



# Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

## 2019-2022



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# One

## Foreword by the Chair of Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership

**I am very pleased to introduce Worcestershire's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. It is the third homelessness strategy developed for the County and comes at a crucial time with implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the publication of the national Rough Sleeping Strategy in 2018.**



This document represents the continued commitment that we have as a County to preventing homelessness in partnership, across sectors and districts. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the organisations and individuals who have contributed towards its development.

We are clear that we want to tackle homelessness in all its forms. Although the most acute and obvious form of homelessness can be seen among those sleeping rough, it is much wider than this. It can include those "hidden homeless" who might be sleeping on a sofa. It can also include those who have a roof over their head, but where it is not safe to remain, perhaps due to abuse or violence, or those living in a home that is unsuitable for a variety of reasons e.g. severe overcrowding, poor property standards, poor health.

Homelessness is experienced by single people, couples and families alike. It can be a consequence of individual risk factors and triggers, or wider structural issues that are beyond their control.

The effects of homelessness for families and individuals can be devastating and can have significant negative impacts on health and wellbeing, employment, education, and crime. It can also have significant costs to communities, local authorities and public services.

Tackling homelessness is becoming particularly challenging in today's tough external environment. Welfare reform has increased pressure on people's ability to manage their finances and access and sustain accommodation. The demand for social and affordable housing far outstrips supply. Whilst reductions in public spending and additional duties contained within the Homelessness Reduction Act

have increased pressure on housing and homelessness services.

We need to work together to ensure the best use and balance of limited resources.

This is why it is vital that this strategy sits at strategic partnership level within the umbrella of the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership Plan – recognising that tackling homelessness benefits the economy, the health of our population, reduces crime and disorder, and reduces costs to the taxpayer. It should therefore be seen as all of our problem to solve.

Our approach to tackling homelessness is based around 3 Priorities. Firstly, to prevent homelessness at a much earlier stage by targeting groups that are more vulnerable to becoming homeless (and developing complex needs in the future).

Secondly, to provide flexible and comprehensive responses to those in crisis and those with complex needs. We need to design services based on what is best for customers whose needs go beyond homelessness – so that they receive the services they need (not limited by existing practice or legislation).

Finally to improve the supply of, and access to, good quality affordable and supported housing.

This strategy will govern our approach for three years. However, in a period of new legislation, welfare reform and austerity measures, it is vital that it remains responsive.

**Kevin Dicks,**  
**Chief Executive of Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils and Chair of the**  
**Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership**

## Two

# Introduction

**The causes of homelessness are complex, and it is often a combination of individual circumstances as well as structural issues (that are often outside of someone's control) that lead up to crisis point.**

Each person or household's journey into homelessness is different and requires a tailored and flexible approach in order to prevent it from happening.

It is widely recognised that individual risk factors and triggers such as poor mental or physical health, adverse childhood experiences, substance misuse, and domestic abuse can increase the risk of homelessness. Recent research found that the chances of experiencing homelessness by age 30 can be predicted by childhood poverty, geography, adverse experiences as a teenager and early adult experiences.

It is vital that the right interventions and solutions are provided at the right time in someone's life, to prevent crisis and a reoccurring cycle of homelessness. The earlier, more "upstream" the intervention, the more chance there is of avoiding a situation that is complex and expensive to resolve, both in the human and financial sense.

Structural issues such as the demand for social and affordable housing outstripping supply, welfare reform, and affordability/access to private rented housing also impact on levels of homelessness.

In order to carry out more "upstream" prevention activities and to mitigate the risk of structural issues resulting in homelessness, true collaboration across statutory, voluntary and community sectors is required – now more than ever with the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act in 2018.

It is also important to recognise that however good our upstream prevention efforts, there will always be some people who find themselves homeless, therefore the need to take a systemic approach and co design services to help

people not just at crisis point, but also to recover and move on from homelessness is essential.

To ensure this systemic approach is taken, this document sits within the umbrella of the [Worcestershire Housing Partnership Plan 2017](#), in recognition that homelessness is not just a housing issue and needs to sit within the wider context if we are to truly tackle it.

On 13 August 2018, the Government published a new national [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) which sets out its vision to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. It requires all local authorities in England to update their homelessness strategies and rebadge them as homelessness and rough sleeper strategies by the end of 2019. The refreshed strategies must have a stronger emphasis on rough sleeping. Local authorities are also required to publish annual action plans and report on progress.

The Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019–2022 replaces the Worcestershire Strategic Direction for Tackling Homelessness 2018–2021.





# Three

## Worcestershire Housing Partnership Plan 2017

**In 2017 the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership developed their first Housing Partnership Plan. This is the overarching document which sets out Worcestershire's strategic combined approach for housing including homelessness.**

Creating the right home environment and meeting housing need is not only essential for residents, but is vital to enable the Partnership's organisations to achieve their ambitions, policy objectives and duties, such as reduced homelessness, improved health and wellbeing, educational achievement of children and young people, employment, crime reduction and sustainable, resilient communities.

**The Plan's vision is:**

*“ To create the right home environment for Worcestershire residents that is essential to their health, wealth and wellbeing, throughout life ”*

This new way of developing a partnership document/approach to housing for the County is viewed as a real step forward. It recognises that to maximise the health, wealth and wellbeing of residents and make the most effective use of existing resources, we need to work very closely with partner organisations across a range of sectors.





To achieve its Vision, the Partnership Plan sets out five high level actions and a number of projects to deliver on those actions. The links to the prevention of homelessness are clear throughout many, if not all, of the projects. Therefore, it is important to note that the Partnership Plan has set the strategic direction for tackling homelessness.

### Partnership Plan Projects

- Develop a county wide supported housing plan
- Undertake a whole systems review of support and accommodation for people with vulnerability or disability
- Develop a 'Housing First' approach to provide permanent housing quickly for homeless people and then provide services as needed
- Develop an intensive support provision for those with complex needs
- Establish clear pathways into support and accommodation for people with complex needs
- Jointly commission new models of accommodation for young people and care leavers
- Establish a multi agency approach to sharing information
- Demonstrate the impact poor housing has on health and social care intervention, to promote the strategic relevance and future design of services

This document will provide a more in depth focus on homelessness and provide the detail on how all the partners dealing with homelessness are going to work together to address the need at both a county and local level. It will provide the link to the wider strategies of our partners and each district council's corporate objectives.



## Four

# Rough Sleeping Task and Finish Group 2019

**The Task and Finish Group for Rough Sleeping commenced in April 2019, following an Expert Panel event, held in Malvern Hills during February 2019.**

**This was following the deaths of two rough sleepers in the autumn of 2018 both within Malvern Hills district.**

The Expert Panel was attended by 56 professionals from across public, private and voluntary sectors from across Worcestershire. During this event, the following questions were asked of the Panel:

- What role does your organisation play in addressing rough sleeping?
- How well do we work together?
- Do we assess wider support needs?
- What gaps in provision are there?
- What does a Housing First approach mean to us?
- What should a Housing First approach look like in Worcestershire?
- What barriers are there to introducing a Housing First approach in Worcestershire?



Following this event it was agreed that a Task and Finish Group should be created, to work alongside the delivery of Worcestershire Strategic Direction for Tackling Homelessness (2018-2021) document.

The group had representation from across sectors, including: all local authorities within Worcestershire, housing associations that operate across the county, local Councillors, Swanswell, Maggs, Moats, CCP, South Worcestershire Citizens Advice, Probation, West Mercia Police, Worcestershire Office for Data Analytics, DWP (staff from across the county and well as the Universal Credit Lead for the county), Public Health, NHS (Mental Health and Crisis Team), Worcestershire County Council Commissioners, Clinical Commissioning Groups, YMCA, St Pauls, Shelter Birmingham, Evesham Street Pastors and NatWest Bank.

During the refresh of this homelessness strategy, the Rough Sleeper Task and Finish Group was simultaneously working on an action plan to tackle rough sleeping across Worcestershire and deliver on the commitments within the document. This approach was supported by both the Worcester Strategic Housing Partnership and Worcestershire Leaders Board.

The action plan has been included at Appendix 2, but it must be noted that it will now be for individual district homelessness forums to consider its contents when developing their local implementation plans based on what is relevant for their area (see Chapter 12). However all districts sign up to the principles within this document.

Actions will be taken forward by all organisations present at the Task and Finish Group and progress will be regularly reported online.

The group will have a commissioned evaluation following the last meeting in September to fully understand its effectiveness.



# Five

## Defining Homelessness



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

**The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) says that someone is considered to be homeless if “they do not have accommodation that they have a legal right to occupy, which is accessible and physically available to them (and their household) and which it would be reasonable for them to continue to live in.”**

Local Housing Authorities (LHA) are bound by various Housing Acts defining what assistance they should provide to those facing homelessness. For further details on definitions of homelessness and the legal duties please see Appendix One.

However this current legislation has been amended to further extend legal duties and these are outlined below.



Homelessness  
Reduction Act 2017

### Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 significantly reformed England's homelessness legislation by placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent and relieve homelessness in their areas. It also requires LHAs to try to help households to secure accommodation but it isn't a duty to rehouse all homeless households.

The HRA will also impose a duty on some public authorities to refer homeless cases to LHAs and the LHAs will work with public and non-public bodies to ensure an effective referral process. It is essential LHAs are clear to partners about the range of duties we now have.





# Six

## Impact of Homelessness

**Identifying and addressing the impact of homelessness for people at every stage of life is essential. The cost of homelessness is too high; for individuals, for communities, for Local Authorities and the tax payer, for it not to be considered a priority.**

One of the drivers of the Homelessness Reduction Act was the recognition that homelessness has a higher impact on single people and childless couples who are more likely to be considered “non priority” homeless. The Act will transform the way homelessness services are delivered and ensure that all eligible applicants are given some help to resolve their homelessness regardless of whether they have a “priority need.”

### The impact of homelessness on health and well-being

Homelessness affects many different household groups and happens for a variety of reasons. The table opposite outlines some of the reasons for homelessness and the variety of impacts homelessness can have on a person’s life. Some groups can be particularly adversely affected including young people and prison leavers, who perhaps don’t have the resilience, social networks and/or income to resolve the issues they face.

*“ Young people who experience homelessness are at risk of embarking on a ‘career’ in homelessness, criminal justice and health systems, at significant cost to their own health and wellbeing, their families and communities, and to the public purse. Their potential to contribute to and benefit from society and the economy is affected by homelessness. ”*

The Impact of Homelessness on Health: a Guide for Local Authorities, LGA 2017

Social/economic/political factors that may lead to homelessness	Consequences of homelessness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Housing market failure including low levels of housing supply</li> <li>● Adverse childhood experiences</li> <li>● Family breakdown or poor relationships</li> <li>● Becoming a looked after child</li> <li>● Domestic abuse</li> <li>● Substance or alcohol misuse</li> <li>● Low income or benefit dependency</li> <li>● Involvement with the criminal justice system</li> <li>● Not in education, employment and training</li> <li>● Welfare reform</li> <li>● Public sector austerity leading to cuts in housing related support and other services</li> <li>● Teenage pregnancy</li> <li>● Overcrowding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Poor mental health including stress for adults/children – common mental health problems are over twice as high among people who are homeless compared with the general population, and psychosis is up to 15 times as high.</li> <li>● Poor physical health- greater risk of infection (delayed access to health care / immunisations)</li> <li>● Lower education attainment for children especially if access to school places is affected</li> <li>● Social isolation and loneliness</li> <li>● Additional financial burdens</li> <li>● Greater likelihood of not being in education, employment or training</li> <li>● Substance or alcohol misuse</li> <li>● Young people in particular might face; exploitation, abuse and trafficking, involvement in gangs.</li> <li>● Likelihood of premature death, dementia or other long term health condition</li> <li>● Low self-esteem and confidence</li> </ul>

## Seven

# Evidence Base – Worcestershire Homelessness Review 2016

The evidence base for this homelessness strategy is the **Worcestershire Homelessness Review 2016**.

The review is a comprehensive assessment of the nature and extent of homelessness across the County, developed by analysing homelessness data and the views of customers and partner organisations.

It draws a number of conclusions and recommendations which have been used to develop our approach to preventing and managing homelessness locally, and these fed directly into the development of the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership Plan.

It is vital that services are developed and delivered in partnership if we are to truly prevent homelessness from an individual, structural and systemic point of view. We believe that sitting our approach firmly within the Partnership Plan is the key to achieving this, bringing together statutory, voluntary and community organisations.

Local Housing Authorities are also working with the County Council in the development of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. The JSNA is designed to inform decisions made locally about what services are commissioned to improve the public's health and reduce inequalities; therefore, it is vital to make sure it contains robust homelessness data and supports the county's homelessness prevention approach.



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District Council  
[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)



good services, good value

## What did the Homelessness Review tell us?

Homelessness is increasing locally, as it is nationally. Successful prevention work across the county continues to have an impact as homelessness applications have remained relatively static whilst approaches for homelessness assistance have increased.

The impact of legislation, national policy, austerity measures and welfare reform will have a huge effect on housing options and the ability to continue preventative work at the same levels.

Welfare reform will impact the affordability of housing. There are concerns about whether there are any affordable housing options for some households, especially large families and those under 35 in the private rented sector.

The demand for social and affordable housing far outstrips supply, a buoyant private sector housing market means private landlords can afford to be selective.

Pressures on temporary accommodation are set to increase with the Homelessness Reduction Act.

The homelessness service does not adequately meet the needs of people with complex needs and the reduction in public sector budgets have meant the removal of housing related support for most homeless households.

The ending of Assured Shorthold Tenancies continues to be a major reason for homelessness, and should become a priority for prevention work.



Supported accommodation in Worcestershire

General lack of supported accommodation especially for victims of domestic abuse, young people, prison leavers and those with low level mental health or learning disabilities.

General lack of good quality shared accommodation, particularly for young people and those under the age of 35. Particularly acute in some areas.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to move people on from temporary accommodation not just due to affordability, but also due to complex or higher support needs and poor tenancy histories – both in the private and social rented sectors.

The Single Person and Childless Couples service focuses on prevention work and quickly moving those newly arrived to the streets into long term housing, but there is gap in provision for continuing and entrenched rough sleepers – this will be reduced by the new MOATS service (rough sleeper outreach) commencing in April 2018.

The Audit of Services identified a number of gaps in provision for certain client groups and also geographically. Gaps could increase as services become unviable due to further funding cuts.

## Recommendations from the review

### Increase the range of prevention services

- Protect and increase good quality, cost effective support services that will prevent homelessness from the earliest possible stage and equip people with the skills to establish and maintain lifelong independence (systems thinking approach).
- Develop pathways to ensure a different and more integrated approach to meet the needs of single people and families with complex needs e.g. mental and physical health, social care, substance misuse.
- Increase service provision to assist entrenched rough sleepers move off the street.
- Increase the use of tenancy ready schemes and tenancy support especially for those in private rented accommodation to improve access and to prevent homelessness.
- Explore gaps in service provision identified by the audit of services – mediation and reconciliation services, support for ex offenders, those with mental health issues, low level learning difficulties and autism.
- Work with partners to improve people's wealth and resilience to prevent homelessness occurring throughout their lives – getting people into work, provision of debt advice/financial management and maximising benefits.
- Upscale communications on housing options and support services to avoid crisis point and improve likelihood of preventing homelessness. Review whether current systems are achieving this.

### Increase the supply of accommodation

- Review and expand the provision of interim accommodation and permanent affordable accommodation, particularly for large families and those under 35 who are increasingly finding it hard to access any accommodation options. This may include a local authority owned/procured property.
- Consider how to overcome the lack of supported accommodation for care leavers (especially those with complex needs) and young parents.
- Consider the lack of direct access accommodation for individuals who are homeless in an emergency.
- Improve data recording and analysis to reflect the true nature of homelessness across the County.
- Analyse the cost effectiveness of homelessness services (cost of statutory versus cost of prevention).



Improving communications to prevent homelessness



Helping rough sleepers move off the street



Getting people into work



Improving access to debt advice



# Eight

## Achievements – Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy 2012–2017

**Through the work of the Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy 2012–2017 and recommendations from the Homelessness Review, we have been able to improve services across Worcestershire. Under the four goals set out in the Homelessness Strategy 2012–2017 we have achieved the following:-**

### Improving Pathways

- Reviewed the housing and support pathway for 16/17 year olds.
- Introduced Young People's Pathway Workers within housing advice teams.
- Mapped out local single homeless services and implemented prison and hospital pathways.

### Partnership

- Developed a Mental Health and Housing Protocol.
- Established closer working arrangements with Clinical Commissioning Groups and Health and Well-being Boards
- Developed agreements with Registered Providers to ensure that their response to flexible tenancies and affordable rent schemes does not increase homelessness.
- Developed one set of generic information for homelessness assistance with local elements for the majority of districts.
- Developed joint arrangements on the use of temporary accommodation and Rent Deposit Schemes across the County.
- Enabled the extension of Domestic Abuse support services, protected refuge accommodation and been able to carry out Survivor and Freedom programmes.
- Improved practice and procedure across Housing Benefit and Strategic Housing.

### Preventing rough sleeping

- Established No Second Night Out.
- Developed more accommodation for single homeless people including emergency crash pads and move on accommodation.
- Developed a personalised approach for entrenched rough sleepers.
- Provided an emergency shelter during extreme cold weather and provisions for severe hot weather.
- Enabled support for rough sleepers to return to the area where they can access their support networks and services.

### Reducing Financial Deprivation

- Secured funding through the Homes and Communities Agency for housing development.
- Established discretionary welfare schemes across the County.
- Developed plans to mitigate the affects of welfare reform locally.

During 2017 and 2018, Worcestershire Local Housing Authorities have been working to an Interim Homelessness Strategy Action Plan – whilst this new strategy is in development. This has resulted in:

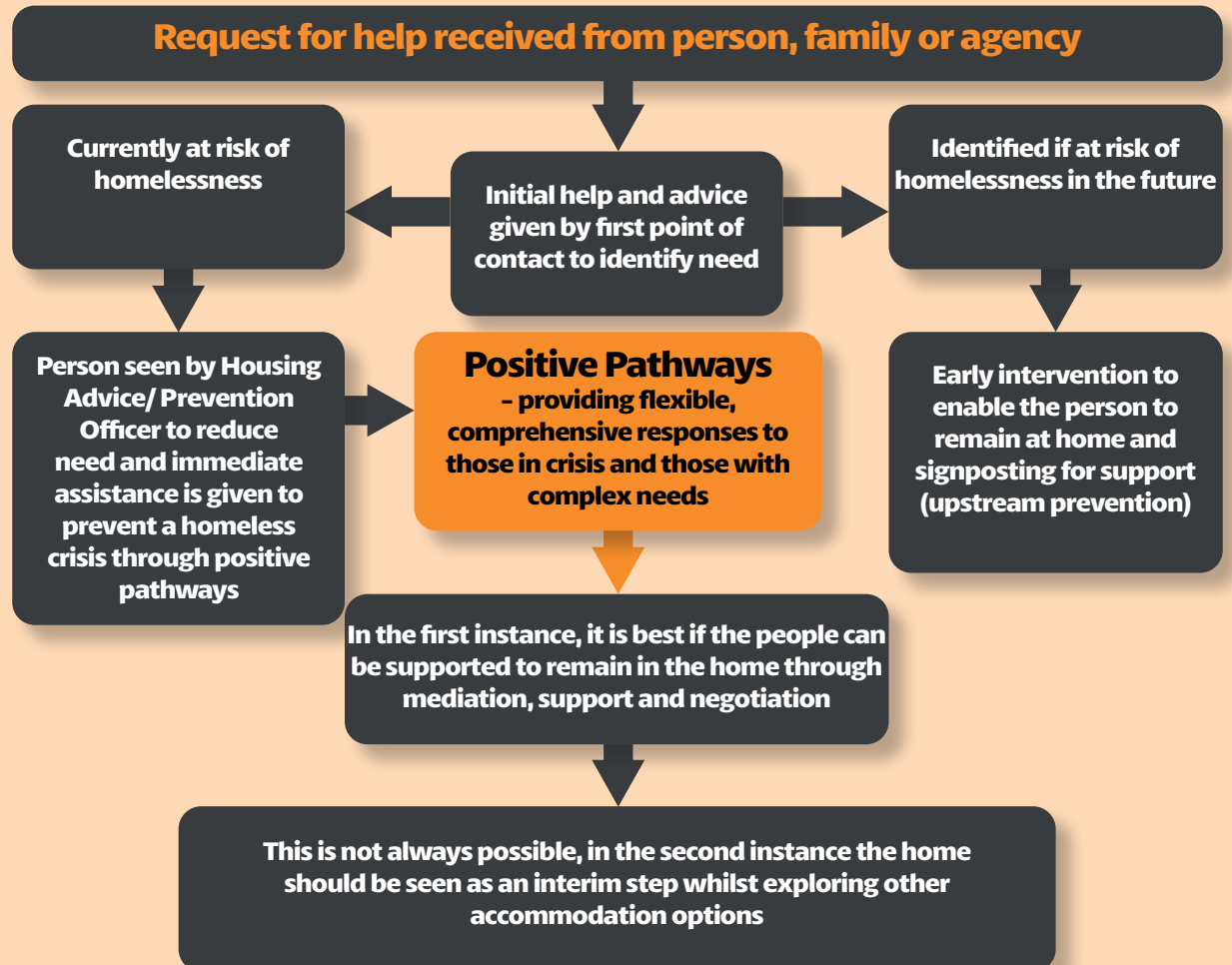
- Continued joint strategic work to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act.
- Utilising the Rough Sleepers grant of £380k to recruit homelessness prevention officers working in each district to prevent rough sleeping.
- Developing a new outreach service for entrenched rough sleepers through a joint bid led by Maggs Day Centre.
- The implementation of new data monitoring system to enable a better understanding of need and inform commissioning.
- Identification of funding to enable the continuation of the Hospital and Prison Pathway support work.

# Nine

## Positive Pathways Approach

Like many Local Authority Areas, the Positive Pathways Model first developed by St. Basil's (in relation to young people) has been successfully implemented in Worcestershire. We would like to build on that success and extend the concept across all groups that might be more vulnerable to becoming homeless. The adjacent diagram and priorities explain how we will do this.

Identification of key risk factors/triggers throughout people's lives to prevent homelessness (early upstream prevention)



# Ten

## Our Priorities for Tackling Homelessness and rough sleeping

The Homelessness Monitor 2017 suggests that priorities for homelessness prevention should be based around – ‘upstream’ prevention (preventing homelessness at the earliest stage), systemic prevention (designing services based on what is best for people in crisis) and structural prevention (mitigating the impact of things that are outside individual control e.g. lack of affordable housing, welfare reform).

The Partnership Plan and the Homelessness Review evidence identified a number of priorities and actions to aim to end homelessness from these perspectives. There are also clear links with the Pathways approach we want to achieve.

The national Rough Sleeping Strategy published in 2018 is based around three principles;

- **Prevention:** timely support before someone becomes homeless. For example, making sure no one leaves prison without suitable accommodation in place.
- **Intervention:** targeted support to get people off the streets.
- **Recovery:** the need for accommodation and support.

These national principles are very much aligned with the priorities contained within our original homelessness strategy developed in 2018. Therefore our priorities have remained the same during the refresh;

1. **Prevent** homelessness at a much earlier stage
2. **Provide** flexible and comprehensive responses to those in crisis and those with complex needs
3. **Improve** supply of/access to good quality, affordable and supported housing

The national strategy sets out a number of commitments against the three principles and a delivery plan setting out the detail. This strategy follows the same structure; this section sets out our commitments and the detailed delivery plan will be published online by the end of 2019.



## Priority One

### Prevent homelessness at a much earlier stage

#### What do we want?

**We want to prevent homelessness by identifying the key risk factors/triggers in people's lives that can cause it, and take action at a much earlier stage.**

#### What does this mean?

We know that individual risk factors and triggers such as poor mental or physical health, adverse childhood/early adult experiences, substance misuse, and domestic abuse can increase the risk of homelessness. Childhood poverty and geography also have a part to play in predicting homelessness.

We need to minimise the risk of homelessness for people experiencing these factors to truly prevent it happening and reoccurring throughout life, to prevent a generation of homeless people with complex needs and to improve health and well-being.

The Homelessness Reduction Act provides opportunity to build on our preventative work with partner organisations and to identify those at risk of homelessness at a much earlier stage. However, it is becoming clear nationally and locally that the strengthened duties within the Act have increased pressure on local authority housing teams – and will require improved cooperation across sectors to truly prevent homelessness for all of our customers.

*“ There must be a focus on helping people to remain in their own homes (where it is safe to do so), prevention and support services should view losing accommodation as the last resort. ”*

Developing Positive Pathways, St. Basil's, 2015

By investing in proactive, front line services we will avoid crisis situations and the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation which is expensive and unsuitable, especially when people have to be placed in temporary accommodation out of area.

#### What will we do?

- **Develop a blueprint that sets out and quantifies the resource needed to prevent and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping for the next 5 years.**
- **Review the effectiveness of current referral processes to local housing authorities.** There will be a specific focus on providing a rapid response in cases where someone is threatened with street homelessness.
- **Develop, review and promote local housing and support pathways for groups that are more vulnerable to becoming homeless** due to;
  - Domestic abuse
  - Mental health problems
  - Leaving local authority care
  - Age, 16-17 year olds
  - Substance misuse
  - Rough sleepers
  - Offenders
  - Former members of the regular armed services
- **Investigate the need for and feasibility of a joint system for support providers and local authorities to gather and share information about rough sleepers** and their personal housing and support plans.
- **Develop pre eviction protocols/arrangements with registered housing providers and private sector landlords** to prevent homelessness from rented accommodation.





## Priority Two

### Provide flexible and comprehensive responses to those in crisis and those with complex needs

#### What do we want?

**To design services based on what is best for people in crisis and for those whose needs go beyond homelessness – so that they receive the services they need (not limited by existing practice or legislation).**

#### What does this mean?

However good our upstream prevention efforts, there will always be some people who find themselves homeless or threatened with homelessness. This is why an improved systemic response (particularly in relation to single homeless people) provided for in the Homelessness Reduction Act is so important for us to achieve.

We must also focus on providing sustained support required by homeless people with needs beyond housing.

Our evidence locally tells us that large families and those with complex needs find it particularly challenging to maintain and access housing, often due to poor tenancy/housing histories. Their needs are not just about housing and they will require intensive support provision beyond LHA provision, to resolve their housing need – for example those with mental health or substance misuse problems.

The use of psychological or trauma informed care in commissioning and treatment/support services is key to the design of this intensive support service – the need to recognise the impact of life experiences on behaviours – and needs to be understood across sectors.

#### What will we do?

- **Pilot a Somewhere Safe To Stay hub** – providing a year round emergency assessment/bed space for rough sleepers to access housing and support regardless of whether they are new or existing rough sleepers.
- **Pilot Housing First** – an approach to provide permanent housing quickly for homeless people with complex and multiple needs. Providing flexible and tailored support.
- **Pilot Supported Lettings** – intensive tenancy support for rough sleepers/ those at risk of rough sleeping – allowing landlords to take more of a risk on tenants with complex needs.
- Provide a rapid response to rough sleeping and increase emergency bed spaces during the harshest months of the winter.
- Explore the need to develop services/improve integration of existing services to meet the needs of families and individuals with complex needs but who do not meet the social care threshold.
- Deliver on the outcomes from the Rough Sleeper Task and Finish Group – review the partnership approach and responses to preventing rough sleeping across the County.

## Priority Three

### Improve supply of/access to good quality, affordable and supported housing

#### What do we want?

**We want to ensure that we work together with partners to make the best use of land and property assets – to meet affordable and supported housing needs.**

We want any barriers to accessing accommodation for particular groups to be overcome for example low income households, those with poor tenancy histories, those with high support needs.

#### What does this mean?

There is not enough affordable housing to meet the need, both nationally and locally. There are also some identified groups who are acutely affected by welfare reform including those under the age of 35 and large families for whom affordability is a huge factor, for any type of housing, including affordable housing due to the benefit shortfall.

Other groups such as those with certain support needs, or with poor tenancy histories find it difficult to access any type of housing. If people within these groups become homeless, they often have very limited housing options and remain in temporary or “move on” accommodation for some time. This is often not suitable for the household, and also expensive for local authorities.

In very simplistic terms, it can be said that homelessness is about money. If you have a low or insecure income, or you don't manage money well (for a variety of reasons which may or may not be outside your control) you can be at risk of homelessness or find it hard to access housing.

#### What will we do?

- Work closely with our Registered Housing Providers in ensuring the most effective use of existing social housing stock and through their plans to develop new housing.
- Develop a county wide supported housing plan based on housing need evidence.
- Improve our private rented housing offer for homeless/potentially homeless households by ensuring the accommodation is of good quality and easy to obtain. Also improve our offer to landlords to encourage them to provide accommodation for homeless households.
- Work with partners to develop additional housing options e.g. shared housing is an important stepping stone for many rough sleepers for whom having a safe place to sleep is all that they can manage initially.
- Develop “tenancy ready” training and support to improve access to and sustainment of tenancies. Including developing general principles around what tenancy ready training is and mapping what services are already being provided.
- If landlords can be assured that someone has the skills to manage a tenancy, including financial skills and the payment of rent, then the risk to is reduced and they may be inclined to offer them housing.
- Consider the feasibility of a “second chance” housing model – recognising the need to have open and honest conversations about past tenancy history in order to provide the right housing and support for that individual/family.

# Eleven

## Delivering on our approach

### 1 Oversight

Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership (WSHP) is responsible for ensuring that the commitments within this strategy are realised. It is a multi-agency, and cross sector partnership, ensuring homelessness prevention is placed in the wider context. See diagram on page 19 for more detail.

The role of the WSHP is to influence commissioning and system change across sectors to resource and deliver on this Strategy.

### 2 Delivery

Worcestershire Strategic Housing Officers Group (WSHOG) is responsible for delivery of this document. WSHOG is a well established group, with a proven track record of housing and homelessness strategy delivery, representing each of the districts.

### 3 Assurance

WSHP will seek assurance from the delivery group on the effectiveness of partnership working in the development and implementation of local strategy implementation plans. In addition, Worcestershire Health and Wellbeing Board will seek assurance on the commitment to the Local Housing and Health Memorandum of Understanding and the Homeless Health Charter.

### 4 Monitoring

WSHOG will report progress against local strategy implementation plans to WSHP. WSHP will undertake a review of progress on an annual basis up to and including 2022.



### 5 Equality duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. Our approach will adhere to this.

## Worcestershire Housing Partnership Plan - Delivery Groups





# Twelve

## Implementation

**Our approach recognises that the causes of homelessness are complex and multi faceted – and that to tackle it holistically, we need to prevent the structural as well as individual factors that lead to homelessness.**

By sitting this homelessness strategy within the Partnership Plan, we will ensure that homelessness prevention will be placed at the forefront when designing system change needed to achieve our vision.

It is important to recognise that although this is a county approach, there are differences between districts that will need individual district focus. Some districts experience higher levels of rough sleeping, some have higher levels of deprivation and domestic abuse, some have a huge lack of supported and temporary accommodation as compared to others.

Worcestershire Strategic Housing Officers Group will be responsible for delivery of this strategy. Local strategy implementation plans will be developed in partnership with local organisations and partners via local homelessness forums that currently exist in each of the districts. They will identify a series of actions, initiatives and opportunities.

The implementation plan will be delivered by working with key partner agencies and will be achieved through task and finish groups and through the expertise and resources of existing meetings/groups. They will continually be reviewed and monitored by Worcestershire Strategic Housing Officers Group and the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership – to keep up-to-date and have the flexibility it needs to have.

There will be briefings and regular training on the importance of tackling homelessness, including an annual stakeholder event.



# Appendix One – Legal Duties

## Legal duties

The primary homelessness legislation – Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 – provides the statutory underpinning for action to prevent homelessness and provide assistance to people threatened with or actually homeless.

In 2002, the Government amended the homelessness legislation through the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 to ensure a more strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness and to strengthen the assistance available to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness by extending the priority need categories.

## Statutory Homelessness – where the rehousing duty is owed

Housing authorities have a legal duty to provide advice and assistance to anyone that is homeless or threatened with homelessness. If a housing authority has reason to believe that someone may be homeless or threatened with homelessness, they must investigate what duty they owe to them under the homelessness legislation.

A 'main homelessness duty' is owed where the authority is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falls within a specified 'priority need' group.

The 'priority need groups' include households with dependent children or a pregnant woman and people who are vulnerable in some way e.g. because of mental illness or physical disability. In 2002 the priority need categories were extended to include applicants who are aged 16 or 17, care leavers aged 18–20, people who are vulnerable as a result of time spent in care, in HM Forces, in prison or custody, and those who are vulnerable as a result of having to flee their home because of violence or the threat of violence.



## Homelessness Households not owed the rehousing duty

Homeless people not owed the full rehousing duty are typically single people or childless couples who are not assessed as being in 'priority need' or those deemed to be intentionally homeless. These groups are only entitled to advice and assistance if homeless, not the 'main housing duty'. Some non-priority homeless people are offered access to Local Authority commissioned housing support services.

## Street Homelessness

MHCLG defines street homelessness as: "People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or 'bashes')."





## Appendix Two – Rough Sleeper Task & Finish Action Plan (WFDC)

Priority	High Level Action	Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Prevention	Develop Housing and Support pathways for specific vulnerable groups so that customers and partners are clear on what tools/services there are in place to prevent homelessness  Upscale communication with customers, stakeholders and communities	1. Develop a Housing Option Toolkit for Local Authority staff to include prevention plan, techniques and pathways	Worcestershire Strategic Housing Officers Group (WSHOG)	12 months
Prevention		2. Develop a charter that highlights stakeholder commitment to refer anyone who is homeless or threatened with Rough Sleeping (Duty to refer / Commitment to Refer)	WSHOG	12 months
Prevention		3. Develop a charter with PCNs in Wyre Forest around homelessness and health, with an initial focus on Rough Sleepers in Year One	Principal Health and Sustainability Officer / Principal Strategic Housing Officer	12 months
Prevention		4. Support Partnership Events (on an annual basis) to confirm roles and responsibilities around tackling and preventing homelessness and rough sleeping	WSHOG / Local Homeless Forum	12 months
Intervention		5. Provide up to date advice on support and guidance services available in the local community for those customers who are homeless and rough sleeping – to include website and written materials	Principal Strategic Housing Officer	6 months
Intervention		6. Improve communication through website, social media, promotional materials etc as per WFDC communication plan including scheduled posts promoted on Council social media to provide a consistent message	WF Media Team	12 months
Prevention		7. Review website to ensure compliance with HRA and other useful, up to date advice	Principal Strategic Housing Officer	6 months
Prevention		8. Implement an alternative giving scheme – Real Change	Principal Strategic Housing Officer	6 months



Priority	High Level Action	Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Prevention	Identify critical intervention opportunities to divert people away from homelessness	9. Continue to commission WF Nightstop and Mediation to provide Schools Education Programme (where funding available)	Head of Strategic Growth	3 months
Intervention		10. Work with commissioned social prescribers in GP surgeries to ensure support available to homeless / rough sleepers	Public Health /Principal Strategic Housing Officer	12 months
Prevention / intervention		11. Support VCS with drop in sessions from statutory services (where required) to ensure consistent approach with regards to homelessness and rough sleeping	Local Homeless Forum / Principal Strategic Housing Officer	12 months
Intervention	Develop different and more integrated pathways to meet the needs of families and single people with complex needs. Identify any gaps in provision and risks.	12. Develop an information sharing protocol for those involved with rough sleepers.	WSHOG /	12 months
Prevention		13. To explore CHAIN to understand the software they use for intelligence gathering	Naomi Morris WDC	12 months
Intervention		14. Develop an “expert by experience” user group who can share feedback on experiences and inform learning / future commissioning. Utilise this group to ensure effective service delivery.	WSHOG / Project Officer & RS Support Worker	12 months
Intervention		15. Role out pre- eviction protocol across social landlords	Naomi Morris WDC	12 months
Intervention	Work with partners to build family stability and supportive social networks within communities	16. Explore funding opportunities for training with partners e.g. motivational interviewing / PIE	WSHOG	12 months
		17. Explore opportunity to develop protocols / SLA with Registered Providers around homelessness / rough sleepers	Principal Strategic Housing Officer	12 months
Recovery	Deliver the Housing First model to provide permanent housing and support for entrenched rough sleepers	18. Deliver and evaluate Housing First pilot in partnership with RPs and St Pauls Hostel	Housing Advice Team Leader /	2 years

Priority	High Level Action	Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Recovery	Develop services for those with complex needs – focus on mental health, substance misuse, domestic abuse, loneliness and isolation.	19. To investigate joint funding / commissioning opportunities with regards to Mental Health to specifically support Homeless and Rough Sleepers	Mental Health T&F WSHOG	12 months
Recovery		20. To identify ways for Rough Sleepers to take part in meaningful activities such as EET, volunteering	Principal Strategic Housing Officer / CHG / Fusion	12 months
Recovery		21. Explore opportunities for developing a day centre or similar in WF where Rough Sleepers can access services, support and meaningful activity	Principal Strategic Housing Officer	2 years



# Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

2019-2022

