



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

15 December 2022

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Paul Watling - Cabinet Member: Stronger and Safer Communities	
Lead Director:	Katherine Kynaston - Director: Housing, Employment & Infrastructure	
Service Area:	Housing Solutions	
Report Author:	Toni Guest - Service Delivery Manager: Housing Solutions	
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Wards Affected:	All Wards	
Key Decision:	Key Decision	
Forward Plan:	Yes	
Report considered by:	SMT – 8 November 2022 Business Briefing – 17 November 2022 Cabinet – 15 December 2022	

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

Cabinet is asked to approve:

- 1.1 the adoption of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for the period of 2022 – 2027; and
- 1.2 delegated authority be given to the Director: Housing, Employment and Infrastructure in consultation with the lead Cabinet Member: Stronger and Safer Communities to implement actions set out in the Strategy.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the adoption of the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for Telford & Wrekin. This sets out how Telford & Wrekin Council and its partners across the statutory, community and voluntary sectors will continue to work together to prevent and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in the Borough over the next five years.
- 2.2 This strategy is integral to the Council Plan and our commitment to ‘protect, care and invest to create a better borough’.
- 2.3 Our Housing Strategy recognises that a decent place to live is the foundation on which people build their lives and this strategy is key to our objective to provide homes to support and empower our most vulnerable people.
- 2.4 Existing partnerships within the borough are robust in delivering a wide range of support to clients facing homeless and are key in delivering the overarching objectives within this strategy. This is particularly evident in the work of the Rough Sleeping Task Force and provides a strong foundation on which to build with the strategy featuring pledges by partners across the public, community, voluntary and health sectors to drive delivery.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all housing authorities to produce a homelessness strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their area. The strategy must be renewed at least every five years showing how we will address and prevent homelessness based on this review. The strategy should be cross service.
- 3.2 Telford & Wrekin Council’s current Homelessness strategy runs to 2022.
- 3.3 The Homelessness Act 2017 significantly reformed England’s homelessness legislation by placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas.
- 3.4 Section 4 of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires that strategies tackle all forms of homelessness that are defined in law, which encompasses rough sleeping.
- 3.5 The strategy must set out the authority’s plans for the prevention of homelessness and for securing that sufficient accommodation and support are, or will be, available for people who become homeless or who are at risk of becoming so.
- 3.6 Local housing authorities should be assisted by social care services and have the co-operation of private registered providers of social housing, to fulfil homelessness strategy duties. Other agencies should also contribute.
- 3.7 The proposed Strategy has been produced with the involvement of a specialist housing advisor to ensure an independent view was taken and to lead on consultation and engagement sessions with key partners and internal services. This has included the voluntary sector, supported accommodation providers, registered social landlords, private landlords, support services and social care.

3.8 Data

3.9 In the past year c.3000 households have approached the Council and been provided with advice and support to prevent them becoming homeless. The table below illustrates how this number has increased year on year.

Number of people approaching and receiving Housing Solutions advice pa:

2018/19	2029
2019/20	2073
2020/21	2438
2021/22	2969

3.10 Our data further shows that the number of clients who fall under the Homelessness Reduction Act duty i.e. they are homeless or threatened with homelessness - has more than doubled from 2018/19 to 2021/22:

	Annual	% of those who Approach for support
2018/19	396	20%
2019/20	452	22%
2020/21	875	36%
2021/22	881	30%

3.11 Illustrating the success of actions in our existing Strategy while we are seeing the scale of our challenge grow the number of clients where we have been able to prevent homelessness has almost tripled since 2018/19 to 2021/22:

	Annual
2018/19	133
2019/20	230
2020/21	303
2021/22	361

3.12 Similarly the number of clients where we have relieved homelessness has more than tripled since 2018/19 to 2021/22:

	Annual
2018/19	111
2019/20	140
2020/21	428
2021/22	418

3.13 The key reasons we are seeing for homelessness include eviction from private rented tenancies, family breakdown and domestic abuse. For some there are a range of issues and support needs contributing to their homelessness including mental health, disability and substance misuse.

3.14 While we continue to see significant numbers of single adults increasing numbers of couples and families are approaching the service.

3.15 We are already seeing the current cost of living crisis leading to increased areas risking an increase in homelessness as a result.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

4.1 The proposed Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy draws on the successful work undertaken by the Council's Housing Services and its partners. It meets all legal requirements and represents a best practice strategic plan that will inform the local approach to preventing and relieving homelessness and rough sleeping for the next 5 years.

4.2 The strategy has been drawn from a robust evidence base which looks at patterns and trends in homelessness, the personal and structural factors that lead to people becoming homeless, and the effectiveness of different interventions in preventing homelessness. It also draws on the lived experience of clients who have found themselves homeless.

4.3 The strategy sets out four overarching priorities to address homelessness and rough sleeping in the borough:

- Prevention through Early Intervention
- Accommodation to Support and Empower
- Addressing Rough Sleeping
- Collaboration - delivering services that are responsive, targeted and maximise impact

4.4 The following sections provide an extract from the strategy to illustrate what we, with partners, are already doing and are committing to deliver.

Prevention Through Early Intervention

4.5 Critical to our strategy is to prevent homelessness through intervening both structurally working with partners including health to address the key causes of homelessness and to work with those threatened with homelessness to provide advice and access to the support needed and/or to intervene directly to prevent their being evicted or losing existing accommodation.

4.6 What's working well

- Wide ranging services in place e.g. from debt and benefit advice to specialist support targeted for particular needs
- Work across and with partners to identify those at risk and make fast referrals so prevention work can take place as early as possible
- Providing discretionary funds alongside food and energy vouchers and vouchers for free school meals
- Work with private tenants and landlords to sustain tenancies
- Work of our mental health alliance and services for those suffering drug or alcohol addiction
- Investing through Disability Facilities Grant to enable people to continue to live at home
- Use of peer mentors and those with lived experience as volunteers to work with clients

4.7 What we will do further

- Deliver the Council's Cost of Living strategy to support households retain their accommodation and independence
- Ensure personalised housing plans build on customers strengths and set out clear expectations and commitments
- Develop a protocol with private and social landlords to prevent homelessness
- Develop an education programme for young people to promote awareness of housing options and pathways that prevent homelessness and continue to raise aspirations at an early age linking to homelessness as well as crime/drugs and Ant Social Behaviour.
- Work with health colleagues to address housing issues early prior to hospital discharge, to provide support services around key contributors to homelessness and work with the Ageing Well Partnership to ensure older people have access to advice and support
- Explore options to include requirements for work experience, volunteering and employment for those who have been homeless as part of social value in council-commissioned contracts
- Review and update information on our website to enable customers to take steps to prevent homelessness

Implement a cross partner communications plan so everyone is aware of the importance of prevention work and timely referral

Accommodation to Support & Empower

4.8 What's working well

- We are already managing to relieve the homelessness of 50% of those approaching the Council's service with support to find alternative accommodation in the social or private rented sector
- Working with our local social landlords to maximise nominations into their accommodation
- Growing our provision of emergency and temporary accommodation and reconfiguring this to better meet demand and facilitate support including for those fleeing domestic violence
- Halving the average time spent in temporary accommodation
- 1000 new homes being completed in the Borough per annum – 30% affordable
- Developing our Supported & Specialist Housing Strategy and Homes for All Supplementary Planning Document to maximise delivery of new affordable and specialist accommodation
- Investing directly through Nuplace and Telford & Wrekin Homes – and using the Council's Registered Provider status and £10m Housing Intervention Fund to deliver new provision on stalled development sites

4.9 What we will do further

- Invest further in Nuplace and T&W Homes to shape the private landlord market and to provide more affordable, adapted and specialist homes
- Explore options to deliver more one bed accommodation and new models for shared accommodation
- Explore the need for respite/crash pad accommodation for young people as additional emergency accommodation with mediation/arbitration services to enable a safe return home where appropriate
- Maximise our planning powers to deliver new affordable and specialist homes

4.10 Addressing Rough Sleeping

4.10 The Council is committed to eradicating rough sleeping i.e. preventing where possible but where it does occur ensuring it is rare, brief and non-recurrent.

4.11 What's working well

- The multi-agency Rough Sleepers Task Force which continues to meet daily to co-ordinate services and ensure that anyone rough sleeping is quickly identified and provided with support
- Growing our night in provision to further reduce use of emergency accommodation alongside new provision to provide intensive support for those not ready to move on into their own accommodation
- Delivery of 23 Telford Housing First properties providing self contained move on accommodation for Rough Sleepers
- Rapid mental health support scheme with Midland Partnership Foundations Trust (MPFT)

4.12 What we will do further

- Sustain and grow the successful work of the Taskforce providing comprehensive services including outreach, provision of support and accommodation
- Working with the Integrated Care System (ICS) to maximise access to health services including dedicated mental health resources
- Expand our Housing First programme
- Lobby for sustained investment by Government to provide additional accommodation and support services

Collaboration – Delivering Services that are responsive, targeted and maximise impact

4.13 There is a strong foundation of partnership working in place. This is evident in the Rough Sleeper Task Force but there is also a much wider set of partnerships in place including working with private and social landlords, older people and those experiencing domestic violence.

4.14 Further work we will undertake

- Develop a new Homelessness Forum with shared responsibility for delivering the strategy
- Hold an annual homelessness event to share progress and renew the commitment of all partners
- Report on and seek support for, the delivery of the strategy through key partnerships including the Health & Wellbeing Board and Telford & Wrekin Integrated Place Partnership
- Ensure that data is captured widely and effectively across the system and used to improve interventions
- Facilitate shared training, shadowing and joint working opportunities
- Build on work with health and social care to ensure that preventing homelessness is at the heart of services and review if/how risk of becoming homeless can be a factor when considering the thresholds and criteria to access services
- Offer fast-track appointments through the hub for interim assessment for adult care services
- Develop further the work with children's services to ensure young people at risk of becoming homeless are identified and supported at the earliest opportunity.
- To support care leavers even further to ensure they are ready for a tenancy and in accessing an appropriate housing pathway

Delivering the Strategy

4.15 The new Homelessness Forum will agree a set of performance measures to evidence the impact of delivering the strategy.

4.16 A live action plan developed from the strategy and ongoing engagement work will be managed and delivery monitored via the Forum.

4.17 Progress will also be reported annually through the Council's Cabinet

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 It is a legal requirement to review homelessness within the local authority area and to publish a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy at least every five years. A failure to implement such a strategy would leave the Council open to the risk of legal challenge.
- 5.2 The Council has drawn on a robust evidence base and engagement with wide ranging partners considering a range of options as part of formulating the strategy.

6.0 Key Risks

- 6.1 The recommendations mitigate against the risks of:
- Increase in homelessness and rough sleeping
 - People not receiving the support service they need, when they need it
 - Legal challenge – including County Court Judgements and Judicial Review
 - Financial Cost (including direct costs paying for emergency accommodation and the impact on wider public sector services)
 - Complaints/damage to reputation

7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community;
- 7.2 All neighbourhoods are a great place to live; and
- 7.3 A community focused innovative council providing effective, efficient and quality services.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 The Homelessness and Prevention Strategy will be implemented using the resources available to the Housing Solutions Team.
- 8.2 New Burdens funding has been allocated by DHLUC to assist with implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act in the form of Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) and access to Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) grants. The Authority has been allocated £374k HPG for 22/23 and were successful in securing RS15 funding totalling £821k over a 3 year period upto 31st March 2026.
- 8.3 The Authority has also been successful in bidding for funding from DHLUC via Homes England for the Next Steps and Rough Sleeping Accommodation programmes with a total funding of £1.48m being granted to deliver additional Housing solutions. The £1.48m includes a capital allocation which will be spent before 31st March 2023.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 9.1 The Legal implications are set out within the body of the report. The Council has a legal duty to publish a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and to do so using an evidence based approach. In addition, the consideration of the Council's

equalities duties are key when developing policies. Legal advice has been sought and will continue to be provided on an ongoing basis.

9.2 There are no HR implications arising from this report.

10.0 Ward Implications

10.1 This report has a borough wide impact.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 The adoption of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will have a positive impact on those facing homelessness and roughing through addressing health inequalities and assisting people into stable accommodation with tailored support where required to improve their social and economic circumstances.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 The Council has considered equality and diversity implications of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, as it has been developed. A key point to note is that the strategy is for all, supporting the most vulnerable in the borough.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 As those rough sleeping are at risk from extreme weather, this strategy identifies the support provided to those rough sleeping to ensure they have access to emergency accommodation. Investment through the Council's Climate Change Programme has brought Council owned temporary accommodation properties up to required energy performance standard. Developments being delivered by Nuplace and T&W Homes include measures to raise environmental standards within the fabric, design and layout of schemes. The Council and partners also offer and channel a range of grant support available to landlords to address energy efficiency.

14.0 Background Papers

Not Applicable

15.0 Appendices

A Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal	12/10/2022	17/10/2022	RP
Finance	12/10/2022	18/10/2022	AEM
Director	12/10/2022	02/11/2022	KK