty Premium) including energy, finance, furniture and white goods. Estimates suggest that the poverty premium can amount to £490 a year, but sometimes can be as high as £2,250. The type of fuel tariff low income households are on contributes the most to the poverty premium.

The table below shows the initial estimate of the number of households with a current housing need. These figures are before any 'affordability test' has been applied to assess the ability of households to meet their own housing needs and has been termed 'the number of households in unsuitable housing'. Overall, the analysis estimates that there are currently just over 12,049 households living in unsuitable housing (or without housing) in West Northamptonshire.

Table 2: Estimated Number of Households Living in Unsuitable Housing ²⁹

	Homeless/ concealed households	Households in over-crowding	Existing affordable housing tenants in need	Households from other tenures in need
Daventry	317	623	100	682
Northampton	1,346	4,763	341	2,282
South Northants	304	475	79	737
West Northants	1,967	5,861	520	3,701

The figures presented are estimates and may include an element of double counting as households could fall within more than one category.

Lived Experience

In addition to the data, it is important that we listen and learn from the lived experiences of people in poverty; that we engage with those with first-hand knowledge. To inform the development of the strategy we have sought evidence from local voluntary and community organisations, along with key front-line services who are directly supporting West Northants' most vulnerable people.

The Strategy has been coproduced in consultation and discussion with partners, cross party elected members, service providers, public health, housing and voluntary and community representatives, including the VCSE Assembly. An Oversight Board was established comprising these partners to develop the framework and shape the strategy.

The strategy will be kept under regular review as new evidence and learning emerges from the impact of the pandemic and we continue to be informed by the findings of the West Northants Poverty Truth Commission.

The Poverty Truth Commission has provided the opportunity to listen and learn from the lived experiences of people in poverty. A website has been set up for the Poverty Truth Commission in West Northants poverty-truth.org.uk which is encouraging real life stories, from those with lived experienced of poverty. These case studies are coming from seldom heard groups within our communities, those that are vulnerable and those most in need.

The Hope Centre, working with other organisations and community groups, conducted research with specific groups affected by poverty, capturing lived experience, providing the opportunity to feed into the strategy.

The engagement and activity that is driven through the Poverty Truth Commission and the work of The Hope Centre and partners has helped to define what poverty means in West Northamptonshire. The Poverty Truth Commission will continue to develop the strategic objectives and commitments.

The close involvement of our communities in shaping our approach will ensure that we are meeting the differing needs in all of the communities of West Northamptonshire to ensure those who experience poverty first-hand remain at the heart of what we do.

Live Your Best Life

In West Northants we want children and adults to have every opportunity to live their best life. Living your best life for us means people have equality of opportunity to be the best version of themselves. To be the best version of themselves we recognise that people need;

- The best start in life.
- Access to the best available education and learning.
- Opportunity to be fit, well and independent.
- Employment that keeps them and their families out of poverty.
- Housing that is affordable, safe and sustainable in places which are clean and green.
- To feel safe in their homes and when out and about.
- Connected to their families and friends
- The chance for a fresh start, when things go wrong.
- Access to health and social care when they need it.
- To be accepted and valued simply for who they are.

To support our residents with these 10 domains means that we have to collaborate, not just with our partners and local business but also with local people to ensure we understand the uniqueness of each of our Neighbourhoods and the people who live in them. Understanding this uniqueness enables us to ensure the right support, environment and interventions are in place to support people to live their best life.

This strategy will provide a significant contribution to enable people to live their best life and does not intend to duplicate any of the work that is already underway but, seeks to add value, align, enhance, and support delivery. The Health and Wellbeing Board will ensure this strategy and its implementation contributes to our overall approach and will provide an annual report to West Northants Council detailing progress and outcomes delivered for local people.

What are we going to do?

To achieve our vision we must work together to maximise our resources and focus on activities that are likely to have a lasting impact on reducing poverty across West Northants, to improve the lives of our local communities. We will do this by focusing on three key priorities:



These in turn are supported by 8 strategic objectives and 32 commitments, high level ambition statements that collectively support the shared vision and are aligned to the 3 priorities. Our vision, priorities and shared commitment statements map our strategic direction. We are clear that this is the start of our journey, identifying our commitments against what we know now and recognising we still have a long way to go.

Through continued engagement of our community, partners, local businesses and community and voluntary sector organisations we will develop a robust set of action plans and a performance framework which will underpin the strategy.

Supporting people who are struggling in poverty now

As clearly demonstrated, levels of poverty remain unacceptably high. It is for us all - public sector, businesses, the voluntary and community sector, communities and individuals to come together to provide better support for those who are struggling, and those who are in poverty now.

Commitment of resource and funding - to deliver the strategy and resultant action plan, with a focus on those most in need

To really make a difference there is a need for effective support services that reach beyond the public sector, at an organisational and individual level. These organisations are also faced with their own challenges of rising demand and reducing resources.

We will:

- Work to map existing resources and services to understand the need and identify gaps across West Northants to drive our actions.
- Work with partners and communities across West Northants to develop a better understanding of the characteristics and experiences of those most in need; the different types of poverty that most affects them; and how we can work together to provide more tailored support when needed.
- Continue to provide appropriate funding to the relevant voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations working across West Northants who provide critical support for those in severe hardship, measuring outcomes and effectiveness of investment.
- Provide more targeted support to those most in need, our high risk groups experiencing severe hardship.

Improve communication and awareness of information and support for those who are in need

This strategy is designed to help bring about change and improve the lives of all people on low incomes, regardless of personal circumstances, across the whole of West Northants.

We will:

- Develop a communication and engagement strategy that ensures we target specific communities, those most at risk and most in need as identified within the strategy.
- Ensure all our residents are aware of the services available to support them and have access to these services when they are in need.

Increase access to affordable credit, free welfare advice and debt advice

Free and independent advice services play a hugely important role in the fight against poverty.

We will:

- Continue to invest in necessary free and independent advice services; front line services, providing vital support to help maximise people's incomes and ensure everyone understands their rights and legal entitlements.
- Work with providers of welfare rights and debt advice reviewing the way these are delivered to ensure more people are able to access the free and independent advice they need.
- Enhance the awareness of affordable credit and savings options to those excluded from mainstream banking; ensuring more people can benefit from cheaper lending and a convenient way of saving regularly.
- Review the Council's debt collection practices (including the use of external enforcement agencies), so that they are undertaken in as sensitive a manner as possible, and in a way that does not create further hardship or financial difficulties for vulnerable people.

Preventing people from falling into poverty in the first place

As well as taking action to alleviate some of the causes of poverty in the short term, we must work collectively to address many of the underlying causes of poverty to prevent people from falling into poverty in the first place. We will seek to do this by:

Helping people on low incomes to maximise their income and minimise their costs

West Northants continues to have fantastic growth potential and our Local Plan sets out clear frameworks for attracting investment and delivering new jobs and opportunities over the coming years. It is essential that local people are given opportunities generated through economic growth and we use our influence to target employers who offer local jobs, pay well and treat their employees well.

Commitments:

- The Council has recently agreed to a pay award for all directly employed staff, which is above the current real living wage
- A commitment to encourage businesses and organisations based in West Northants to pay all their staff the living wage.
- Support benefit claimants to receive their full entitlement to all benefits.
- Promote social mobility, by raising skills and improving access to a range of employment opportunities for people on low incomes, including apprenticeships and adult education.

Meet housing need with good quality social housing and enable the private rented sector to be an effective housing contributor

We have an absolute commitment to preventing homelessness in West Northants and providing alternative housing options, wherever possible, to avoid the need for people to make a homeless application and face the prospect of living in temporary accommodation or on the streets.

It is clear we need lower cost rented and social housing in West Northants to support the existing and growing population.

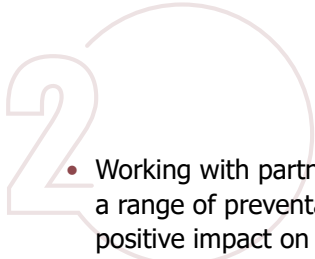
Commitments:

- Develop a new West Northants Housing Strategy.
- Support the development of new homes and ensure rent levels support local housing need.
- Support private tenants and landlords to improve energy efficiency standards of homes to help tenants and residents to reduce their energy costs.
- Develop a new West Northants Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- Help to prevent and reduce homelessness by seeking alternative housing options and increasing the number of good quality private sector homes available to rent.

Build resilient and supportive communities through investment in services that support health and social wellbeing, working in partnership with communities to develop local assets and build community resource

Commitments:

- We will listen to residents' views on local issues and work with communities to identify the solutions. We will seek to coordinate and facilitate community action to help address poverty.
- Work with partner organisations to develop area based approaches and multi-agency initiatives, supporting at a neighbourhood level where there are higher levels of poverty and discrimination.
- We will use an approach that recognises and builds on the strengths of individuals, families and communities. We will continue to build the relationship between public services and residents, communities and businesses that enables greater shared decision making and genuine co-production of services. We saw great examples of this during our response to COVID 19 and we need to ensure we continue to make full use of the assets, skills and resources that already exists within our diverse local areas.



- Working with partners across the system to provide a range of preventative services that can have a positive impact on health outcomes for low income residents and communities. Promoting healthy lifestyles and physical activity, including through the provision of leisure centres and providing access to green spaces, working with local voluntary groups and businesses to promote healthy eating and access to sustainable food.

- The Poverty Truth Commission has identified mental ill health as a particular area of concern. Working with those individuals and families with lived experiences of these issues, along with our health partners, we will explore ways we can better understand the relationship between poverty and mental health, and seek to better support the mental health and wellbeing of our most vulnerable.

Influencing the Government and other national organisations to get a better deal for the communities in West Northants

Whilst there is a lot of action that we can take locally to address poverty, many of the main drivers still lie with national government, which is why it is imperative that we influence the poverty debate at a regional and national level. Working together we must continue to do all we can to build the evidence base for change.

Engage members of parliament and central government departments, to advocate for equality and fairness to get the best deal for our communities

Commitments:

- Harness the appetite and continue to work together, as agencies, as partners, across political parties and across our communities.
- Continue the work of the oversight group which has helped to develop and shape the strategy so far.
- Building on the work that is already taking place at a national level, we will develop a campaign to highlight the hidden dangers of taking out short term, high cost credit and promote more responsible lending.

Utilise the evidence base for action and share this to lever in funds both locally and nationally

West Northants has a wealth of local data and intelligence on poverty and deprivation that has been used to inform the development of this strategy. We will continue to keep our knowledge base up to date and review in a timely fashion.

Commitments:

- Utilise organisations such as the University of Northampton to help provide high quality research, analysis and evaluation.
- Utilise local best practice, to learn and share and influence policy.
- Create local area profiles.
- To learn from and act upon the recommendations of the West Northants Poverty Truth Commission.



Measuring Success

The following outcomes will indicate we are making a difference. Our action plans will focus on those in greatest need and we will continue to collectively champion the cause of those who are most at risk.



A performance framework, which will include a set of performance indicators and a detailed action plan will be developed to measure the effectiveness of our strategy.

The performance indicators that will be used are those for which we have existing data sets available nationally or locally, collected by West Northants Council. We recognise that other partners and our community and voluntary sector have valuable data, which will provide a richer picture. Our intention is to use this information to help inform the future development of our strategy and drive our actions.

Rachel and Joleen's Story

For Rachel and Joleen, two young care leavers who agreed to share their experiences, poverty is about not having the resources (like money, food, or clothes) to cover their basic needs. "I think I realise it more now that I'm older", Rachel explained. "When you are young you don't really pay attention to stuff like that, until you get your own place. Then, it's a different story". "That's when you struggle", Joleen adds. "You think: I had this help when I was in foster care, but now what do I do? Who do I ask for help? I think you think about it more, and it makes you more appreciative of the things that you have now."

As Rachel and Joleen have received lasting support from the Leaving Care team, they expressed their gratitude and admitted how they would turn to them if they needed help. However, Rachel – who is not with Leaving Care anymore – acknowledged she no longer knows where else to get support from. "I wouldn't know what to do, no. I wouldn't know what to do to get out of this situation." She alluded to the abrupt transition into independent living and what a daunting and overwhelming experience it was. "It's the shock when you leave Leaving Care for me. I was 21, I didn't know what was going on, or what to do, or anything, and then it went downhill from there".

Over time, Rachel and Joleen have gradually gained more confidence to ask for help, but it is not without its challenges as they still struggle to receive the support they need. When reflecting on her experiences contacting services for support, Joleen explained: "You wait there (on the phone) for an hour, and they say 'call back tomorrow'. You could ring in the morning and it's still a 45-minute wait". "It's finding the courage to ask for help, then finding it, then waiting through it", said Rachel. "It's frustrating, and it just makes you want to give up. But you've got to persist".

For Joleen and Rachel poverty is a full circle – a cycle with barriers that stop them from escaping from it. "We were talking earlier about driving lessons. Obviously, if a young care leaver was able to experience learning to drive and then buying a vehicle, the opportunities for employment expand. But it's not easy to be able to do driving lessons and buying our own car, so we don't have an opportunity of a bigger, wider range of employment. So even if we were to get a job, we'd have to find out how to travel there", they add. "How are we even going to afford to travel there? It's just things like that, and it goes round."

Lorraine's Perspective on Poverty

Lorraine is a working mother, grandmother and student who recently shared her story on how she is struggling with debt and financial distress. For her, living in poverty means not having enough to pay her bills and the cost of essentials, like food or heating. Although her understanding of what poverty means has remained pretty much the same over time, she got angrier about it over the years when she realised she was stuck in the same position.

With her debts, Lorraine feels that outside her family, there are not enough places for her to go get help. She contacted Citizen's Advice, and she is now in a 60-day breathing space which gives her temporary protection from her debtors and bailiff action. Lorraine has already struggled with council tax bailiffs in the past – not because she does not want to pay it, she explained, but because she can't afford to pay it. "You start off with a debt that I think it was £1,600, but now is £2,300, because every time a bailiff comes, you get £200 put on top. And you have to, obviously, not answer your door, because... it's all been very stressful."

Lorraine is nearly finished with her master's degree, which she started soon after completing her first degree in International Relations and Politics. Nevertheless, as a student Lorraine has been suffering the stress of having to continually switch between universal credit and her student loan. She expressed how, as a result, there were periods of time when she could not claim any benefits. "In that time, I think it was the September when I started uni, until January, I had been entitled to absolutely zero. And now I owe them over £1,000. Then this is how people get in debt."

Even though Lorraine hopes getting these degrees will help her secure a better job, she is not oblivious to the barriers that stand in her way out of poverty, one of them being her age: "I'm going to be 60, so I may not be most employers first choice, because of my age". Lorraine added: "I wish I had gone to university years ago, but you get stuck in that trap – you're so busy spending your whole life concentrating on how you're going to live, that you forget maybe there's something you can do about it. It's just a constant loop you get stuck in."

Lorraine also reflected on how difficult it is for people and families to break the cycle of poverty. "If I get a better job, it will change for me. But all these people that are in world wage, they can't all go out and go get degrees and get better jobs. It doesn't work like that, because there are not enough jobs anyway. Who would do the jobs that people look down on if everyone got out and tried to do better? People should be paid for the value of their work – a cleaner is valuable, but they don't treat it like that", she says. "There should be a minimum wage and it should be enough that people can live on, and if they go out to work, they should be able to live on it. Have enough to pay their bills, to eat and everything, and have a little bit leftover. Everyone should have that."

Case Studies

Case Study F

F is originally from Kenya. She is 68 years old and has been in the UK for 19 years and has no recourse to public funds. She is married to a British national who is 67. Neither of them works, and although he is on a state pension, they find it hard to make ends meet. "We don't have enough money to buy washing salts, food, clothing".

When she first came to this country, in 2002, she worked in care, for private agencies. She paid tax with a fake ID, which she paid £200 for. From the money she was paid, she remitted money back to Kenya regularly, to support her children and family there.

"I used to have good weekly money. "At that time I was even supporting in the house, I had everything" In 2015, she had to stop work, due to ill health. "Now I can't stand for long, I can't lift, so I can't work." To make end meets, F has been doing cash-for-work jobs for community, mostly childminding, for which parents pay cash-in-hand. F has also taken on domestic, housekeeping work, as and when it has been available. For a period, she was doing ironing for cash, earning £20 for 5 or 6 hours work. "They don't pay good money"

F is an overstayer. She has applied for settled status but has been refused 5 times. Each time she has applied, she had to find significant amounts of money. She has been badly advised, legally. The last time she tried was in 2018, when she was arrested on suspicion of forging her marriage certificate. She was remanded in custody and, after trial, was sentenced to 3 months and 2 weeks, had already been in for three months in Gloucester. She was released after three weeks, once they were satisfied that her marriage was genuine. She was told she would not be deported because of her ill health. She told us that someone wrote to her GP while she was in prison, to instruct him/her not to treat her. She has since been receiving support from Doctors of the World for all her medical needs, including the Covid vaccine.

"When you are not a citizen you don't get enough support from the surrounding, from the police, from the hospital, you don't get enough support because they learn that you are not allowed to be in this country, so they support you very little".



References

1. Ministry of Housing and Local government, 2019
2. Public Health Outcomes Framework, 2020/21
3. Subnational indicators explorer - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)
4. Subnational indicators explorer - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)
5. National General Practice Profiles - Data - OHID (phe.org.uk)
6. Carers JSNA, 2020
7. National Education Union
8. National Education Union
9. National General Practice Profiles - Data - OHID (phe.org.uk)
10. Ministry of Housing and Local government, 2019
11. ONS Census, 2011
12. ONS, 2011
13. ONS, 2011
14. Public Health Outcomes Framework, 2020
15. Public Health Outcomes Framework, 2020/21
16. Public Health Outcomes Framework, 2019/20
17. The Health Foundation
18. Ministry of Housing and Local government, 2019
19. Public Health Outcomes Framework, 2019
20. Public Health Outcomes Framework, 2019
21. ONS annual population survey, 2020
22. Subnational indicators explorer - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)
23. Public Health Outcomes Framework, 2018-20
24. Public Health Outcomes Framework, 2017-19
25. Public Health Outcomes Framework, 2017-19
26. Public Health Outcomes Framework, 2018/19
27. Public Health Outcomes Framework, 2018/19
28. National General Practice Profiles - Data - OHID (phe.org.uk)
29. West Northamptonshire Housing and Economic Need Assessment

West Northamptonshire Council

People Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

	Topic identified and scheduled
	Topic identified but not yet scheduled
	Topic completed

Topic	Proposed purpose	Date of Committee meeting	Cabinet Member / Executive Director / other senior leader	Task and Finish Panel	Comments
Integrated Care across Northamptonshire (iCAN)	The Committee to scrutinise progress made with the development of iCAN and the position on key risk factors.	21 September 2021 – A task and finish panel has been set up and will conclude its review in 2022/23	Executive Director People Services	Yes	The task and finish panel will meet 6 times from January 2022 to April 2023, aligned to iCAN contract gateway review points, to scrutinise delivery of iCAN programme outcomes.
Task and finish scrutiny review: Special educational needs and disability (SEND) support	To approve the scope for a scrutiny review on this topic, as agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 21 November 2022.	21 February 2023 – A task and finish panel has been set up and will conclude its review in 2023/24	NA	Yes	
Housing Allocations Policy	The Committee to consider the development of a Housing Allocations policy for West Northamptonshire.	3 May 2023	Assistant Director Housing and Communities	No	The Committee has been advised that corporate work is due to produce proposals in mid-2023.
Fostering services	The Committee to consider the outcomes of the Ofsted inspection of fostering services in Northamptonshire published in March 2023.	3 May 2023	Executive Director People Services		

Topic	Proposed purpose	Date of Committee meeting	Cabinet Member / Executive Director / other senior leader	Task and Finish Panel	Comments
West Northamptonshire Anti-Poverty Strategy	The Committee to scrutinise the outcomes delivered by the Anti-Poverty Strategy in the first year after it is adopted.	3 May 2023	Executive Director People Services	No	The Committee will seek to scrutinise the substance of the Annual Report two months before it is presented to Full Council.
Debt and Money Advice Transformation Project	The Committee to provide scrutiny input into the development and delivery of the transformation project.	21 June 2022 21 February 2023 To be confirmed	Director of Communities and Opportunities	No	The Committee agreed at its meeting on 21 February 2023 to request that more detailed plans for the future Debt and Money Advice service to be developed be presented to the Committee at an appropriate future meeting.
Individual debt and West Northamptonshire Council's approach to debt recovery	The Committee to consider an overview of issues relating to individual debt in West Northamptonshire and the Council's approach to debt recovery.	To be confirmed	Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits	No	The Committee agreed at its meeting on 21 February 2023 to add this topic to its work programme.
School performance	The Committee to invite the Regional Director to discuss school performance in relation to academy schools in West Northamptonshire.	To be confirmed	Executive Director People Services Assistant Director Education Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education	No	The Committee sought to schedule this topic in the first half of 2022 but the-then Regional Director was not able to attend on scheduled meeting dates. This matter was pursued again in September 2022. It initially appeared that the Regional Director would be able to attend the meeting on

Topic	Proposed purpose	Date of Committee meeting	Cabinet Member / Executive Director / other senior leader	Task and Finish Panel	Comments
					21 February 2023 but their attendance ultimately could not be secured. The Chair has subsequently written to the Department for Education concerning engagement with the Regional Director.
West Northamptonshire Council homecare framework	The Committee to consider an update on progress with the proposed new framework.	To be confirmed	Executive Director People Services	No	The Committee agreed at its meeting on 8 December 2022 to request that a progress update be brought to an appropriate future meeting.
Integrated Care Northamptonshire Strategy 2022-32 outcomes framework	The Committee to consider the outcomes framework intended to measure progress with the delivery of key outcomes in the ICN Strategy.	To be confirmed	Executive Director People Services	No	The Committee agreed at its meeting on 8 December 2022 to scrutinise the developing outcomes framework for the ICN Strategy.
Healthwatch West Northamptonshire work	The Committee to invite Healthwatch West Northamptonshire to give an overview of issues identified through its work.	To be confirmed	Healthwatch West Northamptonshire representatives	No	Healthwatch Northamptonshire (HWN) has previously suggested that an item on this topic could be best scheduled following publication of HWN's Annual Report in the summer. The Committee may wish to schedule an item early in 2023/24 on HWN's Annual Report for 2022/23.

Topic	Proposed purpose	Date of Committee meeting	Cabinet Member / Executive Director / other senior leader	Task and Finish Panel	Comments
Communities and Opportunities Directorate key contracts and delivery plans	The Committee to consider the Directorate's key contracts and associated delivery plans	To be confirmed	Director of Communities and Opportunities	No	
Provision of free broadband to young people leaving local authority care.	The Committee to provide scrutiny input into the potential development of proposals by West Northamptonshire Council.	To be confirmed	Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education	To be confirmed	The Full Council meeting on 23 September 2021 referred a motion on this topic to the Committee, to consider the issues involved.
Rough sleeping	The Committee to provide scrutiny input on responses to rough sleeping in West Northamptonshire.	To be confirmed	Director of Communities and Opportunities Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Leisure	To be confirmed	The Committee has identified the following potential focus areas for scrutiny: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the potential to continue to apply the principles of the 'everyone in' approach used during the COVID-19 pandemic severe weather shelter provision.
Support for people living with dementia	The Committee to scrutinise how well people living with dementia are supported in West Northamptonshire.	To be confirmed	Executive Director People Services Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Wellbeing and Health Integration	To be confirmed	The Committee has identified that work on this topic might take as a starting point the response to the Northampton Borough Council scrutiny review on dementia-friendly communities.

Topic	Proposed purpose	Date of Committee meeting	Cabinet Member / Executive Director / other senior leader	Task and Finish Panel	Comments
Sports and Leisure needs assessment	The Committee to consider the needs assessment for sports and leisure provision in West Northamptonshire.	To be confirmed	Director of Communities and Opportunities	The Committee has previously identified wider issues relating to sports and leisure provision as a potential topic for an in-depth scrutiny review.	This item was originally scheduled for late-2022 but the time required for the corporate work has since changed and late-2023 is now more likely.
Sports and leisure provision	Scrutiny of how West Northamptonshire Council works together with other service providers and community groups to provide the best overall offer to residents from all parts of the community.	To be confirmed – early 2022/23 originally suggested	Director of Communities and Opportunities	The Committee to consider setting up a task and finish panel to carry out an in-depth scrutiny review.	The Committee considers that this work could be an example of scrutiny on the wider theme of the community impact of Council services: looking at how the Council identifies needs, other support available in the community that helps to meet those needs, and therefore how the Council can focus resources to have the most impact.
Provision of housing support for refugees	The Committee to consider an update on the provision of housing support for people coming into West Northamptonshire as refugees.	To be confirmed	Assistant Director Housing and Communities	No	The Committee agreed at its meeting on 25 October 2022 that it should seek to maintain oversight of this issue.

Topic	Proposed purpose	Date of Committee meeting	Cabinet Member / Executive Director / other senior leader	Task and Finish Panel	Comments
Integrated Care System / Integrated Care across Northamptonshire (iCAN)	The Committee to receive an overview of the aims of the Northamptonshire ICS and iCAN, and plans for implementation.	20 July 2021	Executive Director Adults, Communities and Wellbeing	No	The Northamptonshire Integrated Care System is likely to be a continuing area for scrutiny in future.
Residential and nursing care for older people	The Committee to receive an overview of current provision and planning towards meeting future needs.	20 July 2021	Executive Director Adults, Communities and Wellbeing	No	
West Northamptonshire Anti-Poverty Strategy	The Committee to receive an update on progress with the development of the Strategy.	21 September 2021	Executive Director Adults, Communities and Wellbeing Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Wellbeing and Health Integration	No	
Northamptonshire children's services performance	The Committee to receive an update on the Ofsted monitoring visit in July 2021 that will focus on children with child protection plans and with children in need plans.	21 September 2021	Director of Children's Services Chief Executive, Children's Trust	No	
Residential and nursing care for older people	The Committee to scrutinise trends relating to performance and capacity of current care homes.	16 November 2021	Executive Director Adults, Communities and Wellbeing Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Wellbeing and Health Integration	No	
Adult Social Care transformation	The Committee to scrutinise outcomes from the implementation of the Adult Social Care Target Operating Model (TOM)	16 November 2021	Executive Director Adults, Communities and Wellbeing Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Wellbeing and Health Integration	No	

Topic	Proposed purpose	Date of Committee meeting	Cabinet Member / Executive Director / other senior leader	Task and Finish Panel	Comments
Northamptonshire children's services performance	The Committee to receive an update covering the following matters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional measures to further improve recruitment and retention of social workers • Achieving consistently good quality practice for all children, supported by full implementation of the practice model Outcomes of the Ofsted monitoring visit due to take place in November 2021.	25 January 2022	Director of Children's Services Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education Chief Executive, Children's Trust	No	
School improvement	The Committee to receive an overview of activity by West Northamptonshire Council to support school improvement.	25 January 2022	Director of Children's Services Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education	No	
Special educational needs and disability (SEND) support and alternative provision	The Committee to receive an overview of SEND support and alternative provision (education outside school arranged by the local authority or schools) in West Northamptonshire.	25 January 2022	Director of Children's Services Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education	No	
Healthwatch function	The Committee to receive a briefing paper giving an overview of the Healthwatch function in Northamptonshire.	25 January 2022	NA	No	

Topic	Proposed purpose	Date of Committee meeting	Cabinet Member / Executive Director / other senior leader	Task and Finish Panel	Comments
West Northamptonshire Anti-Poverty Strategy	The Committee to receive an update on progress with the adoption and implementation of the Strategy.	1 March 2022	Executive Director Adults, Communities and Wellbeing Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Wellbeing and Health Integration	No	
West Northamptonshire Council Housing Strategy	The Committee to provide scrutiny input in the developing Housing Strategy.	1 March 2022 – The Committee to hold a separate workshop-style session following its formal meeting.	Assistant Director Housing and Communities	No	
Northamptonshire children’s services performance	The Committee to receive an update on performance against key targets and the continuing development of children’s services.	21 June 2022	Chief Executive, Children’s Trust	No	The Committee has also identified the way in which children’s services contributes with other services to dealing with cross-cutting issues as a potential future topic for scrutiny.
Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22	The Committee to consider the Annual Report on its activity in 2021/22, for submission to Full Council.	21 June 2022	NA	No	
West Northamptonshire Council Housing Strategy – outcomes from public consultation	The Committee to consider the outcomes of public consultation on the proposed Strategy.	9 August 2022	Executive Director Adults, Communities and Wellbeing Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Leisure	A workshop style remote meeting will be used.	The Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Group considered potential cross-cutting scrutiny topics on 22 March 2022. It agreed that scrutiny of the Housing Strategy should be open to members of all three Overview and Scrutiny committees.

Topic	Proposed purpose	Date of Committee meeting	Cabinet Member / Executive Director / other senior leader	Task and Finish Panel	Comments
West Northamptonshire Council Housing Strategy – draft Strategy	The Committee to carry out pre-decision scrutiny of the full draft Strategy.	9 August 2022	Executive Director Adults, Communities and Wellbeing Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Leisure	A workshop style remote meeting will be used.	The Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Group considered potential cross-cutting scrutiny topics on 22 March 2022. It agreed that scrutiny of the Housing Strategy should be open to members of all three Overview and Scrutiny committees.
Adult Social Care social worker recruitment and retention	The Committee to scrutinise the latest position, focussing on posts supporting the delivery of statutory social care services.	25 October 2022	Assistant Director Safeguarding and Wellbeing Assistant Director Commissioning and Performance	No	
Housing Solutions Transformation Plan	The Committee to consider an overview of the transformation plan for the Housing Solutions function	25 October 2022	Assistant Director Housing and Communities	No	
Special educational needs and disability (SEND) support	The Committee to consider an update on the development of SEND support, to include performance against the timescale for completing Education, Health and Care Plan assessments.	21 November 2022	Executive Director People Services Assistant Director Education Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education	Yes	
Development of Integrated Care Northamptonshire	The Committee to consider an update on the development of the Integrated Care System in Northamptonshire.	8 December 2022	Executive Director People Services Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Wellbeing and Health Integration	No	

Topic	Proposed purpose	Date of Committee meeting	Cabinet Member / Executive Director / other senior leader	Task and Finish Panel	Comments
Task and finish scrutiny review: child and adolescent mental health and the risk of self-harm	To approve the final report of the scrutiny review.	21 February 2023	NA	Yes	

People Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting dates in 2022/23

21 June 2022	8 December 2022
15 September 2022 [NOT HELD]	21 February 2023
25 October 2022	24 April 2023 [RESCHEDULED]
21 November 2022	03 May 2023

Changes to West Northamptonshire Council Overview and Scrutiny committee structure for 2023/24

The Council meeting on 23 March 2023 agreed changes to the future operation of the Overview and Scrutiny Function informed by a review by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. These include splitting the remit of the existing People Overview and Scrutiny Committee between two new committees, one covering Adult Care and Health and one covering Children, Education and Housing. The changes agreed by the Council will come into effect immediately before the Council's Annual Meeting on 18 May 2023.