

Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 - 2025

Our Vision - to end homelessness and rough sleeping and where it has not been possible to prevent it from occurring, that it is rare, brief and non-recurring.



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Foreword by the Chair of Worcestershire Housing Board

I am very pleased to introduce Worcestershire's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. This is Worcestershire's fourth homelessness strategy and as I reflect back over the life of the previous strategy I could not have predicted that we would have had to respond to a global pandemic, an economic crisis and the displacement of so many people through war. So it is with some trepidation that we look to the future to present this, our fourth strategy.

We anticipate that the cost of living crisis will be a huge challenge for those on lower incomes and that loss of accommodation, increases in relationship breakdown and domestic abuse and impact on peoples mental and physical health will be significant.

We saw at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic that a government injection of funding dramatically reduced rough sleeping, and we have developed more effective collaborations with partners such as health and social care to ensure that those who are threatened with homelessness or experience homelessness receive the support they need. We want to build on these new partnerships so that we can respond effectively and efficiently to the challenges ahead.

With the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act we have created specialisms within our teams to respond effectively to victims and survivors of domestic abuse to ensure they have safe supported accommodation when they are in crisis.

These statutory enhancements to our service do put additional pressures on local authorities and come at a time when the demand for housing across all tenures is outstripping supply and housing costs are increasing. However, we are always looking for innovative solutions to meet needs and increase options available.

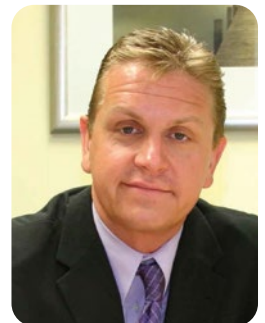
The Homelessness Reduction Act has supported us in our aspiration to tackle homelessness in all its forms, from rough sleeping and sofa surfing to those who experience abuse and harm at home or are living in unaffordable or unsatisfactory housing. Anyone can be affected by homelessness and the effects for families and individuals can be devastating and can impact on health and wellbeing, employment, education and crime.

We want to support people to be able to access good quality accommodation and lead dignified, fulfilling and rewarding lives that have purpose.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the organisations and individuals who worked with us during the pandemic to help others. I would like to also thank those who have contributed towards the development of this strategy. It sits at strategic partnership level within the umbrella of the Housing Board - recognising that tackling homelessness not only benefits the individual but also benefits the economy, the health of our population, reduces crime and disorder and reduces costs to the taxpayer.

This strategy will govern our approach for three years. However, given our experiences over the last two years, it is vital that it remains responsive and as such it will be kept under constant review.

Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive of Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils and Chair of the Worcestershire Housing Board



Introduction

Strategic objectives and means of tackling homelessness and rough sleeping

Our overarching strategic objective is to end homelessness and rough sleeping and where it isn't possible to prevent it from occurring, that it is rare, brief and non-recurring.

We will seek to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping through our work around prevention, intervention and recovery services and projects.

The Local Housing Authorities (LHAs) recognise the role our partners play in the statutory and voluntary sector in supporting the work we do and how they go beyond the delivery of our statutory services through providing complimentary statutory services such as Drug and Alcohol services or other additional services. However, this strategy is focused primarily on the role of the six LHAs in Worcestershire and in meeting their legal responsibilities. It is the legal obligation of the LHAs to have a strategy in place and for it to be compliant with the Homelessness Act 2002. In developing the strategy, we have followed the legislative and good practise guidance and looked at examples of strategies across the country.

Homelessness Review

To inform the strategy, we have undertaken a Homelessness Review ([Worcestershire Homelessness Review 2022 | Wyre Forest District Council \(wyreforestdc.gov.uk\)](#)) which includes the mapping of services, data collection, service providers feedback and the feedback from People With Lived Experience (PWLE). This information has been used to inform the strategy along with outcomes from our stakeholder day and consultation responses.



Background

The Homelessness Reduction Act provided a catalyst for a change in the LHAs approach to homelessness and a framework to formalise and normalise upstream working (early intervention) in partnership with other services, although homeless prevention services had been typical across the county since the Homelessness Act 2002.

In particular, the Duty to Refer has enabled a step change in early notifications of those threatened with homelessness and whilst there is more that can be done, we now have the structure within which to deliver on this approach. Our work with partners such as health, social care, Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and criminal justice has improved and become much more collaborative. Our pathways for key client groups have, or are, being strengthened.

The LHAs are working to upskill officers to recognise how each individual or household experience of homelessness is different and will often require a bespoke solution. Officers are trained to

understand how adversity in childhood may impact on a person's resilience and provide a more trauma informed approach. In doing so we are recognising that more people who approach the service have more complex needs and in response to this we are investing more in support services to help people to get back on track.

We have made significant progress in tackling rough sleeping on the back of the "Everyone In" initiative and intensive housing support through Housing First and Housing Led initiatives are supporting entrenched clients to sustain accommodation and move away from a street lifestyle.

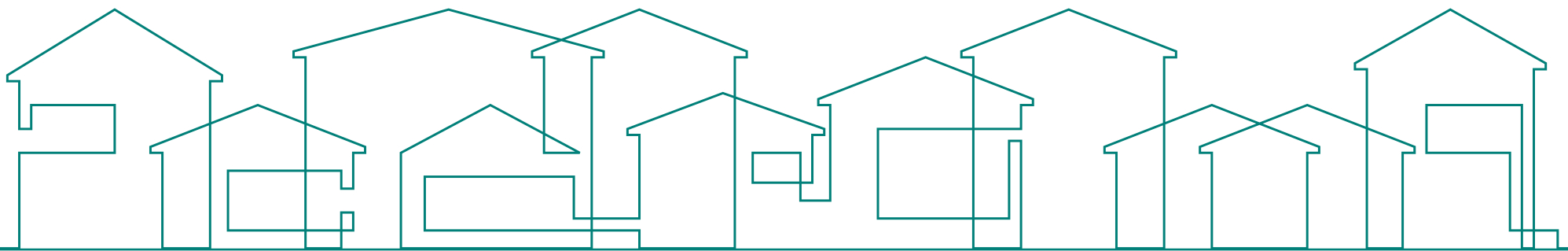
In looking forward, the LHAs continue to see a high demand for social and affordable housing that outstrips supply and we anticipate the cost of living crisis will exacerbate an already challenging private sector market making access to private rented housing more difficult.

We are also anticipating increasing demand from those fleeing wars and are gearing up to look for innovative solutions in response to these households.

Strategy content

This strategy sets out work done to date, how we will continue to deliver services for those most in need and respond to the challenges that lie ahead. The strategy includes an executive summary looking at prevention, intervention and recovery before considering some of the national and local context (although this is outlined in more detail in the homelessness review document). The focus of the strategy then moves on to what the current picture is around homelessness and looks at five key groups who are prevalent amongst our homeless cohort; single people, those with complex needs and rough sleepers, families with children, survivors of domestic abuse and young people. We also consider temporary and permanent accommodation before reviewing the governance arrangements and concluding with a summary of the action plan.

Included in the appendices are the legislative context from LHA perspective, a retrospective look on the outcomes from the previous strategy (2019-22), the current service delivery for our five key client groups, the action plan over the three years of the strategy and the communication plan.



Executive Summary

This strategy is the result of a collaboration across the six LHAs with input and support from the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and statutory partners. The strategy focuses primarily on the role of the LHAs, where we have jurisdiction and the ability to control and influence services but this doesn't diminish the role other statutory partners and the VCS have to play in tackling homelessness.

Our strategic objective is to end homelessness and rough sleeping but where it does occur to ensure that it is brief, rare and non-recurrent. This means providing a wide raft of services both directly and through commissioned partners to assist people that are rough sleeping to come off the streets, provide early intervention services to potentially homeless households, deliver new build homes and make best use of existing stock and to tackle landlords providing unsuitable accommodation or illegally evicting tenants.

The LHAs can tackle homelessness through direct delivery of services, collaboration with partners and through raising awareness of homelessness and rough sleeping throughout Worcestershire to ensure everyone knows where to go to get help or help other people facing homelessness.

Why prevention, intervention, and recovery?

Our methods for preventing homelessness and rough sleeping are based on the principals of prevention, intervention and recovery. This approach aligns with the Government's "Ending Rough Sleeping For Good" strategy (2022). These are further defined below;

- 1. Prevention: timely support before someone becomes homeless (this includes early intervention services).**
- 2. Intervention: targeted support to get people off the streets.**
- 3. Recovery: the need for accommodation and support.**

Across all of the strategy themes it will be a priority to ensure that the safeguarding of all adults including those who sleep rough is explicitly stated and addressed within service aims, learning from the Worcestershire Rough Sleeper Thematic Review and embedding the recommendations throughout strategy and service delivery.

1. Prevention

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.

Preventing homelessness is much more cost effective than dealing with its consequences. A range of studies have been completed including by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government whose 2012 figures estimated that the average annual cost of homelessness was between £24,000 and £30,000 per person. More importantly, we also know that preventing homelessness and dealing with the root causes delivers far better outcomes for individuals and communities.

That is why we are so committed to preventing homelessness at the earliest possible opportunity and targeting support at those groups who are more vulnerable to becoming homeless. The large proportion of preventative actions within the strategy reflects this commitment.

Through this strategy we will undertake a range of preventative actions, including:

- Raising awareness around homelessness and rough sleeping to support earlier intervention, particularly through the development and delivery of a communication plan (this is included in Appendix Five of the strategy)

- Explore opportunities to reduce homelessness due to domestic abuse through a sanctuary scheme
- Explore further opportunities to co-locate staff and provide outreach services with other organisations to improve collaboration and raise awareness
- Improve data analysis and intelligence to shape and inform future commissioning of services
- Engage regularly with service users to enhance learning from lived experience
- Promote and encourage sign up to the Duty or Commitment to Refer from other agencies
- Review work with the private rented sector (PRS) following the rent reform legislation to ensure homelessness from the PRS is reduced.

2. Intervention

There will always be some people who find themselves homeless however good our homelessness prevention response is. We want to ensure that any homelessness is rare, fleeting and non-recurring by deploying the appropriate support to get people off the streets or other homeless situations. We will put in place comprehensive and rapid interventions to help those in crisis, and offer a range of accommodation and support choices to meet specific needs and complexities.

We will strengthen our approach to tenancy sustainment across tenures by developing and embedding support services across the county through a community-based approach and ensuring that support is flexible to meet individual support needs. We will explore opportunities to fund specialist mental health roles to work specifically with homeless households.

3. Recovery

Affordable and supported housing supply in Worcestershire is an on-going problem locally, as it is nationally. Demand far outstrips the supply. During the pandemic, the Government intervened in unprecedented fashion to ensure stability for millions of residents by effectively making it impossible to undertake evictions or repossessions in this country. As a result of this intervention activity levels around homelessness remained relatively stable nationally and locally new, creative ways of working across health services and housing services have developed around, for example, the needs of rough sleepers, but we are now starting to see an increase in homelessness approaches.

We want to increase the supply of, and access to, affordable and supported housing, so that people can recover successfully from homelessness. Alongside this we will enable support for those who have multiple and complex needs to try to ensure that homelessness does not reoccur and longer-term housing solutions are maintained.



National and Local Context

The Homelessness Review includes a more detailed consideration of the national and local context but there are some specific issues that are highlighted below either because they are significant pieces of legislation or due to their impact on homelessness.

Relevant legislation

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Part IV

This legislation has given local authorities (LAs) further duties in relation to homelessness, including undertaking a needs assessment. It also imposes a duty on LAs to have a Local Partnership Board and to work in partnership with Local Housing Authorities (LHAs) in areas where there are two tiers of local government.

The legislation states that local authority housing duties include offering 'Safe Accommodation' and this includes the offer of support from a local expert support service. 'Safe Accommodation' consists of self-contained supported accommodation or traditional refuge accommodation. Therefore 'Bed and Breakfast' is not considered to be Safe Accommodation.

The recent Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has enhanced the joint working with the County Council. The County Council now provide funding to the LHAs to employ specialist Domestic Abuse Housing Officers within the Housing Advice teams and indirectly support the provision of safe houses.

Renters Reform Bill

The renters reform bill that is going through parliament seeks to transform the rights of those who reside in private rented accommodation through ending no fault evictions (section 21 notices) as well as offering other protections to tenants and improving the quality of homes.

Housing Teams and wider partners will need to be aware of these changes and adapt their services to work with landlords to encourage adherence to the new guidelines in the first instance and to look at enforcement where it is necessary.

Once further details regarding the bill are clarified working practices will need to be amended. Transition arrangements will need to be looked at carefully and adequate communication to landlords put in place to mitigate against an increase in homelessness prior to the bill coming into force, where landlords might take advantage of no fault evictions or seek to exit the market.

Armed Forces Act 2021

The Armed Forces Act 2021 further enshrines the Armed Forces Covenant into law to help prevent service personnel and veterans being disadvantaged when accessing public services.

The legislation introduces a duty to have 'due regard' to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant, as follows;

- (a) The unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the armed forces.
- (b) The principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for service personnel from the membership, or former membership, of the armed forces.
- (c) The principle that special provision for service personnel may be justified by the effects on such people by membership, or former membership, of the armed forces.

The new Duty applies to bodies that exercise public functions and is inclusive of bodies that provide housing and homelessness functions: Meaning serving and ex service personnel, and their families must be fairly assessed when processing housing and homelessness applications.

The Worcestershire Housing Board has been signed up to the Covenant since 2012 and are committed to the ongoing duties the legislation brings about.

Contextual changes

Incomes and the cost of living

Across the county there is a difference in household income. The average gross salary varies from £28.6k in Wyre Forest to £33.5k in Redditch but is well below the UK average of £38.1k. In Worcestershire female employees earn less than their male counterparts in every area.

Affordability of housing is also an issue in parts of the county with only Wyre Forest and Worcester City median house price to median salary ratio being lower than the England and Wales average of 7.69. The unemployment rate across the county is lower than the national average ranging from 3.5% in Wychavon to 4.7% in Redditch.

The impact of Covid-19, Brexit and the war in Ukraine has affected the cost of living (particularly food and fuel) and inflation is at its highest since the 1970s. This will have an impact on household disposable income and is likely to lead to many more people experiencing economic hardship, including some of those who have previously been relatively well off. It will also exacerbate existing poverty and those who have no credit history or savings to fall back on are likely to be particularly affected.

In terms of protected characteristics, evidence from the Cabinet Office identifies that Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people are more likely than non-BAME people to experience housing issues in relation to quality of housing, cost of renting as a proportion of income and overcrowding.

During the pandemic the lockdowns led to a reduction in income for many households and a consequent increase in rent arrears in both the social housing and private rented sector. Additional funding was given to local authorities in 2022 to support those in

rent arrears and those generally experiencing hardship through the Household Support Fund and Vulnerable Renters funding.

The use of food banks (distribution of food parcels) nearly doubled between 2019/20 and 2021/22.

Declining social housing supply and housing affordability

Across the county there is very high demand for social housing with nearly 12,000 households on the LHA housing registers. High employment levels and economic growth bring major opportunities for Worcestershire but also present significant challenges, including high housing costs and a shortage of accommodation which is affordable to local people especially those with low incomes.

There was a sharp reduction during 2021/22 in social housing lettings across the county due to the pandemic down to 700 from a high of 1478 in 2018/19¹. There is also a mismatch between the social housing available for letting. For example approximately 50% of vacancies in Wyre Forest are for older people, and yet less than 10% of the households on the housing register are over 65. Part of the issue is the overall decline of social housing numbers as a consequence of the Right To Buy and Right To Acquire, for example in 2018/19 113 homes were sold across the county.

In many parts of the county the supply of private rented properties at or close to local housing allowance levels is very restricted. In addition, most new social housing properties are at “affordable” rather than “social” rent trapping low income households into benefit dependency.

Rough Sleeper Strategy - “Ending Rough Sleeping For Good” 2022

The new strategy gives an explicit commitment to end rough sleeping achieved through the four strands of prevention, intervention, recovery and a transparent and joined up system. The strategy also announced the funding available to tackle rough sleeping some of which is included in Appendix Four.

Health

The development of Primary Care Networks (PCN) has led to closer working relationships between GPs and District Councils including through the formation of Collaboratives across the County.

The Health and Wellbeing Board acts as a forum in which key leaders from the local health and care system work together to improve the health and wellbeing of their local population. In Worcestershire the Board also has representation from District Council members and the Chief Executive of Redditch and Bromsgrove (in his role as Chair of the Worcestershire Housing Board).

The population of Worcestershire is ageing, with 23% over 65 compared to 18.6% in England and Wales and this does put additional pressure on health services.

Average life expectancy in Worcestershire for males is 80.1 years and 83.8 for females. These levels are above England’s worst life expectancy areas but not as good as it’s best areas.

Safeguarding

Local authorities have a duty under Section 42 of the Care Act 2014, to make enquiries relating to anybody aged 18 or over where it has

reasonable cause to suspect that the adult in its area (whether, or not, ordinarily resident there):

- a) had needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs)
- b) is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and
- c) as a result of those needs is unable to protect him or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

Safeguarding responsibilities are integral to all local authority service provision but are particularly important where individuals and families are experiencing homelessness.

Self Neglect Policy

Self neglect covers a wide range of behaviour including neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding. A new policy was developed and launched in 2022 and can be found here

<https://www.safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk/about-us/what-is-safeguarding/who-needs-safeguarding/self-neglect>

Complex Adults Risk Management (CARM) framework

This guidance seeks to provide front line practitioners with a framework to facilitate effective working with adults who are at risk of significant harm due to their complex needs, and where the risks cannot effectively be managed via other processes or interventions, such as section 9 care and support assessment or section 42, safeguarding enquiry under the Care Act 2014. The Complex Adults Risk Management (CARM) framework should be used when the adult’s engagement with support is intermittent or where it has proved difficult to engage with the adult, the risk is significant and an individual agency procedures have not been able to resolve the problem(s).

Analysis of the current data

The national data reported through H-CLIC is the most comprehensive set of data collected for every English authority over time and therefore provides a useful basis to analyse trends in homelessness and inform the development of the strategy. The data has informed our approach to increase homeless prevention, the levels of rehousing into the private rented sector and the provision of other forms of accommodation.

The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) (2017) in 2018 led to a peak in applications in 2018/19 with the new duties owed. Please see Appendix One for more information about the statutory framework. However, this is not a trend that has continued and there has been a decrease in most Districts over the 4 year period although Redditch and Bromsgrove saw a small peak during 2019/20. The level of homeless applications in all districts remained lower in 2020/21 than in 2018/19 (except in Redditch).

Duties have been owed to over 95% of those approaching as homeless in 2018/19 increasing to over 98% in the subsequent years. More duties are owed to those already homeless, under the relief category. The total number of approaches under the relief category reached a peak of 54% in 2020/21 which is attributable to the Covid 19 pandemic and the “Everyone In” scheme.

Countywide the top four reasons for homelessness are end of Assured Shorthold Tenancies (AST), family and friends no longer willing to accommodate, other and relationship breakdown (non-violent). This is comparable throughout the county. More work needs to be done to identify the reasons for homelessness for those in the “other” category.

Table One: Reasons for homelessness at prevention and relief stage

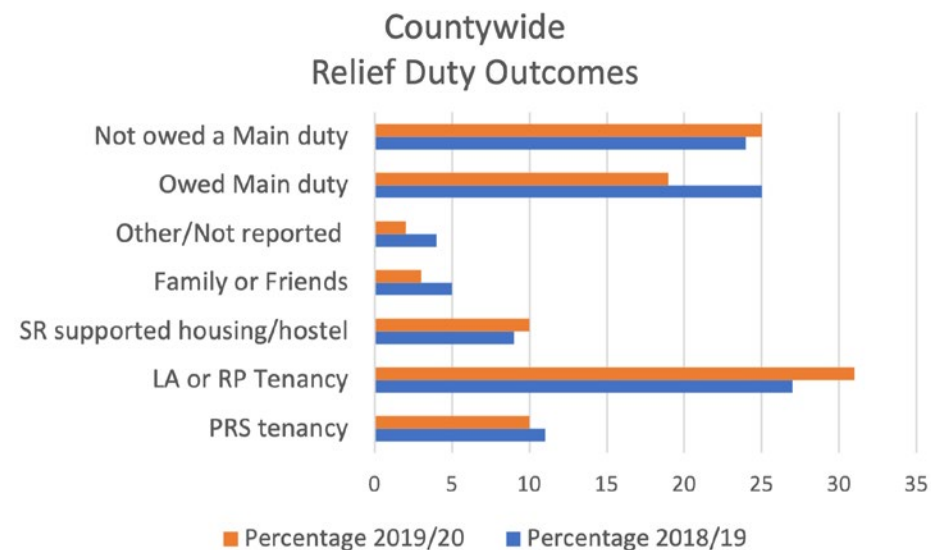
	Prevention %			Relief %		
	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
End of AST	33.6	33.2	23.1	10.2	13.8	6.8
Family/Friends no longer willing to accommodate	26.6	27.1	31.9	21.1	27.8	27.9
Other	15.7	15.7	15.7	16.9	17.1	18.6
Relationship Breakdown (non-violent)	7.2	9	12	16.1	14.5	15.6

The pandemic saw more time spent with family and friends due to lockdown restrictions. Statistics countywide evidence the stress this had on relationships with the increase in homelessness due to family and friends no longer willing to accommodate and non-violent relationship breakdowns. More notably, the number of homeless presentations due to domestic abuse saw an 8-9% increase between 2018/19 and 2020/21, prior to the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

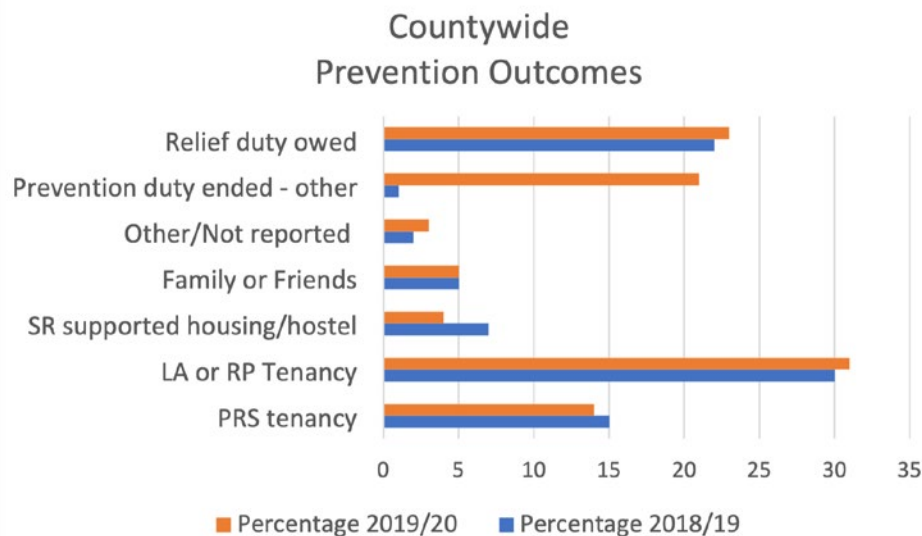
Table Two: Homeless presentations due to Domestic Abuse

	Prevention %	Relief %	Total %
2018/19	4.5	12.7	17.2
2019/20	4.2	11.9	16.1
2020/21	8.2	17	25.2

In 2018-2020 55-60% of those who had a prevention duty owed and 56% owed a relief duty secured accommodation throughout the County.



Further data is included in the Homelessness Review.



Households affected by homelessness

This section considers some specific groups within the homeless cohort affected by homelessness. These are the groups that make up the majority of households that approach LHAs and this section will cover the context and data relating to the groups.

Single People

Context

Single people are often most exposed to changes to welfare benefits and cost of living rises. Affordability issues are more likely to impact on this cohort. Reflecting this, single homeless people make up a large proportion of applicants on the districts housing registers with the largest group aged between 18 - 34.

Data Collection

In 2020/21 just over 50% of all homeless approaches across the county were from single people. The two most common causes of homelessness in Worcestershire are the loss of private rented accommodation and family or friends being no longer willing to accommodate. The support needs of this group vary but most common support needs include mental illness or disability, physical illness or disability and domestic abuse.

Complex needs and Rough Sleepers

Context

Rough sleeping can be a dangerous and isolating experience. People who sleep rough are more likely to be victims of crime and violence. The longer a person remains on the streets, or actively engages in street life culture, the more likely it will have significant implications on their physical and mental health. Female rough

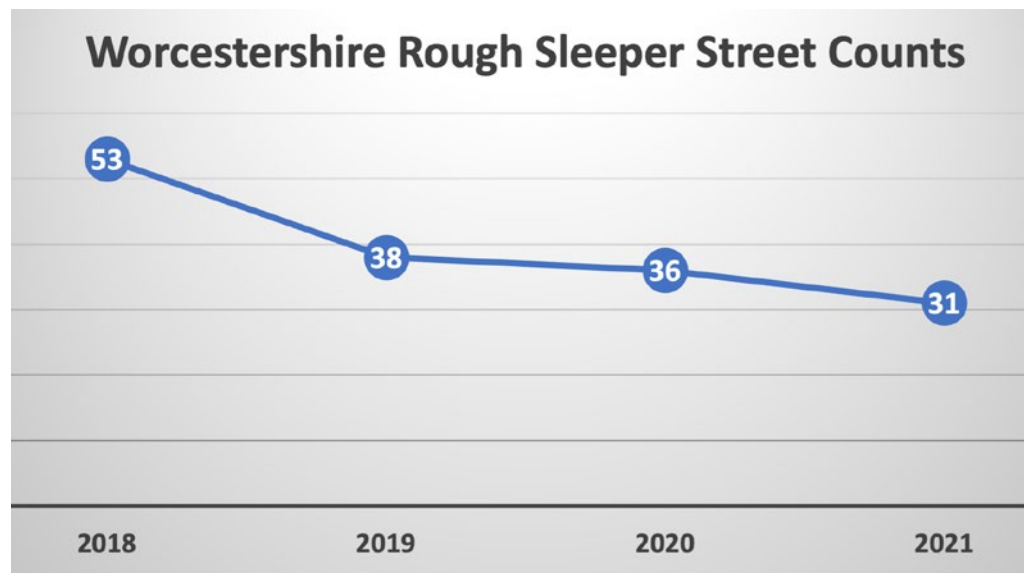
sleepers are particularly at risk and may require specialist or women only services to address their needs. Safeguarding issues are therefore particularly relevant to these groups. Actions in relation to safeguarding have been identified by the Thematic Review of Rough Sleepers, undertaken by the Adult Safeguarding Board in 2020 and those pertinent to the six LHAs are included in the action plan.

One of the positive outcomes of "Everyone In" was to embed the regular rough sleeper meetings across the county. Having regular rough sleeper/prevention meetings at a local level enables the co-ordination of services and information sharing to develop partnerships with all organisations and individuals committed to ending rough sleeping and homelessness. This includes a consideration of any safeguarding issues that need to be flagged with partners or referred to the Adult Safeguarding Team.

There is limited availability of rapid access supported accommodation resulting in households only accommodation option being outside of the county. Although Supported Housing providers in Worcestershire work within a trauma informed, person centred approach, clients with substance misuse, serious mental health conditions and/or a history of arson may find themselves waiting for a suitable placement due to stringent criteria.

Data Collection

Worcestershire official street count held each year has seen a decrease in rough sleepers since 2018 (please see table below).



Rough sleeper data is collated each week improving our local intelligence of the flow, return, stock of individuals and the reason behind their homelessness. Over 150 people were assisted in response to the first lockdown through “Everyone In”.

Families with children

Context

Worcestershire is an attractive place to live and work, inevitably leading to high rents and house prices, from increasing demand. This means some families are unable to afford a home. The recent pandemic and changes to the benefits system together with the impact of the cost of living crisis and the number of people in low paid work has seen a rise in the number of families at risk of homelessness.

We want to prevent homelessness by identifying the key risk factors/triggers in families lives that can lead to a family being at risk of homelessness at the earliest possible stage.

Data Collection

Across Worcestershire there are 5518 families on the Housing register (December 2022).

The data behind family homelessness in Worcestershire suggests that the immediate ‘triggers’ for family homelessness approaches are primarily relationship breakdown with partner (non-violent breakdown) which accounted for 16% of homeless approaches in 2018 to 15.6% in 2021; 12.7% of approaches were due to Domestic Abuse in 2018 raising to 17% in 2021; and the end of private rented tenancy (assured shorthold tenancy) which was 10.2% in 2018 and down to 6.8% in 2021, due to the eviction embargo during the pandemic.

Survivors of Domestic Abuse

Context

Domestic Abuse remains one of the most significant reasons for households facing homelessness across the county and has a wider impact of the lives of survivors and the community. Following the publication of the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) the LHAs implemented changes and enhancements to services towards creating a more robust and responsive service for those fleeing abusive relationships.

Data Collection

With the Domestic Abuse Act providing a more focussed service for survivors of Domestic Abuse, there has been an increase in the recognition of Domestic Abuse in homeless presentations and this has been recorded in the data collected.

In Worcestershire in 2020-21, there were a total of 12,887 domestic abuse incidents (crimes and non-crimes) reported to the police. In addition to those who have reported domestic abuse, there is thought to be a large unmet domestic abuse need in Worcestershire. Prevalence data suggests that 43% of incidents go unreported to the police. Across the County the number of homeless approaches due to Domestic Abuse accounted for 12.7% in 2018/19, 11.9% in 2019/20 and 17% in 2020/21 of all homeless approaches.

According to data collected via a Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) project, which ran from September 2020 to March 2022, of the 162² homelessness approaches due to domestic abuse, 148 of those were owed a duty. 14 households were owed the prevention duty and 121 were owed a relief duty. As part of the DLUHC project, Worcester Community Trust were funded to develop and train a team of Domestic Abuse Community Champions, who are volunteers based in community settings, trained to advise and signpost survivors. A total of 59 champions were trained and supported to make onward referrals for 195 service users, who were referred to services that would reduce the risk of them re-entering an abusive relationship.

A Research and Intelligence Officer has been recruited in order to support the gathering, analysis and dissemination of data for this client group and will help to inform future resourcing of services.

Young People

Context

Homelessness for young people remains a small but significant issue. This includes from people aged 16-17, Care Leavers and young parents. Many young people will have support as well as accommodation needs as they leave home for the first time.

The recent pandemic and changes to the benefits system together with the impact of the cost of living crisis and the number of people in low paid work has seen a rise in the number of young people at risk of homelessness.

Data Collection

Across Worcestershire's housing authorities in 2020/21 there were 629 young people aged between 16-24 on the housing registers down from 697 in 2018/19.

For young people the data indicates that the most common causes of homelessness in Worcestershire are family or friends being no longer willing to accommodate, the loss of private rented accommodation and relationship breakdown with partner (non-violent breakdown).



Households in temporary accommodation and permanent housing

Temporary Accommodation (TA)

LHAs have a duty to provide temporary accommodation in certain circumstances (see Appendix One for further details). Accommodation provided must be suitable in terms of location, standards and cost. The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities states that while Bed & Breakfasts (B&Bs) may be used in an emergency, councils should avoid the use of B&Bs wherever possible and, in the case of families or pregnant women, should use B&Bs for a maximum of 6 weeks.

The availability of different types of TA across Worcestershire differs between districts. The councils have a range of types of accommodation available for their use including B&B and self-contained units.

Table three the number of TA units each Worcestershire LHA has available, compared to the average number of households in TA at any one time (using the average number of households in TA at the end of each quarter in 2021/22).

Table three: TA units in Worcestershire

District	Average No. in TA at end of Qtr 21/22	Shared/ B&B	Self-contained	Gap / Surplus
Bromsgrove	18	Ad hoc B&B	12 static units and a further 38 units that can be made available from bdht stock when required	Flexible approach allows for peaks and troughs in demand
Malvern Hills	8	Ad hoc B&B	4 designated units	-4 units
Redditch	49	Ad hoc B&B	25 designated units	-24 units
Worcester City	57	16 designated B&B rooms Plus ad hoc 8 rooms at LA owned shared TA	26 designated units	-7 units
Wychavon	17	Ad hoc B&B	16 designated units	-1 units
Wyre Forest	26	3 designated B&B rooms 11 rooms at LA owned shared TA	7 designated units	-5 units

The above table shows that the average TA gap differs significantly across the districts and reflects the difference in demand for TA across the county.

Whilst the majority of the districts only use B&B accommodation on an ad-hoc basis, Worcester City, Redditch Borough and Wyre Forest have contracts with B&B providers in place to ensure the availability of this type of accommodation in order to fulfil their statutory duties to homeless households. Although contract arrangements mean that these units can be provided at a lower rate than ad hoc use, this type of accommodation is still significantly more expensive than other types of TA. In addition, as the Code of Guidance states, B&B is not suitable for families or people under 18 and should be avoided for other households wherever possible. Studies have shown that moving home many times in early life affects child behaviour and mental health. Specifically:

- Homeless children are more likely to be in poor health than non-homeless children
- Children who have been in temporary accommodation for more than a year are over three times more likely to demonstrate mental health problems such as anxiety and depression than non-homeless children
- Living in temporary accommodation puts children at greater risk of infection and accidents

The Worcestershire councils have therefore committed to reducing the use of B&B and replacing it with alternative accommodation which is less expensive and of better quality. As this forms part of their 'business as usual' work it doesn't feature as a specific countywide action.

Permanent housing

In terms of permanent housing all the councils work with developers and registered providers to deliver market and affordable housing across the county. This work is underpinned by the council's Local Plans which identify a wide range of tenures and types of housing including low cost home ownership and social/affordable rent properties. There is a shortage in the supply of housing, particularly in the provision of affordable housing with an annual requirement of all housing tenures of approximately 2279 per annum across the county.

Local Plan numbers are informed by a combination of the standard methodology requirement, Housing Market Assessments and Housing Needs Surveys to determine the required mix of housing. The councils also work with registered providers to ensure best use is made of existing stock including tackling underoccupation and low demand schemes.

Work with private sector landlords and letting agents also enable councils to meet some housing needs in parts of the county although local housing allowance rates do make this challenging. The councils have been innovative in attracting landlords to provide accommodation through landlord forums, the use of rent bonds and deposits, social letting agencies and private sector leasing schemes, and this will continue during the lifetime of the strategy.

Governance arrangements

Oversight and delivery

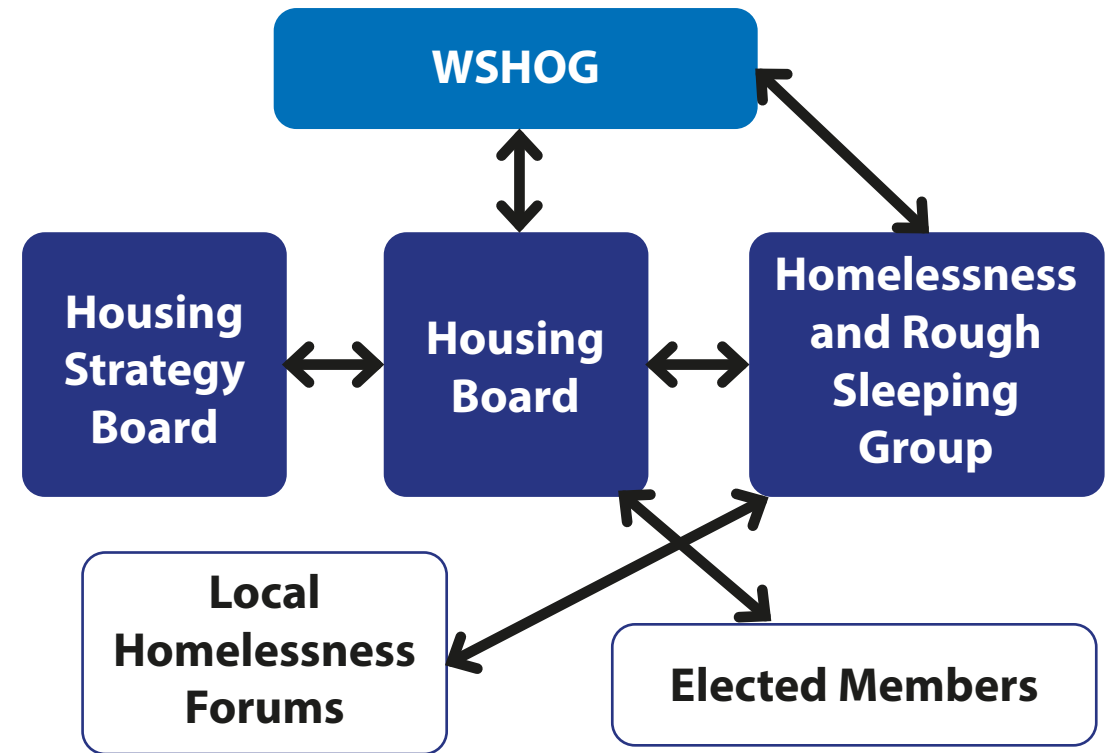
Worcestershire Housing Board is responsible for ensuring that the commitments within the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy are realised. The partnership is a multi-agency and cross sector partnership, ensuring delivery of the strategy is supported across relevant organisations. The Housing Board report to the Housing Strategy Board that is comprised of Chief Executive or senior officers from LHAs, Registered Providers, MHS, Health and Care Trust and Public Health.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be overseen by the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Group, a public and voluntary sector partnership and the chair of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Group will feed into the Housing Board regularly to update on actions, including countywide actions from the strategy and levels of homelessness across the county.

The Worcestershire Strategic Housing Officers Group (WSHOG) will be responsible for the operational delivery of the LHAs elements of the strategy.

Each LHA will have their own separate mechanism for reporting back to elected members in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping including committees and briefings to ensure there is political oversight on the delivery of the strategy and services.

The Local Homelessness Forums, made up of local partners including the VCS, will also support the oversight and delivery of homelessness and rough sleeper services and the strategy and feed into the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Group.



To support this, we will utilise the DLUHC “dataforinsights” homelessness and rough sleeping dashboard.

In addition to the above governance arrangements it may be necessary to set up additional task and finish groups if faced with a particular issue e.g. as seen during the Covid pandemic or to bring together partners for a bid for grants such as the Rough Sleeper Initiative fund. This will give the LHAs the ability to respond flexibly to issues.

There are parts of the homelessness system and related services that fall outside of the remit of the LHAs such as health prevention and substance misuse. The responsibility and governance arrangements for these matters rests with the County Council but with wider partner engagement. Please see the section on partnerships below for more detail on some of these relationships.

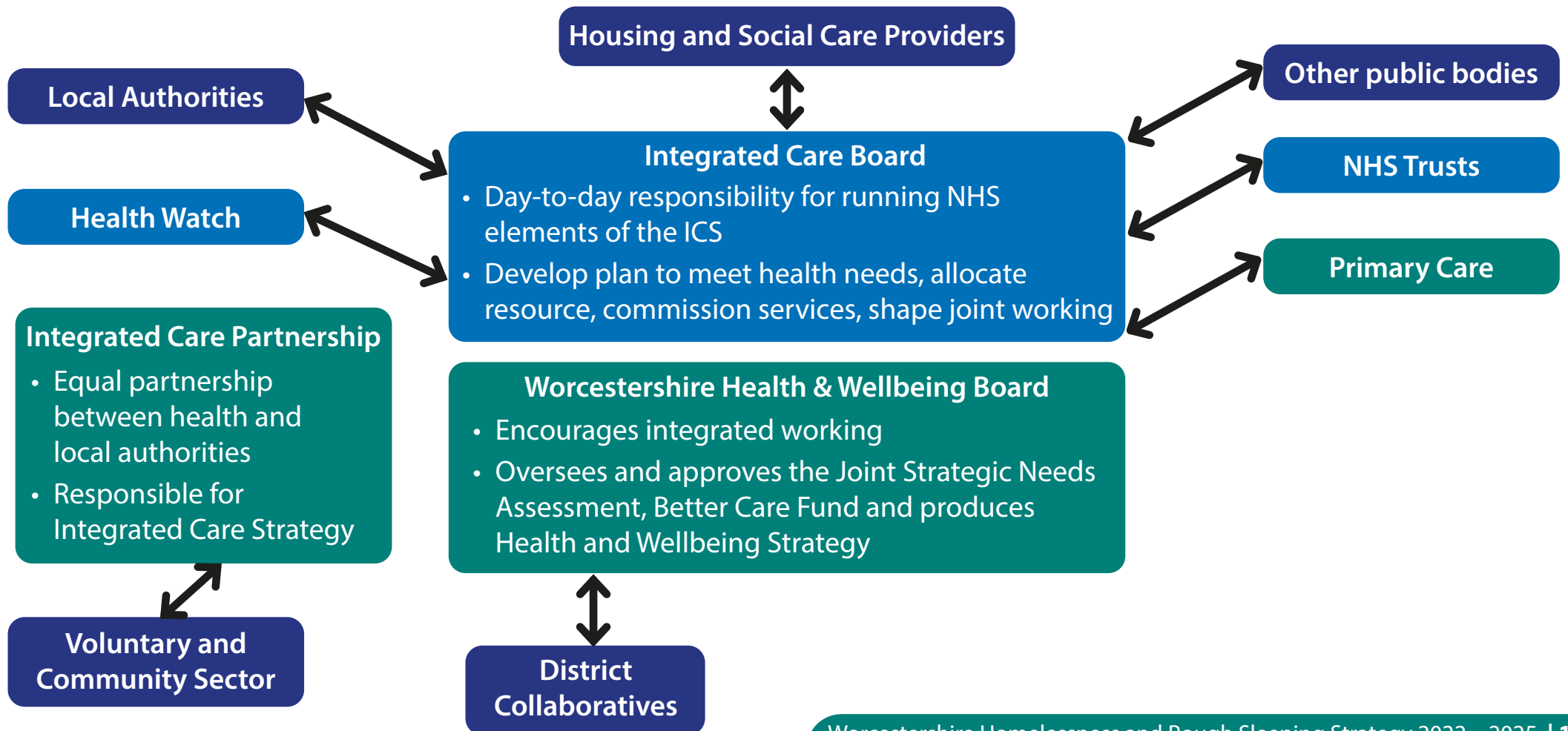
Partnerships

The role of partnerships is essential to the delivery of the strategy as many organisations have a role to play in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in the wider context. This is not a definitive list of all partnerships but highlights some key groups and inter-relationships. There are also localised partnership and strategic groups within each LHA that aren't included in this section as it is focusing on partnerships that are countywide.

ICB and health partnerships

The advent of the Integrated Care Boards and review of the role of the Health and Wellbeing Board has led to a new way of working within the health, social care and wider partnerships including greater District level working with Primary Care Networks.

Integrated Care System - Taking collective action to tackle health inequalities



Reducing Re-offending Group & MAPPA Strategic Management Board

The Reducing Re-offending Board are overseeing development and delivery of the criminal justice pathway and protocol across the county, following on from work commissioned by Public Health and the LHAs. Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) were introduced in 2001 under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 and subsequently strengthened by the Criminal Justice Act 2003 as the statutory arrangement for managing sexual and violent offenders. It provides a mechanism whereby the agencies involved can better discharge their responsibilities and protect the public in a coordinated way. The responsible authority for MAPPA in each criminal justice area consists of the police, probation, and prisons and LHAs have a duty to cooperate with MAPPA arrangements in assessing and managing the risks posed by MAPPA-eligible offenders and the Board oversees the process.

Adult Safeguarding Board and the Assurance Panel

The main purpose of Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board (WSAB) is to promote wellbeing and reduce the risk of harm for people with care and support needs. With regards to rough sleepers the delivery of the actions from the thematic review are overseen by an Assurance Panel. The LHAs are represented on the Board and Panel by a senior officer from WDC.

Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) & Post 16+ Housing Group

The CPB provides leadership and a governance structure for corporate parenting to drive forward the outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. It oversees the Board's strategy and promotes the voice of children and young people. It also provides

challenge and scrutiny to ensure the best outcomes are achieved for children in care and care leavers. LHAs are represented at CPB by officers from WSHOG.

The Post 16+ Housing Group brings together managers from the LHAs and Care Leavers service to ensure we work collectively to commission and deliver housing and support services to young people aged 16 and above and care leavers.

Domestic Abuse Partnership Board (DAPB)

The DAPB consists of key partners with an interest in tackling domestic abuse and supporting victims, including their children. The DAPB has been created to support Worcestershire County Council in meeting its duty under Part IV of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and to expand upon the wider community-focused work of the Worcestershire Forum against Domestic Abuse.

Monitoring

WSHOG will report progress against the strategy action plan to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Group, who will ensure an annual review of progress up to and including 2025.

Each council will also be responsible for reporting back on its local action plan on a quarterly basis to its Local Homelessness Forum.

Action Plan

As part of developing the strategy we undertook a review of provision across the county, reviewed statistics from a variety of data sets, interviewed stakeholders and those with lived experience and held a stakeholder day in June 2022. This information and joint working helped identify gaps and future actions for the strategy. The stakeholders identified a number of suggestions that are business as usual and as such don't feature in the action plan but will still be delivered including the revision of protocols already in place.

The strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis and this will include the review of current actions and identification of any new actions required for years two and three.

To summarise the key actions for the strategy, identified from gap analysis, are:

- Increasing the range of accommodation available to a number of client groups and ensure distribution throughout the county including general affordable housing, supported housing for survivors of domestic abuse through provision of "safe accommodation" and development of a countywide sanctuary scheme particularly through our work with our Registered Provider partners
- Increasing access to the private rented sector through working with landlords
- Exploring opportunities for a greater range of supported and step-down accommodation, including accommodation for rough sleepers
- Reviewing the provision of accommodation and support for young people to ensure no young person will be placed in emergency bed and breakfast with shared facilities, other than in exceptional circumstances

- Working with the Research and Intelligence Officer to improve data collection and quality to inform decisions around commissioning, service delivery and funding bids
- Increasing the level of homeless prevention through a variety of actions including:
 - Undertake joint working and training with Registered Providers, Mental Health teams, Criminal Justice, Substance Misuse etc.
 - Raising awareness of homeless services to stakeholders and the public through the communications plan and the ability to refer cases in through the Duty to Refer or Commitment to Refer
 - Developing homelessness prevention panels across the county
 - Working with those with lived experience to identify gaps in provision
- Completing actions for councils identified in the Rough Sleeper Thematic Review
- Developing / enhancing opportunities for meaningful activities
- Upscaling our response to digital safety
- Increasing the supply of general needs accommodation and to make better use of existing homes to meet needs

See the full action plan in Appendix Six.

Appendix One - Legislation

Legal duties

The primary homelessness legislation - Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 – provides the statutory under-pinning 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.

In 2017 the Housing Act 1996 was amended by the Homeless Reduction Act 2017. This brought in additional duties to all households, namely the prevention and relief duties which apply regardless of priority need or intentionality.

In making decisions local authorities must take into consideration section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and give consideration to individuals protected characteristics. Local authorities also need to consider section 11 of the Children's Act 1989 and the duty to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of children when making decisions.

Homeless duties

Housing authorities have a legal duty to provide advice and assistance to anyone that is eligible and 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 person will be eligible depending on their immigration status. This is a complex area of law, though generally, UK nationals with a right to reside, those with settled status, pre settled status and exercising their worker rights, or those with limited or indefinite leave to remain with recourse to public funds would be eligible.

To establish if the applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness, the following needs to be established:

- Do they have the legal right to occupy accommodation that is available to them and their household for the next 56 days?
- Is the accommodation reasonable to occupy?
- When assessing whether the accommodation is reasonable to occupy, the following should be considered:
 - Is there a probability of violence? Violence has a broad definition here and includes emotional, financial, psychological abuse and controlling/coercive behaviour.
 - Is there a probability of threats that are likely to be carried out?
 - If the above are met the property is unsuitable, otherwise the local authority will need to consider all other matters in relation to the house to determine if suitable. The local authority will factor in the prevailing housing circumstances in the area when assessing whether a property is reasonable to occupy.

The duties are outlined on the next page:-

Prevention Duty

Take 'reasonable steps to help the applicant to secure that accommodation does not cease to be available' (s.4)

Applies to

All eligible applicants who are 'threatened with homelessness within 56 days'

Eligible applicants who become homeless then move on to the relief duty

Relief Duty

Take 'reasonable steps to help the applicant to secure that suitable accommodation becomes available' (s.5)

Applies to

All eligible applicants who are homeless

Priority need, unintentionally homeless applicants who remain homeless fall on the main duty

Original Rehousing Duty

Secure that accommodation is available for occupation by the applicant. (s.193 Housing Act 1996)

Applies to

Priority need and unintentionally homeless applicants

- Deliberately and unreasonably refused to cooperate (although they are still entitled to a 'final offer' of a 6 month private tenancy.)

- Refused a final offer of suitable accommodation at relief stage

Ends with offer of suitable settled accommodation

If satisfied a household is homeless or threatened with homelessness, they have a duty to;

- Assess their circumstances and how they became homeless
- What support they need to sustain accommodation
- What accommodation would best suit their needs
- Develop a personalised housing plan setting out reasonable actions for the authority and customer to undertake to address the housing situation

If a household is threatened with homelessness, they will be owed a prevention duty. If a household is actually homeless they will be owed a relief duty. These are collaborative duties and the authority should seek agreement from the client in regards to actions set.

These duties can end if;

- A suitable offer of accommodation that is likely to last for 6 months is accepted

- A suitable offer of accommodation that is likely to last 6 months is refused, if the offer was a 6 month private tenancy or social tenancy the local authority would not need to consider if a main housing duty is owed
- If a prevention duty is owed, and someone becomes homeless, this will end the prevention duty and a relief duty will begin
- If a relief duty is owed and 56 days pass, this can end the relief duty and a main housing decision should be made
- If a household ceases to be eligible for assistance
- If someone deliberately refused to co-operate with their housing plan and the local authority has an approved policy on when duties should be ended in such instances. Worcestershire authorities are not currently ending duties due to deliberate refusals to co-operate with housing plans.

Main duty decisions

If the relief duty ends and the applicant has not been housed, and they have not refused a 6 month private or a social tenancy, the local authority will need to make a main housing duty decision.

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 2021 this was expanded to include those fleeing from domestic abuse to have an automatic priority need for housing. 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 non-domestic violence or the threat of violence. Guidance on factors local authorities should consider when looking at vulnerability can be found in the Code of Guidance for local authorities.

If someone does not fall within these categories or is not deemed vulnerable, they will not be owed a main duty due to not being in a priority need.

If someone is in a priority need the local authority will need to consider if they are intentionally homeless. A household is intentionally homeless if they have deliberately done an act or omission in consequence of which they cease to occupy accommodation that was available and reasonable to occupy and the act of omission was not done in good faith.

All of these tests need to be satisfied for a household to be intentionally homeless. Acts or omissions should not be deliberate if the applicant was not capable of managing their affairs due to age, mental health or infirmity or due to a temporary aberration of the mind, or if under duress or benefit delays beyond the applicants control.

If someone is intentionally homeless there will be a duty to provide accommodation for a reasonable period of time for the household to make their own arrangements.

Temporary Accommodation

LHAs in England & Wales have duties to provide temporary accommodation under the following circumstances:

- **Interim Duty**
Provision of accommodation whilst homelessness enquiries are ongoing when the LA has reason to believe the applicant may be homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need.
- **Main Duty**
The main housing duty is a duty to provide temporary accommodation until such time as the duty is ended, either by an offer of settled accommodation or by providing advice and assistance that is sufficient to secure accommodation. The main duty is owed when the LA is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, homeless, in priority need and not intentionally homeless.

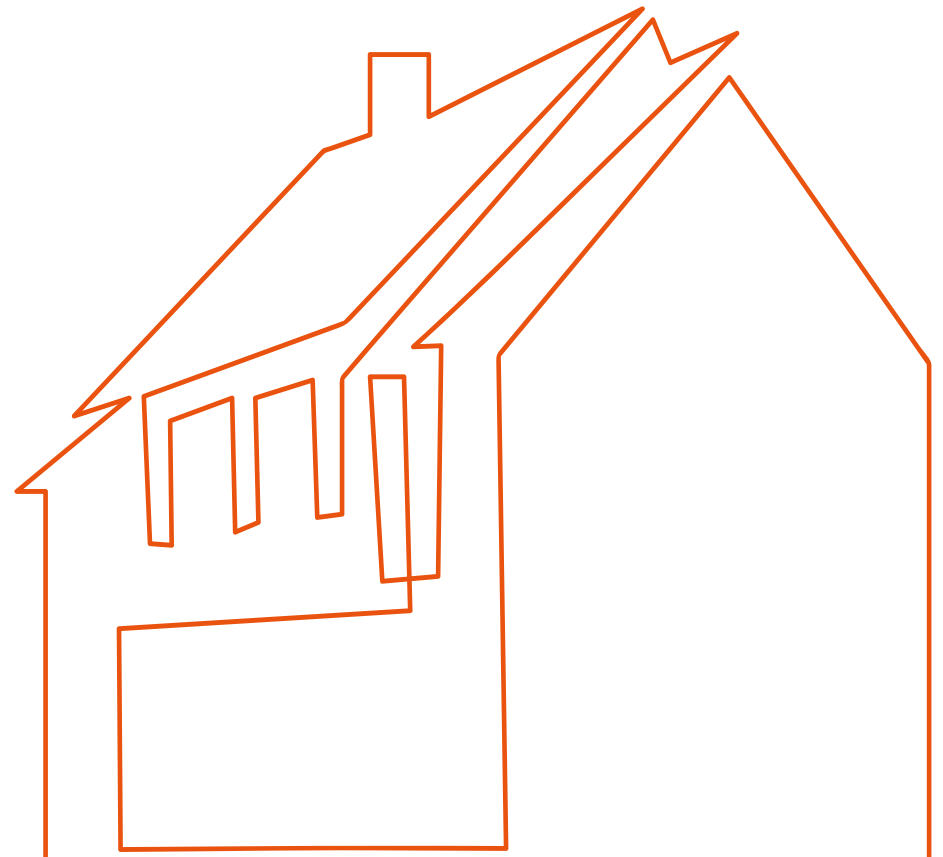
Homeless Households not owed the rehousing duty

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.

The local authority can utilise its discretion to assist certain households in exceptional circumstances.

Street Homelessness

DLUHC 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 - Update from previous strategy

The previous Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy 2019 – 2022 was developed during the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the publication of the national Rough Sleeper Strategy in 2018. The primary focus was around increasing prevention services and the supply of accommodation and mirrored the national strategy by addressing prevention, intervention and recovery. During the strategy lifetime the Corona virus pandemic struck and the way services were delivered to homeless households and rough sleepers across the county changed profoundly, particularly in response to ‘Everyone In’. As a consequence, the strategy was given a refresh in 2021 and the action plan was revised.

This section outlines the principal achievements of the strategy, including the revised actions from 2021.

1	Increased prevention services through developing toolkits and providing advice and assistance to over 4k households	6	Learnt from those with lived experience to improve services - 24 service users interviewed as part of the RSI2022-25 and review process in North Worcestershire
2	Encouraged partners to use the Alert system and sign up to and use the Duty or Commitment to Refer through training sessions, local homelessness forums and county events	7	Enhanced services to Rough Sleepers including a single service offer, motivational interviewing, Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE) services, meaningful activities and Housing First/Led
3	Greater information available to customers through social media posts, refreshed websites, face to face and written materials	8	Explored information sharing through protocols, panels and IT systems – rough sleeper, prevention and domestic abuse panels established
4	Raised awareness of homelessness through schools and GP (social prescribers) to support early intervention	9	Investigated joint funding opportunities with regards to Mental Health services for Homeless households and Rough Sleepers
5	Enhanced partnership working through drop-in sessions, regular joint events and meetings	10	Made better use of statistical data to inform service development in relation to Rough Sleepers

Unfortunately, the pandemic did prevent the delivery of some objectives including hosting annual partnership events and establishing a service user group. An unsuccessful funding bid, due to high levels of competition from other councils, meant mental health services specifically for homeless households have not been developed.

Appendix Three - Current Service Delivery

Current Service Provision - Single Households		
Prevention	Intervention	Recovery
<p>The districts are working directly with the private rented sector to prevent tenancies failing and support those in the private sector. This is being achieved by support officers working directly with both the resident and the landlord including through the establishment of Prevention Panels in some local authority areas. These panels meet regularly at a local level and work to find housing and rent arrears solutions as well as coordinated working and information sharing. As part of the role of the panels moving forward, councils will be clear about who is the lead professional for each case.</p> <p>The Countywide Single Person and Childless Couples Homeless Prevention Support Service is currently provided by Caring for Communities and People (CCP) and is jointly funded by the six LHAs and the County Council. This service's remit is to help councils meet their obligations in providing the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) provision, as well as providing a support service via drop-in sessions and home visits to individuals who are unlikely to be found in priority need.</p> <p>Districts have various options to overcome any financial barriers including Rent Bond Schemes, Welfare Assistance applications, Discretionary Housing payments, Help to Stay, tenancy training, financial inclusion and CAB work and food bank referrals.</p> <p>Early intervention is less easy to achieve when homelessness is predominantly caused by sudden personal crisis, going forward further work is required to engage private sector landlords, to embed approaches such as the 'Help to Stay' scheme and to promote the support and services we can offer.</p>	<p>Where homelessness cannot be prevented, we work to act quickly to intervene by developing clear pathways for specific client groups. Where temporary accommodation is required, we have support officers in place who work with clients individually to develop a housing pathway into sustainable accommodation. Support will include help to identify and undertake meaningful activity, reconnections with friends and family or where this isn't an option then to connect to the People Like Us project (Plus) that helps tackle social isolation and loneliness across the county for 18+.</p>	<p>The use of Private Sector Leasing Schemes is being developed across the county to ensure a supply of affordable housing which meets current standards and increases the options open to people. Applicants are also supported as part of this work to ensure a smooth transition into a sustainable tenancy.</p>

Current Service Provision - Rough Sleepers

Prevention	Intervention	Recovery
<p>In each Local Authority a Rough Sleepers meeting has been established and attended by statutory organisations, voluntary sector, and local charities. This meeting shares information and agrees actions to reduce rough sleeping.</p> <p>The Rough Sleeper Initiative funding has enabled the creation of localised provisions of No First Night Out (NFNO) /No Second Night Out (NSNO) settings offering “Off the Street” accommodation at an earlier opportunity, resulting in households new to the street or at high risk of rough sleeping being accommodated with a structured support package and move on options. It has also funded assertive outreach focusing on street-based responses both directly from the Housing Authorities but also in partnership with a local homeless charity, Maggs Day Centre who provide the Maggs Outreach and Assessment Team (MOAT)s and the commissioned Navigator services.</p>	<p>For people already rough sleeping there are services such as the Navigation Support Service who are working with our more complex rough sleepers from rough sleeping into accommodation/housing pathway plan. This is assisted by the MOATs floating support service working with rough sleepers who are disengaged with local services/housing options teams. For those rough sleepers who do engage with councils there are Homeless Support/Prevention officers working with former rough sleepers in accommodation or those vulnerable to rough sleeping onto an accommodation/housing pathway using a person centred, strength-based approach.</p> <p>To support rough sleepers during the colder months we have localised, countywide delivery of the Severe Winter Emergency Provision (SWEP). During Covid this moved from communal provision to self-contained rooms which led to greater levels of usage in some districts.</p>	<p>The Rough Sleeper Initiative and Business Rates Retention Scheme funding has enabled Housing Authorities to implement Housing First (delivered in partnership with St Pauls Hostel) and Housing Led projects throughout Worcestershire. This has taken the most entrenched rough sleeper cohort, some of whom have been on the streets for more than ten years, to maintain social housing tenancies with intensive support.</p> <p>There are also a range of other accommodation schemes including Private Sector Leasing Schemes increasing options to access affordable, high standard housing, rent deposit schemes to help access the private rented sector and shared housing provision with individual support packages.</p>

Current Service Provision - Rough Sleepers

Prevention	Intervention	Recovery
<p>There are targeted prevention services including officers who focus on early intervention and prevention through regular meetings with social, private sector landlords and other services who encounter people who are at risk of homelessness. Homeless Support/Prevention Officers are working with clients at risk of rough sleeping through a person centred, strengths-based approach to maintain their accommodation. There are also tenancy sustainment services and those focused on the private rented sector, such as “Help to stay” in Wyre Forest and bdht 360 Support in Bromsgrove which is aimed at private sector landlords who are considering ending tenancies. This helps to reduce homelessness caused by the ending of tenancies by providing tenants support and signposting to be able to stay.</p> <p>We are working with people with lived experience of homelessness to provide a more personalised, inclusive approach to the overall quality of the services provided and more information on this is included in the Homeless Review.</p>	<p>In parts of the County there are supported Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) accommodation used as a housing option for households who may require tenancy ready skills/support prior to accessing independent accommodation. Worcester, Wychavon and more recently Wyre Forest have all been successful in Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) bids to support people coming off the streets and receiving accommodation and tailored packages of support.</p>	<p>To support former rough sleepers in the longer term some councils have commissioned a Peer Mentor service, using those with lived life experiences working in conjunction with support workers to support rough sleepers.</p> <p>A Worcestershire Communities of Practice has been established, facilitated by Homeless Link, that is attended by local authority housing options, homeless charities and voluntary sector partners with the focus on sharing good practices.</p> <p>Due to the particular risks experienced by women rough sleeping there have been some targeted services just for women including the provision of women only supported accommodation in Worcester, Wyre Forest and Wychavon.</p> <p>Finally, personalisation budgets have been set up enabling councils to fund specialist support packages such as access to counselling services and meaningful activities to reduce/break the cycle of homelessness.</p>

Current Service Provision - Families with Children

Prevention

Throughout the county there are online customer portals to encourage self-referrals at an early stage to obtain housing advice and access the housing register. Housing Authorities have also raised awareness of where to go for help through publishing of materials to promote services and support available and ensuring websites are regularly updated with local and national advice enabling customers to help themselves where possible. The Duty to Refer (through ALERT) and Commitment to Refer has increased the referrals from a wider range of agencies for customers who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. There are different multi – agency groups established including prevention panels to provide meaningful advice, support and assistance to particular cases. The Housing Authorities work with landlords in the private and social housing sector in developing and supporting pre- eviction protocols to ensure eviction is always the last resort and they have assisted with rent arrears payments to ensure evictions can be prevented where possible. This includes providing pre tenancy and tenancy sustainment training to support customers. Housing teams are co-locating with some outside agencies such as the DWP for a proactive approach. Families have been assisted to reduce rent and mortgage arrears through various funding streams including the Homeless Prevention Grant “Vulnerable Renters” fund. Across the county we received £365,612 to assist households remain in their current home.

Intervention

At the intervention stage the services aim to assist households into permanent housing as quickly as possible, whilst providing housing support and tenancy sustainment work if required, with targeted delivery in a family’s temporary accommodation or homes. This is supported by changing to working practises to enable staff to work more agilely to enable greater access to services.

Homeless families are particularly hit by cost of living rises. Welfare assistance (including access to foodbanks and community kitchens) to meet basic household needs and financial inclusion measures such as budgeting advice, debt management, support and assistance with welfare claims are essential to help maintain temporary and permanent accommodation.

Recovery

We currently work in partnership with other agencies to provide additional support for families and the councils also directly provide floating and outreach services to provide support to families in their own localities. This has been enhanced throughout the Covid pandemic with housing teams having an increased presence in the community to provide comprehensive advice and support to areas where there is recognised deprivation and possible families at risk of evictions.

We recognise that there is an undersupply of accommodation, particularly for larger families and this may cause delays to households moving out of temporary and interim accommodation. Working closely with social and private sector landlords is critical to ensure households move through the rehousing pathway in an effective manner and enable those households to settle back into education and employment.

Current Service Provision - Domestic Abuse

Prevention	Intervention	Recovery
<p>The Domestic Abuse and Housing Co-ordinator role was introduced to start working on establishing services across the County in preparation for the act. The county housing authorities have been working with the co-ordinator to improve services available through the homelessness process, developing a Domestic Abuse Pathway and providing training and regular meetings in order to upskill staff in understanding and recognising Domestic Abuse and the need for risk assessments and safety planning. Wyre Forest District Council have developed a joint working approach with West Mercia Women’s Aid establishing a Domestic Abuse Panel. This is a meeting between a representative from Women’s Aid and the Domestic Abuse Housing Officer to create links between housing and support services. It is an opportunity to make sure all involved are doing what is needed to offer support and to share best practice and learning between agencies. These Panels are now considered good practice and are likely to be rolled out across the county. There is currently some provision of services in respect of educating children and young people on healthy relationships in academic settings but this is not consistent across the county. Housing authorities are expected to have domestic abuse pathway information accessible to potential victims and information is available on council websites. However, information needs to be expanded upon to ensure a consistent approach and an up to date list of services and information that can be easily accessed by those fleeing an abusive relationship.</p>	<p>The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) requires that local authorities provide an offer of support to all victims of Domestic Abuse who are accessing ‘Safe Accommodation’ provision. The Housing Authorities have recruited specialist Domestic Abuse Housing Officers, funded through the County Council, to work with and support those fleeing Domestic Abuse. These officers oversee the housing process for survivors creating a named contact who takes ownership of the case so that they don’t have to keep re-telling their story and provides continuity in their journey. These officers will discuss the safest and most appropriate options, ensuring that any temporary accommodation is safe for them to occupy and will refer or signpost them for additional support.</p>	<p>The Freedom Programme helps survivors of Domestic Abuse to make sense of and understand what has happened to them and is delivered by West Mercia Women’s Aid across Worcestershire to assist in the recovery process. Training is also delivered to services that work alongside survivors of Domestic Abuse. The newly commissioned DASS, delivered by West Mercia Women’s Aid, will support survivors in a number of different housing settings including refuges and safe houses to ensure they have access to advice and support to aid recovery. Many victims/survivors of Domestic Abuse have never had the opportunity or freedom to take up a hobby or take part in an activity they enjoy due to their controlled and isolated environment. By investing in the right support that includes meaningful activities victims/survivors can be given the opportunity to improve their confidence and self-esteem and achieve a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives.</p>

Current Service Provision - Domestic Abuse continued

Prevention	Intervention	Recovery
	<p>Worcestershire County Council, in partnership with other commissioners including the District Councils and Police and Crime Commissioner, have commissioned a specialist support service known as the Domestic Abuse Support Service (DASS). This service will provide support to survivors both in their own homes and in the specialist “safe” accommodation. Safe Accommodation, as referenced in the Domestic Abuse Act, covers any temporary accommodation that is made available by local authorities to those fleeing an abusive relationship. Housing authorities have worked in partnership with the County Council and social landlords to make more accommodation available to this group that meets the definition of being ‘safe’ under legislation. Housing authorities across the County have received grant funding to ensure these new units comply with these requirements. A sanctuary scheme is a service designed to help keep survivors within their homes, if it is safe for them and they choose to do so. If the relationship has ended and the perpetrator is no longer residing at the permanent residence, then safety measures such as additional locks on doors and windows, security lights, and video doorbells are provided. More advanced measures may also be considered such as safe rooms built into the property. Work is being undertaken by the County Council to ensure that sanctuary schemes are available and consistent in all areas.</p>	<p>Tackling perpetrator behaviour is also key and the Drive Project aims to reduce the number of child and adult victims of domestic abuse by deterring perpetrator behaviour. Liaising closely with local police and support agencies, caseworkers deploy a two-pronged approach of disruption through the criminal justice system and/or support for unresolved personal issues to stop domestic abuse. The Drive Project pilot focuses on priority (high-risk or serial) perpetrators, as this group carries the greatest risk of serious harm and engage poorly with available services.</p>

Current Service Provision - Young People

Prevention	Intervention	Recovery
<p>Across the county we have raised awareness of homelessness and where to go for advice to encourage self-referrals at an early stage through improving customer portals, publishing materials to promote services and support available, keeping websites updated with local and national advice enabling households to help themselves where possible and the use of the Duty To Refer via ALERT for wider agencies to refer potentially homeless or homeless customers to us.</p> <p>Many of the councils have well-established multi-agency working or prevention panels to develop meaningful support provision as required including the Care Leavers Panels.</p> <p>The Councils work with social landlords to ensure a pre – eviction protocol is followed and that eviction is always the last resort and where possible provide assistance with rent arrears or additional outreach support. Partnerships with private sector landlords help to ensure an understanding of housing to aid a preventative approach.</p>	<p>If, despite all prevention interventions, young people become homeless the teams will continue to provide tenancy sustainment training, support and work with other services to ensure the homelessness is fleeting. Changes to the way officers work and the use of technology like video conferencing means the services are more agile and able to provide greater access to people. Support will include help with independent living and financial inclusion measures such as budgeting advice, debt management support and assistance with welfare benefit applications.</p> <p>As both a prevention and intervention service, mediation is available to reduce relationship breakdowns and restore connections with family and friends where these have broken down.</p> <p>In the longer term we will work with young people and partners to overcome financial barriers to accessing accommodation through support into working programmes. Accommodation can be provided by both social and private sector landlords and many councils provide rent deposit schemes / charities to help young people to move into affordable, suitable accommodation.</p>	<p>Many young people will continue to have support needs beyond their homelessness and so part of the longer term recovery will be the ongoing development and embedding of support services across the county, in conjunction with the County Council (with Personal Advisors for example) and Voluntary and Community Sector.</p> <p>The use of the Duty or the Commitment to Refer offers agencies who identify issues with households to refer into housing services through a clear signposting route. This is supported by having an easy to access, agile workforce in the community that can provide comprehensive advice and support to areas where there is recognised deprivation and possible young people at risk of evictions.</p>

Current Service Provision - Young People

Prevention	Intervention	Recovery
<p>Some of the authorities and the Care Leavers service provide pre-tenancy sustainment training and in some parts of the county training is offered within schools to raise awareness of homelessness causes and tackle relationship breakdown.</p>	<p>Across the county the Councils have worked with Registered Providers (RPs) to provide suitable supported accommodation such as specialist young person's accommodation including Foyer or similar schemes, Nightstop, Crash pad emergency rooms and floating support from projects like Basement. In some cases this is in partnership with the County Council who provide funding for the specialist support services.</p>	<p>Young people often have the lowest incomes and are very vulnerable to cost of living rises so maintaining access to welfare assistance (including access to foodbanks and community kitchens) to meet basic household needs and financial inclusion measures such as budgeting advice, debt management, support and assistance with welfare claims are essential to help maintain permanent accommodation.</p>

Appendix Four - Funding the strategy

Homelessness services are funded through a variety of funding streams including the individual councils general fund budgets as well as additional funding received from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) called the Homelessness Prevention Fund (HPF)

Homeless Prevention Fund

Homelessness Prevention Fund is ringfenced and should be utilised to:

- Fully embed the Homelessness Reduction Act and contribute to ending rough sleeping by increasing activity to prevent single homelessness.
- Reduce the number of families in temporary accommodation by maximising family homelessness prevention.
- Reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families and eliminate family B&B placements beyond the statutory six-week limit.

In 2022/23 it also includes an element for new burdens due to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

However, there is currently a consultation into how this funding is allocated across the country with some of the Worcestershire councils potentially losing out, which will put prevention services at risk.

The allocations in 2022/23 are as follows;

Housing Authority	Grant (£)
Bromsgrove District Council	163,348
Malvern Hills District Council	140,582
Redditch Borough Council	322,383
Worcester City Council	474,097
Wychavon District Council	362,524
Wyre Forest District Council	351,898

Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme 2021/22 - 2024/25

Local Authority	Grant			
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Worcester	Capital - £440,000 Revenue £147,667			
Wychavon & Malvern (18 units)	£28,330	£49,420	£50,420	N/A
Wyre Forest	N/A	£29,023	£30,622	N/A

Domestic Abuse Act 2022/23

Housing Authority	Grant (£)
Bromsgrove District Council	32,859
Malvern Hills District Council	31,912
Redditch Borough Council	32,788
Worcester City Council	32,943
Wychavon District Council	32,015
Wyre Forest District Council	31,078

Rough Sleeper Initiative 2022-25

This funding aims at preventing rough sleeping and providing accommodation and support to those that do become homeless.

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Worcestershire	£927,451	£1,079,229	£1,002,282

Worcester City only - Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol Fund

The Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol approach will involve a comprehensive peer mentoring program focused on harm reduction, engagement and recovery support. This will involve peer mentors from third sector agencies including St Pauls Hostel, Emerging Futures and Cranstoun. There will also be a rough sleeper assertive outreach and intervention team to delivering support to the target population including supported access to housing, health services and delivery of psycho social interventions. These will be aligned with current rough sleeping outreach services to provide a co-ordinated response from County Council, the city council and third sector partners.

LHA	2022/23	2023/24
Worcester City	264,317	378,047

Appendix Five - Communication Plan

Homelessness is a complex issue. People find themselves without a home for many reasons. There has been a steady increase in the number of people seeking help and there are many factors contributing to this including public sector austerity, welfare reform, cost of living rises and an undersupply of suitable, affordable accommodation. We provide a number of services across the county to try to prevent homelessness from occurring and to provide assistance to those that become homeless. In 2020/21 the county had approaches from over 2214 households, that we owed a duty to. There are also a much smaller number of people who sleep rough every year and across the county there are tailored services to address these needs including No First and No Second Night Out accommodation, support via the HOPES commissioned service, Navigators and in-house, or locally commissioned, support teams and bespoke accommodation schemes for move-on including Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) funded projects. The Voluntary and Community Sector also support people facing homelessness with food, clothing and advice etc. However, not all those on the streets are Rough Sleeping, some will be begging or street drinking for example and this message should be highlighted as well.

This communications plan has been developed by the District Councils to raise awareness around homelessness (an action in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2022) and to deliver on the recommendations of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Thematic Rough Sleeping Review.

Objectives of the plan:

- To ensure that the public, organisations and people who are potentially homeless are aware of the help that is available
- To communicate how important it is for people to act early if they are having difficulties that may lead to homelessness
- To highlight the important work of the councils and their commissioned partners to raise awareness and reduce the misinformation circulated on social media
- Have some clear, jargon free key messages that highlight activity or actions for the councils, stakeholders and the public

Communication Action Plan

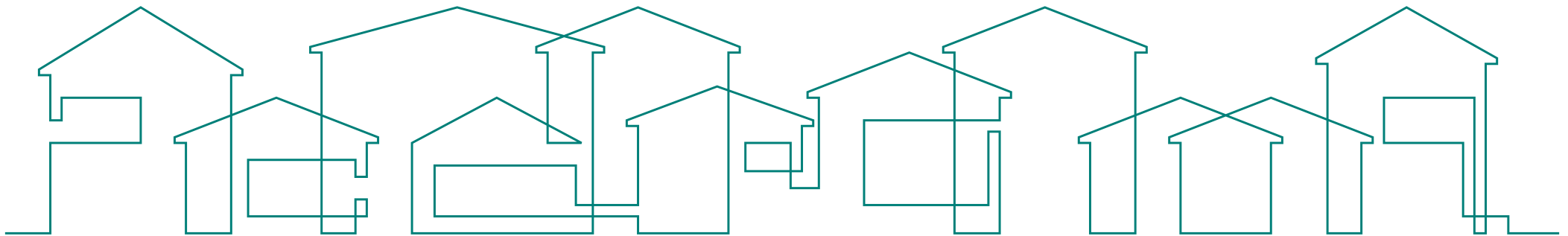
Action	Outcome	Communication Channels	Target Audience	Responsible	Due date & frequency
To re-promote the Duty to Refer / Commitment to Refer message.	To increase the number of referrals to Homeless Teams through Duty to Refer from a wider range of agencies.	Existing joint meetings and publicity materials with public organisations.	Public organisations who may meet people who are potentially homeless.	District Councils	Dec-22
For organisations and agencies who have an interest in preventing homelessness to continue to meet on a regular basis to share information, develop best practices and current policy developments.	To have a cohesive and coordinated approach and response to homelessness.	Regular local homeless forums	Organisations and agencies who are involved in homelessness.	District Councils and voluntary/ statutory agencies	Quarterly or Bi-annually depending on local arrangements
To continue to review information on housing and homelessness on the district council websites to make sure it is up to date and accessible including through obtaining views on the information from People With Lived Experience (PWLE) To include case studies or videos to make messages more impactful.	For the public, organisations and people who are homeless or may become homeless to have easily accessible online information.	District Councils' Websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who are homeless or may potentially become homeless • General Public 	District Councils	Sep-22 and a six monthly review
To promote the statutory and voluntary services available to all homeless people including Streetlink, Mediation services, No First Night Out, etc.	For the public to have an increased awareness of the services available for people who are homeless. All organisations to promote a jargon free, cohesive message.	Regular media campaigns to include local newspapers, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who are homeless or may potentially become homeless • General Public 	District Councils, WSHOG and Homeless organisations	Quarterly as a minimum

Channels to be used (subject to local arrangements)

- Local Homeless Forums
- Websites
- Social media (depending on local policies)
- Members and staff briefings
- Newsletters

Resources (subject to local arrangements)

- Website and media teams
- Relevant Housing Managers (Operational / Strategic)
- Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership Officer
- Worcestershire Strategic Housing Officers Group (for annual review)



Appendix Six - Action Plan

Year One (December 2022 - November 2023)

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale	How we will measure success
PREVENTION						
Reducing homeless approaches	Explore opportunities with Worcestershire County Council to develop a county wide Sanctuary Scheme to enable survivors of Domestic Abuse to remain safe in their own home.	Domestic Abuse	WCC	RBC&BDC (Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator)	November 2023	Contractor appointed from 01/04/22
	Delivery of the Rough Sleeper Initiative project.	Complex needs and rough sleepers	WSHOG	WFDC	November 2023	Rough Sleeping numbers as close to zero as possible
	Work with the Research and Intelligence Officer to identify shared key performance indicators to reassure homelessness, utilising the national data collected on a quarterly basis.	All client groups	WSHOG	RBC&BDC (Research and Intelligence Officer)	November 2023	New KPI agreed and reported to H&RSG
Partnership working	Ensure district health collaboratives have a housing rep or housing issues fed into the collaboratives.	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	November 2023	Review membership of Collaboratives across LAs concluded
	Work closely with Adult Safeguarding Board to ensure dissemination of information including on the Mental Capacity Act, Care Act 2014, Self-neglect policy and CARM occurs.	All client groups	All councils / ASB	WSHOG	November 2023	ASB rep to attend WSHOG

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale	How we will measure success
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PREVENTION

Partnership working	Ensure partnerships across the county are well supported by officer resources and that local homeless forums meet at least twice a year. Include (where appropriate) in the terms of reference the opportunity to set up responsive task and finish groups that can contribute to bids for funding or urgent issues as seen during the pandemic.	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG (Research and Intelligence Officer)	Ongoing	Terms of reference review
	Explore further opportunities to co-locate housing staff with other organisations e.g. DWP, Care leavers team.	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	November 2023	Number of officers co-located
	WSHOG to discuss with WCF the issues around the transition from young people to adult services (where learning or physical disability or mental health need) so that a coherent and consistent pathway is in place that avoids homelessness occurring.	Young people	WCF	WSHOG	November 2023	Meeting with Care Leavers team
	Develop protocol with criminal justice and develop action plan following on from the independent report.	Prison leavers	All Councils	Reducing Re-offending Group	November 2025	Reduction in the number of prison leavers leaving no fixed abode

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale	How we will measure success
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PREVENTION

Customer Involvement	Engage regularly with service users using a variety of methods including face to face interviews and surveys to enhance learning from lived experience and consider whether actions from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy are making a difference to households.	All client groups	All Councils	WSHOG	November 2025	Regular updating of action plan based on customer feedback
	Working with People With Lived Experience across the homeless and rough sleeping groups to commence with a pilot working with WMWA and survivors of DA.	All groups	All Councils	RBC&BDC (Research and Intelligence Officer)	June 2023	Pilot findings reported to WSHOG
Raising awareness – customers and other organisations	Explore opportunities to work with Here2Help to have a community directory of homeless related services.	All client groups	All Councils & WCC	WDC (Laura Marshall) and Nicki Breakwell	November 2023	Homeless related services included
	Deliver communication plan to raise awareness and have a consistent message around homelessness across the county (see separate plan appendix five).	All client groups	All councils	Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership Officer	November 2025	Regular communications as per action plan

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale	How we will measure success
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PREVENTION

Early Intervention	Explore the opportunity to establish prevention panels for domestic abuse across the county.	All client groups	BDC, MHDC, RBC, WC & WDC	N/A	November 2023	Increase in number of DA panels established
	Work with Ukrainian hosts and guests, asylum seekers and refugees in partnership with other organisations to reduce homelessness.	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG / WSHP	November 2023	Reduction in number of homeless approaches
	Promote and encourage sign up to the Duty or Commitment to Refer especially from the Police (DA), Voluntary and Community Sector and registered providers.	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG to agree individual organisations	November 2023	Increase in number of organisations signed up to DTR / CTR
	Work with the Early Help Partnership to ensure family homelessness is prevented at the earliest stage.	Families with children	All councils	WSHOG	November 2023	Number of meetings attended
Commissioning	Work in partnership with the County Council, service providers, the Police and Crime Commissioner representative and other organisations to commission, deliver and review services to ensure they satisfy objectives.	Domestic Abuse	All councils	WFDC	November 2023	Contract compliant service assessed by Joint Commissioning Group

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale	How we will measure success
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PREVENTION

Thematic review of rough sleepers (where actions not already picked up elsewhere in the action plan)	Local Homeless Forums to consider the development of a set of principles for organisations providing services for the homeless.	Rough Sleepers	Adult Safeguarding Board and councils	WSHOG	Throughout 2023	LHF discussion
	Members of the local homeless forums to consider how the voluntary sector and other smaller organisations providing homeless services may be able to work collaboratively to deliver and access training.	Rough Sleepers	Adult Safeguarding Board and councils	Local Homeless Forums	November 2023	LHF discussion
	Monitoring of outcomes from the RSI2022-25 and the Rough Sleeper Action Plan to see how effective the interventions are into rough sleeping across the county.	Rough Sleepers	Adult Safeguarding Board and councils	WSHOG / Rough Sleeper Co-ordinators	November 2023	RS interventions are effective
	Consider local evidence of need which supports any specific actions including female rough sleepers.	Rough Sleepers	All councils	Research and Intelligence Officer / Rough Sleeper Co-ordinators	November 2023	Needs assessment and service development where appropriate
Data and intelligence	Monitor and gather intelligence around debt and other impacts from the cost of living including with voluntary sector working with the homeless and rough sleepers.	Rough Sleepers	All councils	Local homeless forums	Throughout 2023	LHF discussion

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale	How we will measure success
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INTERVENTION

Tenancy sustainment	Ensure officers link to harm reduction service where client not fully engaged with drug and alcohol services, through joint working and training.	All client groups	Cranstoun	WSHOG	November 2023	Number of referrals to Cranstoun
	Develop and embed support services across the county – community based led approach – to meet needs in a flexible and adaptable way.	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	November 2023	Support provision delivering in community
Support	Delivery of the Rough Sleeper Initiative project.	Complex needs and rough sleepers	WSHOG	WFDC	November 2023	Supported provided to 563 individuals
Training	Staff training in Psychological Informed Environment (PIE).	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG through WDC (training budget)	Throughout 2023	Training undertaken
	Awareness of the MCA process within councils for those who have capacity but have complex needs.	Complex needs / Mental Health	Adult Safeguarding Board / MH Trust	WSHOG	Throughout 2023	Training undertaken

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale	How we will measure success
RECOVERY						
Tenancy sustainment	Explore opportunities to link homeless households into meaningful activity and services to reduce social isolation and loneliness such as Plus (Onside Advocacy).	Rough Sleepers	All councils	Rough Sleeper Co-ordinators	November 2025	Referrals into services increased
	Increase take-up of education, training and employment support available across the county.	All client groups	All councils	Building Better Opportunities / WSHOG	November 2023	Referrals into services increased
	Review the existing peer mentoring services and consider whether this should be widened out across Districts / Clients.	Rough Sleepers	All councils	WDC, MHDC, BDC & RBC	November 2023	Service review concluded
Early Intervention	Work with those in safe accommodation to ensure digital safety including around local settings, use of social media etc.	Domestic Abuse	All councils	Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator / Domestic Abuse Housing Officers	November 2023	Information distributed
Partnership working	Support and maintain attendance from Cranstoun at Rough Sleeper group meetings and other local partnership meetings.	Rough Sleepers	All councils	Rough Sleeper Co-ordinators	November 2023	Cranstoun attending RS meetings
	Promote non-medical interventions in mental health including accessing Wellbeing Hub, Mood Masters, Plus service and Social Prescribers.	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	November 2023	Increased referrals into services
Commissioning services	To ensure new homelessness and rough sleeping contracts include an element of supporting recovery.	All groups	All councils	WC / WSHOG	November 2023	KPIs
Accommodation and support	Delivery of the Rough Sleeper Initiative project.	Complex needs & rough sleepers	WSHOG	WFDC	March 2025	Target Priority Group (36) have housing / support plans

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale	How we will measure success
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SUPPLY OF ACCOMMODATION

Increasing the supply of accommodation	Work with Registered Providers to increase the supply of affordable housing for rent and sale through the actions of the Housing Board.	All clients	All councils	HB / Worcestershire Delivery Group	November 2025	Number of affordable housing units delivered
	Explore opportunities for a greater range of supported and step-down accommodation available, before settled accommodation, for those that need an interim step, following the supported housing needs assessment.	All clients	All councils	ASC / PH / WSHOG	November 2025	Number of supported housing units delivered
	Explore the housing demand for rough sleepers utilising University of Worcester evaluation to identify whether any further accommodation is required and where that should be located e.g. Housing First, Direct access Hostel.	Rough Sleepers	All councils	UoW / Research and Intelligence Officer	March 2023	Review concluded
Domestic Abuse	Develop / retain 35 units of safe accommodation across the County for victims/survivors of domestic abuse.	Domestic Abuse	All councils	WFDC	March 2023	35 units of safe accommodation provided

Year Two (December 2023 - November 2024)

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale	How we will measure success
PREVENTION						
Reducing homeless approaches	Explore the funding opportunities available to employ a countywide Young People's Co-ordinator (YPC).	Young People	All councils	WSHOG	November 2024	YP co-ordinator employed
	Targeted domestic abuse training and joint working with registered provider teams to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce risk of financial abuse for tenants Enhance understanding of tenancy law/policies to remove perpetrators 	Domestic Abuse	RBC & BDC	RBC&BDC (Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator)	November 2024	Training completed
	Work with the Research and Intelligence Officer to improve quality, understanding and utilisation of data including on adverse childhood experiences to assist with shaping homeless prevention services.	All client groups	RBC & BDC	RBC & BDC	November 2024	All Homelessness data reviewed across LHAs
	Delivery of the Rough Sleeper Initiative project.	Complex needs and rough sleepers	WSHOG	WFDC	November 2024	Rough Sleeping numbers as close to zero as possible
	Review issues within the private rented sector (PRS) following the rent reform legislation and end of the s21 notices to ensure homelessness from the PRS is reduced.	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG / Housing Advice managers	November 2024	Review completed

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale	How we will measure success
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PREVENTION

Raising awareness	Work with schools and education settings to ensure digital safety and healthy relationships is delivered.	Young People	All councils	Young Peoples Coordinator	November 2024	Number of schools attended
Partnership working	Work with partners to explore opportunities for further outreach provision from their services e.g. GP drop ins, joint home visits, mental health outreach.	All client groups	All councils	Health and Housing Partnership Officer	November 2024	Review completed
	Work with partners to explore joint training and job shadowing to improve understanding of care act, homelessness and mental health assessments to support the prevention of homelessness.	All client groups	All councils	Health and Housing Partnership Officer	November 2024	Training completed
Customer Involvement	Explore opportunities to develop a youth homelessness snapshot survey with YPC.	Young People	All councils	Young People Co-ordinator / Research and Intelligence Officer	November 2024	Survey completed
Raising awareness - customers and other organisations	Deliver communication plan to raise awareness and have a consistent message around homelessness across the county (see separate plan appendix five).	All client groups	All councils	Worcestershire Strategic Partnership Officer	November 2024	Regular communications as per action plan
Early Intervention	Work with school/education settings to explore homelessness / healthy relationships targeting schools in areas where homelessness is more prevalent.	Young People	All councils	Young People Co-ordinator	November 2024	Number of schools visited

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale	How we will measure success
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INTERVENTION

Reducing rough sleeping	Review outcomes from Rough Sleeper Initiative 2022-25 funding / Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme to reduce rough sleeping.	Rough Sleepers	All councils	Rough Sleeper Coordinators	November 2024	Rough Sleeping reduced
Tenancy sustainment	Explore opportunities with the MH Trust / VCS around a specialist MH funded post(s) to work with homeless households.	Mental health	All councils	Health and Housing Partnership Officer	November 2024	MH service for homeless households established
	Ensure any available support provision is flexible to the client's needs as they progress along the pathway.	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	November 2025	Support provision remains in place until client ready to exit

RECOVERY

Tenancy sustainment	Explore opportunities to link homeless households into meaningful activity and services to reduce social isolation and loneliness such as Plus (Onside Advocacy).	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	November 2024	Increase in referrals to services
	Outcomes from Sanctuary Scheme evaluated.	Domestic Abuse	All councils	Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator	November 2024	Reduction in homeless approaches for DA
	Explore opportunities for localised counselling services and other related services specifically for homeless households.	Mental Health	All councils	Health and Housing Partnership Officer	November 2024	New counselling services commissioned where appropriate

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale	How we will measure success
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SUPPLY OF ACCOMMODATION

Increasing accommodation	Explore opportunities for a greater range of supported and step-down accommodation available, before settled accommodation, for those that need an interim step.	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG / ASC	November 2024	Increase in provision where appropriate
	Consider outcomes of the supported housing joint strategic needs assessment in identification of further types of accommodation for the rough sleeper client group.	Rough Sleepers	Adult Safeguarding Board and councils	WDC (Laura Marshall) & WSHOG UofW	November 2024	Supported accommodation provided to meet identified needs
	Explore opportunities presented by re-purposing older peoples accommodation surplus to requirements.	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	November 2024	Accommodation re-purposed
	Review the provision of accommodation and support for young people to ensure no young person will be placed in emergency bed and breakfast with shared facilities unless no other accommodation available (to avoid rough sleeping) including working with RPs on new build and accessing existing stock and other specialist housing providers.	Young People	All councils	Young Peoples Coordinator	November 2024	Review concluded
	Support the recommissioning of YP accommodation and support services to ensure it meets need.	Young People	All councils	Young Peoples Coordinator	November 2024	Services recommissioned

Year Three (December 2024 - November 2025)

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale	How we will measure success
PREVENTION						
Partnership working	Explore Greater Manchester Combined Authority around co-ordinated bids across statutory and voluntary sector partners to address gaps.	All client groups	All councils	Homelessness Link / WSHOG	November 2025	Future funding bids are co-ordinated
	Explore opportunities to engage Private Rented Sector (PRS) landlords through prevention panels to increase prevention in the PRS.	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	November 2025	Landlords engaged with prevention panels
Raising awareness - customers and other organisations	Deliver communication plan to raise awareness and have a consistent message around homelessness across the county (see separate plan appendix three)	All client groups	All councils	Worcestershire Strategic Partnership Officer	November 2025	Regular communications as per action plan
Reducing homeless approaches	Delivery of the Rough Sleeper Initiative project.	Complex needs and rough sleepers	WSHOG	WFDC	November 2025	Rough Sleeping numbers as close to zero as possible
INTERVENTION						
Support	Delivery of the Rough Sleeper Initiative project.	Complex needs and rough sleepers	WSHOG	WFDC	November 2025	Support provided to 536 individuals

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale	How we will measure success
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RECOVERY

Tenancy sustainment	Explore opportunities to link homeless households into meaningful activity and services to reduce social isolation and loneliness such as Plus (Onside Advocacy).	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2025	Maintain or increase the number of positive exits from support/ temporary accommodation
Accommodation and support	Delivery of the Rough Sleeper Initiative project.	Complex needs and rough sleepers	WSHOG	WFDC	March 2025	Target Priority Group (36) have housing / support plans

SUPPLY OF ACCOMMODATION

PRS accommodation	Engage with landlords from the private rented sector to enable access to accommodation across the districts post rent reform act.	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2025	Maintain the number of households rehoused into the PRS
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Appendix Seven - Glossary of terms

LHA	Local Housing Authority	WSHOG	Worcestershire Strategic Housing Officers Group
RSI	Rough Sleeper Initiative	PWLE	People With Lived Experience
BDC	Bromsgrove District Council	VCS	Voluntary and Community Services
MHDC	Malvern Hills District Council	ASB	Adult Safeguarding Board
RBC	Redditch Borough Council	WHB	Worcestershire Housing Board
WC	Worcester City Council	WHSB	Worcestershire Housing Strategy Board
WDC	Wychavon District Council	PCN	Primary Care Network
WFDC	Wyre Forest District Council	ASC	Adult Social Care
PH	Public Health	UofW	University of Worcester
DLUHC	Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities	DASS	Domestic Abuse Support Service
WCF	Worcestershire Childrens First		